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Through Native Lenses: American Indian Vernacular Photographies and Performances of Memories, 1890-1940

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements

for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Culture and Performance

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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by

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Professor Allen F. Roberts, Chair

At the turn of the twentieth century, photographers like Edward Curtis were creating romanticized images of Americans Indians. Far from merely serving as camera fodder, however, Native Americans during this period were independently producing their own photographic records. This dissertation offers a critical overview of how Native North Americans appropriated photography and integrated it into their ways of life in the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, both as patrons who commissioned portraits and as photographers who created collections. In this study, I investigate the practices through which Native-produced photographs have become entangled in a set of performative acts of remembrance that have helped sustain and generate tribal histories. The primary sources under investigation are early snapshots dating to approximately 1890 to 1940, created for and by indigenous peoples throughout the United States and Canada. By arguing that these photographs stand as counter-images to the hegemonic visual histories of their peoples, I demonstrate that

Native-produced images undermine dominant narratives while simultaneously endorsing their own tribal histories. My goal is to prove that "Native American photography" as practiced by and for Native Americans is profoundly different than photography practiced by contemporary non-Natives.

To help support these claims, I provide two case studies of amateur Native photographies that have become part of their cultural consciousness by virtue of being displayed in their respective community museums. Unlike most domestic images, the photographs taken by Jennie Ross Cobb (Cherokee) and George Johnston (Inland Tlingit) were neither bequeathed to family members nor gifted to friends. Instead, these photographers donated their images to aid in the foundation of new museums in their respective tribal communities. In the case of George Johnston, the eponymous museum in Teslin, Yukon Territory, was built to hold and preserve the photographs, while the pictures by Jennie Ross Cobb contributed to the efforts to valorize and restore the historic George M. Murrell Home in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, where they are now displayed. These localized, self-contained collections allow for an unprecedented look at how vernacular photographs work within indigenous communities to perform and recover memories.

The dissertation of Nicole Dawn Strathman is approved.

Mary (Polly) Nooter Roberts

Stephen Aron

Allen F. Roberts, Committee Chair

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Collection of Karen Harrington

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Photographer: Jennie Ross Cobb
Oklahoma Historical Society Research Division,
Jennie Ross Cobb Collection, 20661.17

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Photographer: Jennie Ross Cobb
Oklahoma Historical Society Research Division,
Jennie Ross Cobb Collection, 20661.21

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Collection of Karen Harrington

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Jennie Ross Cobb Collection, 20661.20

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collection of the author

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Photographer: Nicole Strathman
collection of the author

Chapter 6 **No Images**

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Chapter 1

Native American Photography: An Introduction

> *When native people do pick up the camera, often their image making is greeted with a patronizing welcome. The "Indian" no longer sits passively before the camera, but now operates the camera—a symbol of white man's technology*.
> – Theresa Harlan (Santo Domingo/Jemez Pueblo), "Creating a Visual History"

Like most industries, academia has what is called the "elevator speech." It is a quick synopsis of one's work that a person could conceivably provide before that hypothetical elevator reaches the ground floor. While working on my dissertation, I attended several academic conferences which gave me the opportunity to test my elevator speech. Whether speaking with a peer or to an established professor, I inevitably got to the point where I say, "I work on early Native American photography," and my pitch came to a screeching halt. In every case, the listener stopped me to ask: "Do you mean Edward Curtis?" or, "Weren't Indians afraid that photography would steal their souls?" Mind you, these questions have been posed by scholars at some of the most prestigious annual conferences. It was these preconceptions about Native American photography that became the driving force behind my research. My goal, before the elevator doors open, is to convince my audience that "early Native American photography" means photographs *of* and *by* Native peoples whose images are fundamentally different in content and in scope than pictures taken of them by Western photographers during the same period, 1890-1940.

The association between early Native American photography and Edward Curtis is an understandable one. From 1896-1925, Edward Sheriff Curtis created over 40,000 images of tribal communities throughout North America. He spent most of his life and money trying to document the indigenous population before it "vanished." Yet it was his beautifully composed, sepia-toned portraits that would essentially vanish. Late in his career, a destitute Curtis sold the

rights to his work, and his photographs would languish in a Boston basement for almost fifty years. After his opus was rediscovered in 1972, it quickly garnered commercial and academic attention. His frontal portraits of tribal elders spawned a thriving cottage industry and Curtis's photographs can now be found emblazoned on posters, calendars, and various tchotchkes. Scholars have exhaustively researched his life, aesthetics, work, and business ventures, particularly in reference to his *North American Indians* project.[1] Understandably, Edward Curtis's name is now synonymous with Native American photography. In light of Curtis's popularity and prodigious output of staged portraits, it is somewhat incongruous that so many people think that Native Americans feared photography.[2]

It is a commonly held view that American Indians believe that cameras were "shadow catchers" that "stole the soul."[3] Although, as far as we know, only a few individuals actually expressed this belief, it has been generally ascribed to *all* Native Americans.[4] According to mythographer Marina Warner, "the repeated tale of the soul-stealer may correspond to a deeper desire of the incomers. It could function like cannibal stories, as a marker to docket and define the savage mind. Such a supposedly primitive concept became convenient shorthand for marking out indigenous peoples as superstitious, naïve, undeveloped" (2006:192). Although this concept may speak more to the motives of Western incomers, for those few indigenous people who did express fears or anxieties regarding photography, they may have been responding to something

[1] Holm & Quimby 1980; Lyman 1982; Davis 1985; Gidley 1987, 1998, 2003; Makepeace 2000; Cardozo & Horse Capture 2000; Sandweiss 2001; Lawlor 2005; Scherer 2008; Hausman 2009; Egan 2012.

[2] "Staged portraits" does not mean that the sitter was particularly willing or comfortable with the medium. In many cases, photographers and anthropologists paid, or otherwise coerced, the impoverished Indians for their participation. See Gidley 2000.

[3] Several texts on Native American photography perpetuate the use of the term 'shadowcatcher,' for example: "The Shadowcatcher: The Uses of Native American Photography," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* (1996); Fleming & Luskey, *The Shadow Catchers: Images of the American Indian*, (1996); In Canada, 'shadowcatchers' are also known as 'facepullers.' per Brock Silversides, *The Face Pullers: Photographing Native Canadians, 1871-1939*, (1994).

[4] Anthropologist Ira Jacknis (1996) has referenced a few specific examples of the shadow catcher belief among the Yurok and Creek tribes, but he (like me) is unable to locate the first recorded usage of the term.

much less supernatural. "General suspicions of the camera and its operator were not perhaps entirely unfounded," argues historian James Ryan, "since those sitters whom photographers did manage to capture had neither knowledge nor control over the uses and meanings of their likenesses. Thus to a large extent explorers' accounts of superstitious fears of the camera were themselves misreadings of cultural difference and the very real threat that their presence and technology posed" (1997: 143). This assertion is echoed by visual anthropologist Elizabeth Edwards who maintains that "in many ways those people who fear the camera would steal their souls, would peel their faces were right. The camera was one of those instruments of appropriation which recorded culture at the colonial periphery and removed it for analysis.… culture and histories became not what they were to the people themselves, but how they were defined and analyzed externally" (Warner 2006: 107).

So what did these photographs exported to the metropoles depict? From 1867-1879, ethnographers of the Four Great Surveys of the American West created hundreds of photographs that recorded indigenous customs and ways of life.[5] The records that emerged from their lens were part of a "salvage paradigm" that depicted a vanishing race, one that needed to be photographed and studied before it disappeared (Clifford 2002). Other, more commercial images, such as the work by Edward Curtis and Joseph K. Dixon, portrayed American Indians as "noble savages" through romantically-conceived compositions that evoked nostalgia for a pure, "primitive" past (Lyman 1982). At the same time, Indian boarding school photographers presumed to show the redemptive qualities of acculturation by demonstrating the change from "Indian" to "man" with their propagandistic before-and-after images of Native students

[5] The Four Great Surveys of the American West were sponsored by the U.S. Geological Survey to explore the environment and the peoples of the American West. The surveys are also known by the leader names: King Expedition (1867-78), Wheeler Expedition (1872-79), Hayden Expedition (1867-78), and Powell Expedition (1869-79). Per the USGS website: http://pubs.usgs.gov/circ/c1050/surveys.htm

(Margolis and Rowe 2004). By the turn of the twentieth century, Native Americans had been portrayed as wild and primitive, beautiful exotic others, assimilated student bodies, and as people on the verge of disappearing in their "authentic" form—images all constructed by Western photographers that tended to freeze American Indian identity in the past. Commoditized for non-Indian profit, these photographs continue to be featured in countless textbooks, museums, and are for sale in gift shops, especially in places associated with Indians in tourist imagination, such as in and near national parks (Stewart 1993; Hoelscher 2008). "Native people live in a prison of images not of their own making," claims historian Don Alexander (1986: 45). However, the photographs that they themselves have produced tell very different stories.

It was only when American Indians began to commission and create their own photographs that they could counter the dominant imagery and (re)construct their own visual identities. As artist and scholar Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie (Seminole/Muscogee/Diné) declares, "no longer is the camera held by an outsider looking in, the camera is held with brown hands opening familiar worlds. We document ourselves with a humanizing eye, we create new visions with ease, and we can turn the camera and show how we see you" (1993:30) – with the "you," of course, being non-Native people. At the turn of the twentieth century, Native Americans used cameras to record events from daily life and to remember tribal members. Like their Western counterparts, they visited photography studios to have their portraits made, and they snapped their own photos of friends and family, material goods, and special events. But unlike Euro-American photographers of Native Americans, indigenous photographers did not emphasize or de-emphasize the "Indianness" of their subjects (Katakis 1998). The images they created did not show noble savages or assimilated groups; rather, they depicted proud and resolute people retaining their cultures while simultaneously embracing modern technologies. "The camera

technique and even the choice of subject may be similar," notes art historian Theresa Harlan (Santo Domingo/Jemez Pueblo), "but the interest and the treatment of the resulting works is not" (1993: 7). The issue at stake for indigenous photographers has always been working within already established visual parameters while simultaneously trying to exert their own identities. These identities are not fixed, but creatively imagined (and imaged) through photography, which serves "as creative space[s] in which new aspirant identities and personae can be conjured" (Pinney 1997: 85).

Native-produced photography encompasses much more than just identity formation. According to Tuscarora artist and scholar Jolene Rickard, "photographs made by indigenous makers are the documentation of our sovereignty, both politically and spiritually.… the images are all connected, circling in ever-sprawling spirals the terms of our experiences as human beings ... hooking [together] memories through time" (1995: 54). What she describes is an important part of indigenous visual heritage, and a dynamic, tangible link between the past, present, and future. Similarly, for Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor, "some photographs of ancestors are stories, the cues of remembrance, visual connections, intimations and representations of time, place, and families, a new native totemic association alongside traditional images and pictomyths" (2007: xiv). These *pictomyths* are images or "picture-stories" that are "venerated and carried into every native season, experience, and sacred histories" (ibid). Therefore, Native image-makers and their photographs operate as "message carriers" for their people by communicating indigenous knowledge to subsequent generations (Harlan 1993). And, if it is true that "photographs have replaced oral history," as Richard W. Hill, Sr. (Tuscarora) states, then it is imperative to study how photographs perform as objects of tribal memories (1990: 25).

In this dissertation, I offer a critical overview of how Native North Americans successfully appropriated photography and integrated it into their ways of life in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, both as patrons who commissioned portraits and as photographers who created collections. With this study, I intend to investigate the practices through which Native-produced personal photographs have become entangled in a set of performative acts of remembrance that have helped sustain and generate tribal histories. Like Peter Nabokov, I will refocus "attention on motivations and practices through which American Indians have remembered their diverse pasts" (2002: iv). Presented as a type of visual genealogy, this dissertation traces the origins of native participation in photography from the first individuals and groups who commissioned and controlled their own images, to the pioneering native practitioners of photography who adopted the medium to document their communities. The primary sources under investigation will be early vernacular images dating to approximately 1890-1940, created for and by indigenous peoples throughout the United States and Canada. In arguing that these photographs stand as counterimages to the hegemonic visual histories of their peoples, I will demonstrate that Native-produced images undermine dominant Western narratives while simultaneously endorsing their own tribal histories.

To help support these claims, I will provide two case studies of amateur Native photographs that have become part of their cultural consciousness by virtue of being displayed in their respective community museums. These two collections are exceptional in that they have never left their particular communities. In fact, the photographs taken by Jennie Ross Cobb (Cherokee) and George Johnston (Inland Tlingit) do not have the common characteristics of vernacular photography or, "the *expected* career for such things" (Kopytoff 1986: 66, emphasis added). For example, unlike most domestic images, their photographic collections were not

bequeathed to a family member or gifted to a friend. Instead, the photographers donated the images to aid in the foundation of new museums in their respective tribal communities. In the case of George Johnston, the eponymous museum was built to hold and preserve the photographs, while the pictures by Jennie Ross Cobb contributed to the efforts to valorize and restore the historic George M. Murrell Home where they are now displayed. Since these private photographs were created in the same area in which they were publicly exhibited (Teslin, Yukon Territory, and Tahlequah, Oklahoma, respectively), the people are generally familiar with the subject matter depicted in images. These localized, self-contained collections allow for an unprecedented look at how vernacular photographs work within indigenous communities to perform and recover memories.

Literature Review

What is *vernacular photography*? And why use this phrase as a primary point of reference in the study of collective memories of indigenous communities? Photography theorist Geoffrey Batchen defines vernacular photography as "ordinary photographs, the ones made or bought (or sometimes bought and then made over) by everyday folk from 1839 until now" (2001: 57). Best understood as an umbrella category, vernacular photography is often interchangeable with other descriptors such as domestic, everyday, popular, quotidian, folk, and amateur snapshots. "Vernacular photography" is everything that is *not* art photography, or what art historian Douglas Nickel calls "the grab-bag left-over category" (2000: 229). The vernacular category of photography includes images of self, family and friends, pets, material possessions, special events, tourism, class pictures, and identification photos like cartes-de-visite. For curators Stacey Cutshaw and Ross Barrett, "vernacular photographs refuse to be organized or analyzed

according to the paradigms that have guided traditional historical studies of photography, such as authorial intention, artistic expression, originality, and formal innovation" (2008: 11). Furthermore, vernacular photography is not limited to a particular style or author. For example, family photographs can be created by a professional in a studio, a semi-professional itinerant photographer, or by an amateur snap-shooter at home. Since the types of producers are not always the same, vernacular photographs are "defined more by their destination than their origin" (Wallis and Wills 2005: 10). Such expression is "the popular face of photography," Batchen states, "so popular that it has been largely ignored by the critical gaze of *respectable history*" (2001: 57, emphasis added)—with this last term offered in all irony. In effect, the main reason to use vernacular photography as a historical and cultural resource is because it offers a different kind of record and different quality of information than more conventional forms of documentation such as letters, diaries, and other textual documents.

Others before me have proposed using vernacular photography as a means to understand collective memories. For several decades, scholars have explored how people remember and (re)construct the past using personal photography.[6] First coined by French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1925), the idea of "collective memory" describes the ways in which memories are continuously constructed through shared cultural images, stories, and conceptions of the past. In 1967, another French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, explored how collective memories are created and reinforced through the structure of family albums that present images in "the logical order of social memory" (1990: 31). Later, art historian Martha Langford would claim that "a photographic album is a repository of memory … [and] an instrument of social performance" (2006: 223). Her extensive scholarship on family albums examines the "afterlife of memory" for

[6] See J. Hirsch 1981; Spence & Holland 1991; M. Hirsch 1997; Kuhn & McAllister 2006; Kroes 2007; and Bán and Turai 2010.

collections that have moved from private spaces to the public realm thus creating new "remembrance environments" (Langford 2001, 2005, 2007, 2011). For sociologist Celia Lury, photographs are more than different environments of memory, they are a "prosthetic" or external means of consciousness (1998: 1-22). "As a form of externalized or prosthetic collective memory," vernacular photographs can serve as an "articulation of a collective historical consciousness" (Edwards 2006: 53-54). Photographs thereby operate as "constituents of collective memory" and as "historical markers" to help individuals "imagine" themselves as part of a larger community—and to question that relationship as well (Brennen and Hardt 1999: 7). Historian Marita Sturken would add that vernacular photographs "have the capacity to create, interfere with, and trouble the memories we hold as individuals and as a nation" (1997: 19).

Memories, however, are not stored in the photographs. According to Sturken, "memory appears to reside within the photographic image, to tell its story in response to our gaze … yet memory does not reside in a photograph, or in any camera image, so much as it is produced by it" (ibid). What she is describing is a mnemonic device: a tool used to recall or, perhaps more appropriately, to *instigate* personal and collective memories. As Allen and Mary Nooter Roberts remind us, "memory devices do not symbolize thought as much as they stimulate and provoke it" (1996: 44). Vernacular photography, in particular, is often considered to be an effective mnemonic device that constitutes who we are and the histories that we remember (Edwards and Hart 2004; Pinney 2004). Frequently, these memories are described as eliciting a sense of nostalgia, sadness, loss, and—to use Roland Barthes' famous phrase—a feeling that "this-has-been" (1981: 79). But is this a universal way of reading vernacular photography? Do non-Western cultures experience the same type of nostalgia in response to personal photography? According to scholars Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie and Henrietta Lidchi, "whilst the idea of memory

must be integrated into any discussion of postcolonial photography, this melancholy analysis … neither conveys the vigour of contemporary Native photography, nor the living presence of archival images in the lives of Native communities" (2009: xix). What is needed then is a method that takes into consideration the "living presence" of Native photography, and how these images are being engaged by the communities as social agents to generate, sustain, and perform memories.

In constructing my approach, I will engage the work of photographer and critical communication studies scholar, Hanno Hardt, who writes that "family photographs, in particular, deliver the text of memories; they refer to the shared experiences of the past, which rely on the proximity between community and communication" (2000: 157). Not only will community readings be explored, but so will the manner in which the photographs are presented to particular audiences. As Hardt states, vernacular photographs "provide the opportunity for the reader-as-relative to penetrate the surface of the images … to enter into the concrete details of previous existences … to recognize and acknowledge kinship" (ibid). By investigating what pedagogical activities the two community museums that I have studied employ to convert family photographs into tribal histories, I will explore how the photographs perform as memory objects and how the museums encourage the creation of collective memories around the images. Stress will be given to how *active* such processes are—as people inexorably reinvent themselves in the present based upon useful aspects of pasts they presume to be collective.

In examining the performance of memory, this dissertation critically extends the scholarship of performance studies scholar Diana Taylor and historian Richard Cándida Smith who have examined the relationship between performance and archives. For Diana Taylor, the space for the performance of memory would be "between the archive of supposedly enduring

materials and the so-called ephemeral repertoire of embodied practice/knowledge" (2003: 19). It is this space that "requires presence," because, as she states, "people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by 'being there,' being a part of the transmission" (ibid). Likewise, Richard Cándida Smith believes that "memory exists in an ongoing process of performance and response. Traces of the past otherwise slip into the archive, as an ever-present but usually ignored repository filled with random survivals of antecedent social relationships stored in buildings, landscapes, libraries, museums" (2006: 3). He too describes an active engagement between objects and people, and the efforts undertaken to perpetuate the past in the present. For Smith, archives are storage rooms accessed by people to "pluck" out fragments of history in order "to engage and perform as they confront the future" (ibid). Such memory work is crucial to this study as it constitutes "vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity" for Native communities who are (re)engaging with images from their own personal and public archives (Taylor 2003: 2).

French historian Pierre Nora has provided us with a more elegant title for archives, calling them *lieux de memoire* or "sites of memory" (1989: 7). Consecrated to "block the work of forgetting," these sites are created at the nexus between memory and history (ibid). For Nora, "what we call memory is in fact the gigantic and breathtaking storehouse of a material stock of what it would be impossible for us to remember, an unlimited repertoire of what might need to be recalled" (ibid: 13). The problem, he finds, is that memory is a dynamic phenomenon that exists in the present, while history is a representation and codification of the past. It is this tension between memory and history that produces and problematizes "sites of memory." As Nora argues, "the passage from memory to history has required every social group to redefine its identity through the revitalization of its own history" (Nora 1989: 15). Simultaneously, as the

collective redefines itself, "memory-history has multiplied the number of private memories demanding their individual histories" (ibid). For my study, this point is fundamental to understanding how private, vernacular images have become public histories, and how in turn, other alternative histories have become suppressed.

According to anthropologist Elizabeth Edwards, "images read as 'private' are those read in a context contiguous with the 'life' from which they are extracted: meaning and memory stay with them, as in family photographs for example. 'Public' photographs remove the image entirely from such a context, and the meaning becomes free-floating, externally generated" (2001: 9). But what does this mean for family photographs that are on display in a community museum? At what point do the photographic meanings become divorced, and "free floating," if they do at all? How are individual, family, and collective memories performed in a new site of display? In recent years, photographs of Native peoples have moved from the public realm back to the private and vice versa. For example, a number of scholars have practiced photo-repatriation by taking publically-held archival or museum photographs and returning them to the source communities, often with the intent of eliciting information (Aird 2003; Peers and Brown 2006; White 2007; Morton and Edwards 2009). Conversely, some privately-held Native photographs, such as family portraits, have been published by Native authors to support personal stories and autobiographies (Momaday 1976; Silko 1989; Vizenor 1990; Denetdale 2007). For these authors, the photographs are not just illustrations, but an integral part of telling one's personal history so that the authors' life stories become intertwined with the imagery. Consequently, even though the family portraits have been made public, they still retain their private meanings.

Perhaps one of the most influential scholars in regards to public and private photography is cultural historian John Berger. As he states:

> There are photographs which belong to private experience and there are those which are used publicly. The private photograph … is appreciated and read in a context *which is continuous with that from which the camera removed it*. … Such a photograph remains surrounded by the meaning from which it was severed. The contemporary public photograph usually presents an event, a seized set of appearances, which has nothing to do with us, its readers, or with the original meaning of the event. It offers information, but information severed from all lived experience. If the public photograph contributes to a memory, it is to the memory of an unknowable and total stranger (Berger 1980: 55-56, emphasis in original).

Although I agree with Berger, I take a slightly different direction in my analysis of public and private imagery. Because the private photographs to be discussed are located in community museums on tribal lands, they are not necessarily "severed from all lived experience" (ibid). In point of fact, the images have entered a larger visual economy that makes them subject to a variety of meanings.

"Adequately understanding a photograph," writes Pierre Bourdieu, "means not only recovering the meanings which it proclaims, that is, to a certain extent, the explicit intentions of the photographer; it also means deciphering the surplus meaning which it betrays by being a part of the symbolism of an age" (1990: 5-6). This viewpoint is shared by many scholars. For example, because "seeing is learned and culturally influenced," anthropologist Paul Byers suggests that the same photograph will inevitably trigger more than one interpretation, with each dependent on the viewer's experience (1966: 30). According to Geoffrey Batchen, "the meanings of photographs are not determined by or confined to the pictures themselves, for

meaning is continually being reproduced within the contexts within which these pictures appear" (1999: 10). In other words, photographs are highly ambiguous objects revealing many possible meanings. For cultural theorist Stuart Hall, "meaning 'floats.' It cannot be finally fixed" (1997: 228). Likewise, photography critic Alan Sekula argued that a photograph cannot have a universal meaning since every photographic message is "characterized by a tendentious [or subjective] rhetoric" that causes its meaning to be "inevitably subject to cultural definition" (1975: 37). Historian David Nye holds that "the meaning of a photograph does not reside in the image itself, but rather in the entire process of photographic communication.… Ultimately the photographer loses control over the meanings that can be assigned to an image" (1986: 3). Critic John Tagg goes so far to write that photography has no identity outside its historical specifications; it is always tied to specific circumstances, and the images are only readable within the particular context in which they were created (1988: 118). According to Tagg and the other scholars heretofore mentioned, the only appropriate way to make sense of photographs is to look at them in their particular cultural and historical settings. This observation must be conducted while striving to learn the social conventions used by their makers and intended viewing audiences, as well as those who may gain access to images even though they may not have been meant to do so.

Until recently, scholarship regarding photography has relied primarily on Western theoretical models, which "rest on the assumption of a universal photographic ontology" (Edwards 2011: 212). However, due to the rise of visual culture studies, photographic discourse has expanded to include practices *outside* of Europe and European-heritage communities like Canada and the United States. My study will be situated within current scholarship that deals with the production, reception, and circulation of photography by non-Western peoples. This

emergent but already rich literature has generated theories applicable to Native American and other indigenous photographic practices worldwide. For example, Debra Poole elaborated upon the concept of "visual economy" (1997) to describe her work on transnational image-making in the Andes. For her, "it becomes important to ask not what specific images *mean* but, rather, how images accrue value" (1997: 10). Likewise, anthropologist Christopher Pinney has explored the "social lives" of vernacular photography in India to consider "how the particular visual reality associated with particular places comes to be so constituted" (1998: 10). Elsewhere in Southeast Asia, Karen Strassler has considered these same photographic processes to be "refracted through shared genre conventions and visual repertories" (2010: 23). Other "image worlds" have been explored in Latin America by Ester Gabara who has examined the "aesthetic ethos" of Mexican and Brazilian photography (2008) , and in Africa by Allen and Mary Nooter Roberts who have presented "visual hagiographies" of Sufi saints (2003). In fact, there has been enough interest in non-Western photographic practices to fill at least two volumes of collected essays, including *Photography's Other Histories* (Pinney and Peterson 2003) and *Photographies East* (Morris 2009). The authors, who focus on subaltern photographic practices and localized uses of photography, are collectively enacting what Dipesh Chakrabarty calls "provincializing" or the de-centralizing of Western thought (Chakrabarty 2000). By disrupting the Eurocentric history of the medium and extending the discourse laterally outward beyond the purview of conventional narratives, these studies have laid the foundation for my work here.

Texts devoted exclusively to American Indian-produced photography are few and far between. Most fall into one of the following categories: photo-elicitation projects, exhibition catalogues, or reflection essays. Photo-elicitation projects involve collecting photographs from archives (Brown & Peers 2006; White 2007; Jones et al 2011) or from communities themselves

(Cruikshank and Robb 1975; Frank and Hogeland 2007), and using them in interviews to solicit oral histories. While elicited stories are important unto themselves, the research method focuses so much on the subject matter within the photographs that it nearly overlooks the lives and practices of the Native photographers. Some exhibition catalogues provide more information on indigenous photographers but, the text is often limited to brief biographical paragraphs and short photo-captions.[7] Reflective essays, which I am defining as personal opinions and observations regarding photographic topics, have been written by both Native and non-Native artists and scholars. This type of critical commentary provides useful insights and understandings regarding Native photographies. Reflection essays can be found in some exhibition books such as *Native Nations* (a Barbican Gallery exhibition from 1998), which includes writings by three of the most influential Native scholars: George Horse Capture, Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie, and Jolene Rickard; but perhaps the most useful texts for my project are reflection essays collected in volumes.

Three such works inform my research. One is based on a specific group of institutional images, while the other two focus on personal and private images selected by the authors themselves. In *Beyond the Reach of Time and Change: Native American Reflections on the Frank A. Rinehart Collection* (2005), edited by indigenous poet and professor Simon Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo), fourteen essays by Native artists and scholars—some of whom are descendants of the photographic subjects—comment on a selection of American Indian portraits housed at Haskell Indian Nations University. For contributor Geary Hobson, the photographs "can, at best, lead viewers not so much into the familiar morass of stereotypes and set images, but into new

[7] Native American photography exhibitions (with catalogs) include: *Silver Drum: Five Native Photographers* (NIIPA 1986)*; No Borders: Works by Four North American Native Photographers* (NIIPA Gallery, 1991); *Strong Hearts: Native American Visions and Voices* (Smithsonian 1995); *Spirit Capture: Photographs from the National Museum of the American Indian* (Smithsonian 1998); *Native Nations: Journeys in American Photography* (Barbican Art Gallery 1998); *Our People, Our Land, Our Images: International Indigenous Photographers* (C.N. Gorman Museum 2006).

ways of viewing the past, new ways of creating connections with our relatives, new ways of reaffirming cultural identity" (Ortiz 2005: 109). Hobson's sentiment is prefigured by the native authors in *Partial Recall: Photographs of Native North Americans* (1992), edited by art critic Lucy Lippard. Each of the thirteen contributors selected a family photograph or archival image through which to discuss his or her ancestors and Native continuance, and to disrupt normative meanings of the images. In her introduction, Lippard states that "with fresh interpretations, especially from Native people, new windows into these images will be opened; the lives and beliefs of the people depicted will be released from the prisons of the colonial past into a shared present" (1992: 14). More recently, Henrietta Lidchi and Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie released *Visual Currencies: Reflections on Native Photography* (2009) as an edited volume of essays that links photographers and their work to larger issues of visual sovereignty and self-representation. Their text "features photographs which speak to the rich memories and wild diversities innate to Native expression. It clearly establishes that there are a variety of positions from which to view the history and contemporary practices of photographs for and by Native peoples, and that these are not yet exhausted" (2009: xxiv). Indeed, I hope to add to this discussion even as these works will be indispensable in providing indigenous voices and viewpoints to my study.

My project deviates from past studies of Native American photography in several ways. First, I do not deal with repatriated anthropological images. For the last several years, returning images to their source communities has been a very popular research method.[8] Rather than concentrating on *recovered histories*, this project focuses on *enduring memories*. Second, I do not focus exclusively on the work of early professional photographers. While there are some remarkable Native photographers working today such as Lee Marmon (Laguna Pueblo), Victor

[8] See Pinney & Petersen 2003; Brown & Peers 2006; Isaac 2007; White 2007.

Masayesva Jr. (Hopi), Jolene Rickard (Tuscarora), and Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie (Seminole/Muscogee/Diné), there is relatively little research on indigenous photographers working prior to 1950. Promising studies have been conducted of some early photographers such as Kiowa photojournalist Horace Poolaw (Smith 2008; Jerman 2009), Tsimshian studio photographer Benjamin Haldane (Askren 2002), and Crow field photographer Richard Throssel (Albright 1997), but all of these photographers self-identified as professionals and were often commissioned for their work. The photographers of my two case studies were avowed amateurs, although their work has been used—and sometimes "professionalized"—in afterthought. Finally, I shall not attempt to reconcile "inaccuracies" in Native American photography (Scherer 1975). A prevalent trend in scholarship for the last few decades has been to dispel misconceptions about American Indian culture by calling attention to the visual myths and stereotypes in commercial and anthropological photography.[9] Instead, I shall focus on American Indian vernacular photography and the performance of memory through community museums.

Methodology

Since the turn of the twentieth century when many of the vernacular photographs in question were created, the research landscape has changed—for the better. No longer does one conduct a study *of* a Native community; research is conducted *with* the community and *for* their benefit (Lassiter 2000). Yet, research is not just about collaborating, giving back, or "completing the circle" (Piquemal 2001). Reflexive researchers disclose their intentions and act in accordance with indigenous cultural protocols as negotiated in the course of research. This means initiating research that is cognizant of Native values, beliefs, and concerns, and the need for consent (and,

[9] See Berkhofer 1978; Stedman 1982; Edwards 1992; Faris 1996; Dilworth 1996; Vizenor 1998; Huhndorf 2001; and P. Deloria 2004

in my case, the rights to use the photographs) from the communities in question. As studies of Australian Aboriginal images rights have suggested, such processes may be ongoing, as permission granted by some may be contested by others, or by the same party over time (Myers 1991; Michaels 1994; Jessup and Bagg 2002). As I conducted my field research, I ensured that I established appropriate contacts within relevant tribal groups and endeavored to foster mutually beneficial relationships. For my research in Canada, I was required to obtain a license from the national government. With approval from the Teslin Tlingit Tribal Council, I was granted permission for both of my trips to the north. Overall, I have employed the "decolonizing methodologies" that characterize progressive American Indian studies today (Smith 1999).

Much of my photographic data was collected from archives in the United States and Canada. I identified and obtained copies of images from photography collections at the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, American Heritage Center in Wyoming, Southwest Museum of the American Indian (at the Autry National Center), and from various state, territorial, and tribal archives. Other sources included small community museums and heritage centers. Many early photographs are now scanned and digitized, so travel to distant institutions and tribal communities was not always necessary. For my case studies, however, I visited the communities.

In 2007, I spent a month in the Yukon working in the archives and starting to establish working relationships with the Teslin Tlingit community and the George Johnston Museum. I compiled all correspondence and other textual materials referring to George Johnston, and took inventory of his 342 original black-and-white images. Since this visit to the Yukon, more data about George Johnston's photographic collection has been recovered and recorded. For example, on March 10, 2009, an archivist from the Yukon Archives used Johnston's photographs

to conduct a photo-elicitation project with the Teslin Tlingit Tribal Council. A wealth of information was gathered, and I will be drawing extensively from this unpublished cache.

During my second trip to Teslin in the summer of 2011, I conducted several interviews in the Inland Tlingit community. I arranged my visit to coincide with Canada Day (the July 1st holiday also known as Dominion Day), in order to take advantage of the number of First Nations people in town for the holiday.[10] While in the village, I volunteered to help serve "Dominion Day Silver Tea" to the elders. Over pots of steaming tea and finger sandwiches, I met many people who personally knew George Johnston or were familiar with his images. His nephew, Sam Johnston, a former chief and recent Yukon congressman, spoke with me for over two hours regarding his family and the cultural history of his people. I also had the opportunity to meet with Pearl Keenan (née Geddes), a respected elder born in the 1920s who remembers George Johnston and appears in some of his photographs. I transcribed these interviews for inclusion in my project.

My first trip to the Cherokee Nation (Tahlequah) was in January 2008. I spent most of my time at the George M. Murrell Historic Home where Jennie Ross Cobb lived (and photographed) as a teen in the 1890s and where she would later become the first curator of the house museum. The on-site archives include her original glass-plate camera, as well as a wealth of information on her family and her famous great-grandfather, Principal Chief John Ross. The Cherokee Female Seminary School stands nearby as part of the Northeastern University campus. I walked the halls of Jennie Ross's old school and found her class pictures in the University Library archives. I also visited the Oklahoma Historical Society in Oklahoma City and the Western History Collection at the University of Oklahoma to locate additional photographs and

[10] Many Teslin Tlingit live elsewhere during the winter such as Whitehorse or Vancouver, but spend their summers in the village of Teslin.

documentation regarding Jennie Ross and her family. During this trip, I was put in contact with Bruce Ross Jr., the nephew of Jennie Ross Cobb and a former curator of the Murrell Home—from 1984-1994—who maintains a family website and who kindly served as an excellent source of information.

During my second research trip to Tahlequah in July 2012, I discovered some interesting changes. Shortly before I arrived, a box of glass plate negatives found in a basement and attributed to Jennie Ross Cobb was purchased at an estate sale. I was able to procure copies of these images from the new owner. Elsewhere in Tahlequah, the Cherokee Nation created two new exhibitions featuring Jennie Ross Cobb's photographs which have since been incorporated into my study.

This project considers the photographic content and the display of images. Like Elizabeth Edwards, I intend to "shift the methodological focus away from content alone, arguing that it is not merely the image *qua* image that is the site of meaning, but that its material forms, enhanced by its presentational forms, are central to the function of photographs as socially salient objects" (2002:67). This means taking into consideration cultural biographies of photographic objects by looking at the "careers" of photographs, and examining purposes for which they have been displayed and put to use. Since much of the photographs' careers have been spent in community museums, it will be integral to this study to examine how the photographs are featured within museum spaces.

Anthropologist Gwyneira Isaac claims that "although numerous studies have looked at locally operated museums, few have incorporated the local population's reactions to their museum" (2007: 14). I plan to rectify this oversight. Native voices will be incorporated into my study through interviews with tribal members. Museum managers Sharron Chatterton at the

George Johnston Museum and David Fowler at the George M. Murrell Historic House Museum are eager to learn how their local communities are interpreting photographs from their collections. Through their assistance, I was put in touch with elders and docents who were willing to share their thoughts and feelings regarding the museum and its holdings. Such interviews will inform my study of the performance of memories.

In each case study, photographs will be presented with archival data, information from interviews, and wall text from museum exhibitions. In order to bring this disparate information together, I shall adhere to art critic John Berger's suggestion that "a radial system has to be constructed around the photograph so that it may be seen in terms which are simultaneously personal, economic, dramatic, everyday and historic" (1980: 47). In an effort to present my research clearly and lucidly, I look to authors of cultural histories. Scholars working on American visual culture such as Martha Sandweiss, Alan Trachtenberg, Brian Dippie, and Mick Gidley have employed the style of cultural history that I will emulate here.[11]

Chapter Synopsis

The next chapter of my study will situate American Indian photography within the history of the idiom. As mentioned earlier, Native Americans were familiar with photography before they picked up cameras themselves. Rather than considering indigenous subjects as passive victims of Anglo photographers (although they were sometimes just that), I will emphasize their *participation* in their own photographic representations. Such an approach runs counter to earlier scholarship that often finds Native American photographs as "produced largely

[11] Specifically, the following texts have inspired my work: Sandweiss, Print *the Legend: Photography and the American West* (2002); Trachtenberg, Reading *American Photographs: Images as History Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (1989); Dippie, *West-Fever* (1998); and Gidley, *Edward S. Curtis and the North American Indian Project in the Field* (2003).

by a dominant, aggressive, and exploitative majority foreign culture with institutional trajectories and disciplines … oriented toward the consumption of images" (Faris 1996: xi). While there is no denying the nefarious intent or unfortunate outcomes of some Western photographers, I agree with historian Martha Sandweiss that "to imagine that every photograph of an indigenous person represents an act of cultural imperialism is to deny the ambitions of the sitter, the capacity of that sitter to understand the collaborative process of portrait making, and the cultural malleability and contingency of any photographic image" (2002: 215). Therefore, the second chapter focuses on the *agency* of early indigenous sitters and how they harnessed the power of photographic imagery for their own personal, political, social, and commercial purposes.

The third chapter examines the emergence of Native photographers and their motivations for employing photography to document their own communities as well as other indigenous groups. As Elizabeth Tonkin notes, "to understand how history-as-lived is connected to history-as-recorded, we have to look at the actors concerned" (1992: 12). Each of the historical actors to be discussed in this chapter has had different levels of experience with the camera. Starting with trained professionals and moving on to semi-professional and amateur indigenous photographers, I hope to underscore the "plurality of particular photographies" and to stress the multiple values and perspectives across Native North America (Tagg 1994:92). Steven Leuthold states that "there is no one set of formal characteristics that comprises an Indian 'way of seeing,' perhaps because of the great variation in native culture's experiences" (1997: 80). Holding this to be true, I examine the experiences that inform the image-making of early Native photographers. With this chapter, a broad cross-section of early Native photographers will be introduced, as well as their vast range of practices.

In essence, the second and third chapters present Native peoples as *participants* (subjects) and as *practitioners* (photographers) of photography, respectively. This structure will provide context for the case studies to follow. Emphasis will be given to the *performative* aspects of photography from taking the pictures to displaying them in public venues. Chapters four and five will be dedicated to my photographic case studies of George Johnston and Jennie Ross Cobb.

Chapter four will start with a chronological historiography of George Johnston's images. A walkthrough of the George Johnston Museum—which is a simulacrum of his old general store—will follow, as will a discussion of the performances that the Teslin Tlingit have conducted in conjunction with Johnston's imagery. Special attention will be paid to the award-winning documentary film "Picturing a People, George Johnston, Tlingit Photographer" (1997) by Teslin Tlingit director, Carol Geddes. The film plays on a continuous loop within the museum and features commentary from elders interspersed with local Native actors who re-create Johnston's photographs to tell the histories of the Inland Tlingit. Focusing on these various *sites of memory* (Nora 1989), I will examine how Johnston's photographs are instrumental to the Teslin Tlingit in their ongoing discussions of personal and group identity.

Chapter five will focus on the work of Jennie Ross Cobb. Like the previous case study, I will start with a historiography of the images. However, in this case, it is important to address gender and social class. As an acculturated Cherokee woman at the turn of the twentieth century, Jennie Ross Cobb's image-making was informed by late Gilded-age sensibilities. Many of her photographs, taken at her home in an antebellum mansion, highlight the family's antique furnishings and reveal a fondness for luxurious, material goods associated with Euro-American values. Although her life is not representative of most Cherokee at the turn of the twentieth

century, Cobb's photographs give us a glimpse of class divisions within the Native community at the time. Later in life, Jennie Ross Cobb returned to her childhood home, now known as the George M. Murrell Home, as it was being transformed into a museum, and she became its first curator and on-site manager. This chapter will consider how Cobb constructed a public history with and through her images, and how subsequent curators (most of whom, her relatives) continued to use her photographs in much the same manner. I will also look at how the greater Cherokee Nation has incorporated her photographs into their cultural centers and historic sites. My intention is to examine the performances of memories as the images shift from personal mementos to public artifacts while addressing issues of how visual culture contributes to class consciousness as well as heritage politics.

The sixth and final chapter will conclude with a summary of the ultimate goals of this project, which are to explore indigenous ways of representing self and community, to analyze the performative qualities of vernacular imagery, and to examine the inscription of meanings and memories of Native-produced photography. With this study, I hope to bring attention to a group of understudied visual documents that offer insights into the tribal histories and everyday lives of American Indians and First Nations peoples.

Chapter 2

Native Participants in Photography

Formal presences in a photograph, they serve to remind me of who I was and therefore am.
- Louis Owens (Choctaw/Cherokee), "Their Shadows Before Them"

All too often scholars focus on the agenda of Western photographers and their roles in salvaging, staging, and showcasing traditional Native cultures. In this way, the Native subject simply becomes a helpless victim of the Western gaze. While I do not question the asymmetrical power relations and the often malicious or moralizing intent of early Euro-American photographers, I am more interested in the *participation* of Native North Americans in their photographic representations and what they hoped photography could do for them. As historian Martha Sandweiss points out, "if one goes back to some of the very earliest records of encounters between Euro-American photographers and Native American subjects, that is precisely what one finds—evidence that Indian subjects were fully capable of comprehending the possibilities of the photographic medium" (2001: 27). This chapter focuses on early Native American portraiture (1840-1940) and how, as subjects, Indians exercised a large degree of agency in their own representations. My intent in this chapter is to provide a historical context for indigenous photographic practices.

The discussion will begin by concentrating on portraits of rulers, activists, and intellectuals. Then I consider the portraits of Native sitters for Edward Curtis' *North American Indian* project. The chapter will conclude with an examination of the images of tribal laypeople—those indigenous groups who established rules regarding photography and *permitted* particular outsiders to photograph their lives. Most of the images in question are produced by professional photographers or by self-taught ethnographers and are located in archives

throughout the United States and Canada. Many of these photographs can also be found in tribal museums and Native homes. When available, I will incorporate the descendants' memories, meanings, and usages of their ancestor's portraits.

In 1843, a mere four years after the invention of the medium, a Hawaiian diplomat commissioned a photographic portrait of himself in order to commemorate an overseas mission to campaign for Hawaiian independence.[1] The resulting image is currently regarded as the oldest photograph of an indigenous person in what would eventually be the United States.[2] It came about because Timothy Kamalehua Ha'alilio (1808-1844), also known as Timoteo, was unable to find "a good portrait painter" in Paris and settled on having a daguerreotype made.[3] In his frontal portrait (Fig. 2.1), Timoteo sits with one hand on his abdomen and the other resting on a book in a convention often used by European scholars and statesmen.

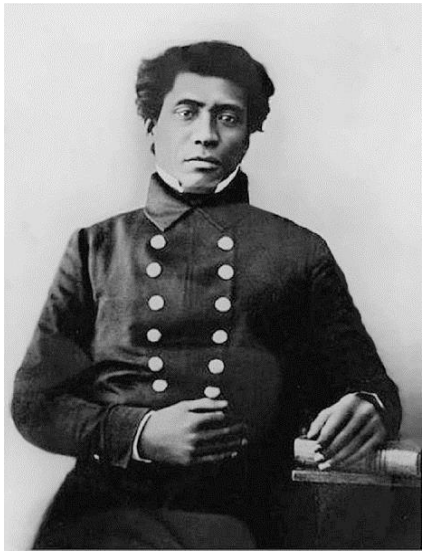


Fig. 2.1 Timothy Kamalehua Ha'alilio, 1843

[1]The year 1839 is generally regarded as the birth of photography since it was when the photographic process became public with dual announcements by Louis Daguerre (daguerreotype) and William Henry Fox Talbot (calotype). See Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography from 1839 to the Present,* 1982.

[2] Per Martha Sandweiss 2002: 208. Scholars have previously claimed that the photograph of The Reverend Peter Jones/Kahkewaquonaby (1845) was the oldest, and prior to that, the photograph of Keokuk (1847) held the title. As more photographs are uncovered in archives, undoubtedly this new claim will be overturned.

[3] According to the diary of William Richards, a special envoy who accompanied Timoteo to the U.S. and Europe, as cited in Lynn Davis, *Na Pa'I Ki'I: The Photographers in the Hawaiian Islands, 1845-1900*. (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1980) 16.

Glancing outward towards the viewer, Timoteo regards us with a confident, yet stiff pose. Of course his posture can be attributed to the state of technology at this time which "required exposures so long that subjects were compelled to adopt a fixed pose. That pose soon became standard, aided by a series of body clamps and head vices, which lent a certain apparent homogeneity to otherwise quite different subjects…their [Natives'] gestures and demeanor, were necessarily no different than those of most white sitters" (Bush and Mitchell 1994: xvi). In contrast to Euro-American subjects, early Native sitters were often placed against natural settings or backdrops that visually linked the figures to the natural environment and thus emphasized their indigeneity. But in this case, the (anonymous) photographer seems to have no interest in portraying an exotic "Other." As such, the photograph expresses more about the sitter's self-representation than the photographer's pre-conception about Native subjects. Most likely, the photograph was simply a souvenir of Timoteo's travels because "nothing about the picture suggests it was to be used for anything but the subject's own private purposes" (Sandweiss 2002: 208).

Perhaps one of the most striking aspects to Timoteo's portrait is his dark, button-down suit. It should be noted that he was not the first Hawaiian to adopt European-style clothing. Even before advent of photography, Native Hawaiians were appropriating European dress. As anthropologist Marshall Sahlins has pointed out, "by the early nineteenth century the putting-on of prominent European identities had become high fashion in Hawaii" (1987: 140). In fact, the Hawaiian Royal family used clothing in accordance with the Polynesian worldview regarding *mana* or spiritual energy.[4] "It took the form of ostentatious consumption of foreign luxury

[4] *Mana* has several different meanings including: divine power, sacred essence and spiritual force. Many prominent anthropologists have attempted to define the concept including Pitt-Rivers (1974), Hubert and Mauss (1899), Sahlins (1987), and Levi-Strauss (1987).

goods," according to Sahlins, "but then, *mana* had been traditionally associated with a style of celestial brilliance. Fine clothing was the main item" (ibid: 141). By circulating photographs of themselves in lavish attire (Figs. 2.2 & 2.3), the Royal family could display the sacred power of *mana* while simultaneously "augmenting their own people's recognition of their divinity" (Maxwell 1999: 196).



Fig. 2.2 House of Kamehameha, 1853



Fig. 2.3 Emma,
Queen Consort of Kamehameha IV
c. 1880

For the Hawaiian Royal family, photographs were not just a vehicle for the exhibition and preservation of spiritual power, but a powerful tool in the fight against colonial forces. Historian Anne Maxwell states that "in the period leading up to the annexation, the Hawai'ian royal family set out to appropriate European technologies and artistic practices for the purposes of resisting colonization. Specifically, they believed that the new art of portrait photography could help stave off the impending threat" (1999: 193). By cultivating an image in line with contemporary western society, the Royal family believed they could influence Western public opinion in their favor. They strived to be depicted as sophisticated, refined and civilized; not as poor, undeveloped "primitives" in grass skirts. This method of self-fashioning seemed to be

working with the British public who were surprised to see a stylish image of the young queen consort Emma upon her marriage to King Kamehameha IV, on display in London during the 1860s (ibid). Emma also impressed Queen Victoria and the British nobility by participating in the popular trend of exchanging *cartes-de-visite* or visiting cards. Although the photographic public relations campaign failed to maintain Hawaiian sovereignty, "these photographs were used so effectively to drum up support for Hawai'i's independence that they were still frustrating the US government well into the next century" (Maxwell 1999: 193).

Post-colonial theorist, Homi Bhabha provides a useful concept for understanding why these images were such a thorn in the side of the West. In his essay, *Of Mimicry and Man* (1994), Bhabha explains how mimicry is a particular form of behavior that involves copying the person or group in power in order to have access to that same power. In the case of portrait photography, it can be especially subversive. The very use and practice of photography disrupted the Western belief that indigenous people were "primitive" and incapable of partaking in Modern society.[5] Secondly, by presenting themselves in European dress and performing whiteness, Native people made it difficult for the colonizers to label them as "Others." Combined with the fact that technology allowed for images to be circulated (e.g. cartes-de-visite), and for their visual voices to be heard, the use of photographic portraiture by the colonized was indeed a powerful tool of resistance. As Bhabha states, "the success of colonial appropriation depends on a proliferation of inappropriate objects that ensure its [the colony's] strategic failure, so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace" (1994: 123). As we will see, there are other cases of Native North Americans using photography as a mode of representation and resistance.

[55] Given arguments such as Johannes Fabian's point in *Time and the Other* (1983) about the "coeval" lives of Europeans and those they would define as "primitive," it is important to capitalize "Modern" here so as to suggest that particular position at play, rather than a simple reference to existence in contemporary times.

Red Cloud

In the mainland United States, the Oglala Lakota Chief, Red Cloud (1822-1909), "embraced photographic portraits as an alternative means of voicing personal and tribal concerns. They helped to reaffirm his physical presence in a world that wanted to render him and his people invisible" (Goodyear 2003: 16). From 1868-1909, Red Cloud led his people (also known as the Sioux) through the long process from freedom to reservation life suggested by the transformations of dress and demeanor as illustrated in Figures 2.4 and 2.5. During his tenure, he fashioned himself as the tribal spokesman through the numerous photographic portraits for which he sat. According to Smithsonian curator Frank Goodyear, "Red Cloud posed before the camera some fifty times and appears in over one hundred photographs, rivaling the number taken of Abraham Lincoln" (2003: 213).



Fig. 2.4 Red Cloud, 1880

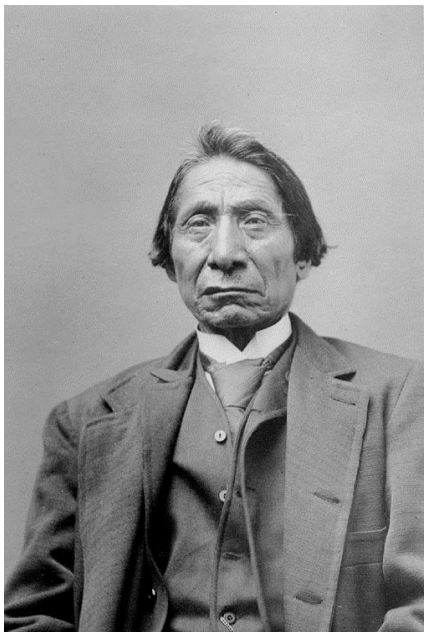


Fig. 2.5 Red Cloud, 1890

Due to the frequency with which he appeared in portraits, Red Cloud found the medium to be a useful propagandistic tool. Photography allowed him to create a public persona and

broadcast his right to power on a scale never before seen in tribal life. As Goodyear notes, because "political and social standing in Oglala society was determined more by public displays and performances than hereditary association, the ability to manifest authority was vital. Red Cloud's embrace of photography to do this work was entirely new in the context of Native American society" (2003: 6). Of course, Red Cloud did not need photography to *establish* his authority. Early in his life, he gained much acclaim and status among his people for leading successful armed attacks against the U.S. government.[6] During the 1870s, his exploits made news headlines: "The fame of Red Cloud, the Chief of the Sioux Nation, the most powerful band of savages on the American continent, is now world-wide.… His name has been heralded with electric speed, within a month to the remotest parts of the civilized world, and his position has made him in name, if not in reality, great."[7] Although he was well-known as a fearless warrior, as time went on, he was forced to settle into a quiet life on the reservation. Yet he continued to work tirelessly to negotiate treaties and fight for the fair treatment of his people. In order to stay relevant and in the public eye, he used photography to advocate for himself as the tribal diplomat for the Oglala community.

Red Cloud wished to be perceived as a preeminent statesman, and he knew exactly how to pose in order to project that ideal. In most his portraits, he has the same dignified, unsmiling countenance. As Frank Goodyear has remarked, "throughout his lifetime, he almost never smiled for the camera. Understanding portrait photography as a formal occasion, he was reluctant to share with the photographer anything other than his carefully composed statesman personality" (2003: 49). This is in line with what art historian, Richard Brilliant, found regarding portraiture: "most portraits exhibit a formal stillness, a heightened degree of self-composure that responds to

[6] For more information about these series of conflicts, also known as Red Cloud's War, see Larson 1999.
[7] *Omaha Weekly Herald* (June 1, 1870): 13.

the formality of the portrait-making situation.… Portraits of persons who occupy significant positions in the public eye—statesmen, intellectuals, creative artists, war heroes, and approved champions—usually bear the gravamen of their 'exemplary' public roles; they offer up images of serious men and women, worthy of respect, persons who should be taken equally seriously by the viewing audience" (1991: 10). In the case of Red Cloud, he consciously and deliberately presented a well-rehearsed identity to the public.

Unfortunately, Red Cloud's attempts at gravitas may have had the unintended effect of providing historians with more examples of what has been deemed the "stoic Indian" stereotype (Berkofer 1978; Stedman 1996; Wernitznig 2003). But is it possible to understand the sitter's intent without dismissing it as a visual cliché? It is, according to Choctaw historian Devon Mihesuah, but we must consider the context within which these images were taken. For her, "historic Indians are not painted or photographed smiling, and with good reason: often photographs were taken or portraits were drawn during a treaty-signing or after they had been captured" (Mihesuah 1996: 112). While I agree that the contemporary state of affairs may register on the indigenous sitter's face, I do not believe that an unsmiling expression is merely a reflection of current events. As Native writer and artist Gail Tremblay (Mi'kmaq/Onondaga) points out, "their expressions are sometimes sad, sometimes angry, and sometimes carefully composed in order to represent themselves and their people favorably as they travelled among strangers" (1993: 9). What Tremblay describes is a more calculated response to the picture-taking process—an awareness of the power of images and of the fashioning of self.

Zitkala-Sa

Like Red Cloud, the Yankton Sioux intellectual and activist Zitkala-Sa (a.k.a. Gertrude Simmons Bonnin, 1876-1938) had a "sophisticated understanding of the importance of self-

presentation in the age of celebrity, when photography and illustration were increasingly important in creating public figures' reputations" (Hutchinson 2000: 26). During the late 1890s while teaching at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, Zitkala-Sa decided to embark on a career as a musician and author (Hoefel 1999). In order to build her publicity portfolio, she traveled to New York City where she had several portraits made by studio photographer, Gertrude Käsebier (Figs. 2.6-2.8).

Käsebier was a talented photographer who trained under Alfred Stieglitz and was becoming a prominent photographer within the Pictorialist movement. In 1904, critic Sadakichi Hartmann praised her work as having "a delightful, old-masterish quality.… [She] knew how to lend her pictures the character of a Holbein, Rembrandt, or a Mary Cassatt, or in other words, the true painter-like qualities, as far as conception and composition go" (Hartmann 1991: 160). Thus, Zitkala-sa presumably "trusted Käsebier's ability to help with the process of creating a successful photographic self-presentation" because, as Elizabeth Hutchinson argues, "why else would she have journeyed from her home in central Pennsylvania to see an expensive *artistic* portrait photographer rather than working with someone closer to home?" (2000: 26, emphasis in original).


Fig. 2.6 Zitkala-Sa, 1895


Fig. 2.7 Zitkala-Sa, 1895


Fig. 2.8 Zitkala-Sa, 1895

Of the nine photographs produced during that studio sitting in 1898, Zitkala-Sa wears Western clothing or Plains-style dress and uses three different props: a book, a basket, and a violin. In the some of the images, Zitkala-sa appears cool and reserved, while in other portraits, she seems almost coquettish and charming. Even in photos that emphasize her "Indianness" (such as figure 2.6), Zitkala-sa is poised and dignified, transforming a simple stereotype—the Indian staring off into the distance using a hand as a sun visor—into a graceful pose. Gertrude Käsebier may have seen in Zitkala-sa a turn-of-the-century "New Woman" like herself, an intelligent and independent woman who was seeking professional success as well. Since, as Barbara Michaels suggests, "Käsebier's portraits of Zitkala-sa—like the portraits she was to take of other talented women—were governed by her knowledge of her subject's abilities, personality and background" (Michaels 1992: 44). Indeed, her skills as a photographer garnered continued praise from contemporary critics who recognized Edward Curtis as "*the* photographer of Indians, and will live as such," but who stated that Käsebier's Indian portraits were "way ahead artistically" (ibid: 38, emphasis in original).

Käsebier photographed other Native figures including the cast of the Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show—coincidently during the same year as photographing Zitkala-sa, but unlike Curtis who often provided outfits for his sitters, the clothing and props used in Zitkala-sa's portraits do not appear in any other images by Käsebier (Delaney 2007). So most likely, the sitter furnished her own outfits for the portrait session—ones that correspond to the multiple identities that she is projecting: Indian, musician, author, and activist. Evidently, she recognized that she could manipulate opinions by altering her public persona. For example, we know that Zitkala-Sa ("Red Bird") used her Yankton Sioux name for her creative work as a musician and author, but her English name, Gertrude Simmons Bonnin in legal affairs and in her correspondence with the

Bureau of Indian Affairs. Cognizant of her liminal position in society, Zitkala-sa's self-presentation is "clearly identifying the two worlds in which this woman lived and worked" (Smithsonian 2012).

Through her photographs and public appearances, Zitkala-sa provided a public presence for American Indians who were commonly believed to be disappearing. "Through such visual statements as formal studio photographs, made for publicity and to give or sell to supporters, and the careful selection of what to wear when appearing on stage," Zitkala-sa, like other Native activists such as Charles Eastman and Francis LaFlesche, "used their bodies, as well as their words, to contest the stereotypical image of 'vanishing' Indians" (Hutchinson 2000: 26). Indeed, shortly before having her photographs taken in Kasebier's studio, Zitkala-Sa participated in a speech contest and discussed the precipitous decline of American Indians in society:

> To-day the Indian is pressed almost to the farther sea. Does that sea symbolize his death? Does the narrow territory still left to him typify the last brief day before his place on Earth 'shall know him no more forever?' Shall might make right and the fittest alone survive? ... [God] look with compassion down, and with thine almighty power move this nation to the rescue of my race (1896/2005: xvi).

Throughout her life, Zitkala-sa advocated for Indian adaptation but *not* assimilation. She increased majority awareness of Native issues by translating traditional stories into English, writing autobiographical narratives, and lobbying for Native rights. By appearing in the public eye as a successful figure with diverse ambitions, she could serve as a role model for the opportunities available to American Indian society. Furthermore, "in an age of celebrity, when photography and illustration were increasingly important in creating public figures' reputations," Zitkala-sa "created self-consciously designed images meant to establish a new visual model of Indian identity that was modern, cultivated, and morally upright" (Hutchinson 2000: 26).

Princess Sarah

Several years before Zitkala-Sa promoted herself as a "civilized" Indian, Sarah Winnemucca (1844-1891), a Native American activist and daughter of a Northern Paiute chief, fostered her image using photography. Over her lifetime, she gave over 300 speeches defending Paiute rights, wrote an autobiography discussing the plight of her people, and met with U.S. President Rutherford B. Hayes to protest reservation life. Given the birth name Thocmentony ("Shell Flower"), she used her English married name, Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, in publications and correspondence, but she was commonly known as "Princess Sarah." She further encouraged the princess identification by appearing in costumes of her own making. According to Smithsonian anthropologist Joanna Cohan Scherer, "she joined herself to a stereotype that on one hand would make her acceptable to Euro-American mentality, but on the other hand tied her to the 19th century notion of 'Indian Princess'" (1988: 178).

From 1879-1884, Sarah Winnemucca had at least nine different photographic portraits made, and in all but three, she is wearing elaborate costumes of non-traditional materials (figures 2.9-2.10). Her "Indian" outfits, which she also wore on the lecture circuit, consisted of short-sleeved fringed dresses, leggings, and moccasins. Although the Northern Paiute did wear fringed skirts of either grass or buckskin, Sarah Winnemucca's garments were composed of cotton and embellished with sequins or tassels "some of which are ready-made fringes used on lampshades, curtains, and chairs" (Scherer 1988: 180). While it was common for indigenous groups (worldwide) to incorporate Western goods such as glass beads and metal buttons into their garments, Winnemucca seems to have created entire outfits and accessories from manufactured merchandise and mass-produced items. For example, her bag was adorned with a beaded cupid figure, and she often wore a felt scarlet crown decorated with stars. As a whole, these costumes

make use of stereotypical iconography (e.g. fringed buckskin and a crown) familiar to Euro-Americans that would signify her as an Indian princess.



Fig. 2.9 Sarah Winnemucca, 1883



Fig. 2.10 Sarah Winnemucca, 1883

Winnemucca's portraits best illustrate what Philip Deloria calls "Playing Indian," that is, dressing up to assume an Indian identity (1998). However, the Indian identity that she is performing never actually existed. The Indian Princess is an invented character, one formulated by Euro-American society from the tales of Native heroines such as Pocahontas and Sacagawea (Green 1974). Winnemucca's willingness to participate in the myth of the Indian Princess would seem to be counter-intuitive to her efforts as an Indian activist. As Linda Bolton notes, "for her critics, this image resonates with her acquiescence and complicity. This is the pose that has been read to signal Sarah Winnemucca's willing participation in the degradation of the Indian" (Bolton 2010: 159). Yet Winnemucca's situation was much more problematic than just providing the "correct" image for her people. It was, to use Guy Debord's phrase, "a society of the spectacle," where social relations are mediated through imagery, and where "everything that was directly lived has moved to a representation" (1994: 7). Indeed, while Winnemucca's

performance of self as an Indian princess captivated Euro-Americans, we must remember "the fact that native people turned to playing Indian—miming Indianness back at Americans in order to redefine it—indicates how little cultural capital Indian people possessed at the time" (Deloria 1998: 125).

It seems that Sarah Winnemucca was using that little bit of cultural capital to her advantage. By "playing Indian" and using iconography recognizable to her audience, she used a well-established publicity ploy—an appeal to authority. Her costume provided her with an instant level of credibility, and she "would have known from the stereotype that the 'princess' image gave Indian women a favorable status, associated with royalty, which would facilitate their reception as citizens in Euro-American society" (Scherer 1988: 188). In catering to popular cultural imaginings, Winnemucca was afforded some amount of respect and esteem that she would not have had otherwise, considering the relative status of woman and Indians vis-à-vis the Euro-American majority during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

It is curious then, that Sarah Winnemucca did not wear her costume when she appeared as a tribal delegate to meet with President Hayes in 1880 (Fig. 2.11).



Fig 2.11 Paiute Delegation, 1880

Authorized by the commissioner of Indian affairs, the official delegation photograph features Sarah and her brother, Natchez, standing on either side of their father, while another Paiute leader, Captain Jim, is seated with an unidentified non-Native boy standing to his left. All of the men wear suits reportedly provided to them by the government (Richey 1975). In response to the men's contemporary American fashions, Sarah probably chose to wear a dress that would complement their attire. She wears the current style of the day, which was a high-necked blouse with a fitted jacket over a long, bustled skirt. In this case, it is not her Euro-American style that is remarkable, but the fact that she even appears in a delegation photograph at all. As Scherer notes, "few Indian women appear in formal delegation photographs, and her inclusion underscores her important status in her family and her position as a spokesperson for her tribe" (1988: 184).

Although the picture was not made at the request of Sarah Winnemucca, she most likely received a copy. At the very beginnings of delegation photography in the 1850s, Secretary of the Smithsonian Joseph Henry wrote that "nothing would be more agreeable to the Indians themselves who might be furnished with a copy" (Viola 1995: 180). Thereafter the practice of providing photographs to Native diplomats became a commonplace occurrence, as in 1880, after the Paiute delegation sat for the portrait, when the Commissioner of Indian Affairs placed an order for six 8x10 duplicates of the "group, Winnemucca and others" (ibid: 187). In a particularly noteworthy episode regarding this same genre, Chief Red Cloud, who was a frequent visitor to the capital, asked the Commissioner to reciprocate by sending additional photographs of two government employees, including "the one with black hair and goatee or small whiskers who occupied a desk near yours. I shall be very glad to get their pictures as they are friends of mine" (ibid).

Although Native delegates were usually high-ranking members of their tribes, group photographs are frequently misidentified due to incorrect captions or subjects who wore regalia inappropriate to their tribal identities. Oftentimes it was the photographer who insisted that the Native sitters wear traditional indigenous clothing such as headdresses, breastplates, and leggings, regardless of whether or not such accoutrements were relevant to the sitter's specific tribe (Scherer 1975; Blackman 1980). For example, Alexander Gardner, the famous Civil War photographer, worked as a delegation photographer for the Office of Indian Affairs from approximately 1860 to 1880, and had a collection of Indian outfits in his studio. According to Josephine Cobb, a specialist in Civil War iconography at the National Archives, Gardner's wife "had the unhappy task of assisting her husband in the posing of the Indians and outfitting them in feathers and beads and tribal garments from a 'smelly collection' of native costumes maintained by the Gallery. For they often came to Washington dressed in odds and ends of white man's clothing rather than in their traditional dress" (1958: 134).

Costuming American Indians was a common occurrence, and Gardner was by no means the only studio photographer to resort to such practices. Scholars have found examples of costuming in photographs by William Soule, John K. Hillers, DeLancey Gill, Christian Barthlemess and Major Moorhouse—just to name a few (Scherer 1975; Blackman 1980; Fleming and Luskey; Sandweiss 2002). Yet, it would be erroneous to assume that Native sitters had no say in their appearance. As we have already seen, Zitkala-Sa, Sarah Winnemucca, and the Hawaiian royal family fashioned themselves in front of the lens. Furthermore, as Smithsonian curator Rayna Green (Cherokee) notes, "the truth is that Indian people have been trading with each other for centuries before the Europeans came. … thus, it was perfectly feasible that people might be wearing items that weren't particularly from their tribe" (1992: 155). However, there is

a caveat. Green considers that "in these paintings and photographs, so much of what one sees is not even an accurate representation of what a group might have been trading. … Only after much research can we look at some of these images and reconstruct who these persons were and what their history was" (ibid). Her point is exemplified with a photographic portrait of Native American elder, *Meshekigishig* or *Sky Striking the Earth* (Fig. 2.12) taken in 1896 by the Bureau of American Ethnology. In this image, the Chippewa delegate sits posed in a three-quarter view with a feather duster tucked firmly in his headband. [8]



Fig. 2.12 Meshekigshig (Sky Striking the Earth), 1896

Many viewers might assume that the photographer insisted on this prop to make the sitter appear more "Indian." However, Joanna Cohan Scherer challenges this assumption, stating that the sitter most likely wanted to wear the feather duster in order to be depicted as a warrior—since the Chippewa traditionally wore upright feathers, "to show that a man had met an enemy."[9] If

[8] This figure is also known as *Mezhukigizhik* or *Sky Touching the Ground* per the Smithsonian Collections Catalog.
[9] According to Joanna Scherer, the upstanding feathers of the feather duster imitated Chippewa warrior bonnets (1975: 67).

this is the case, then it is a demonstration of resistance and self-expression by an Indian delegate in the nation's capital—despite the apparent irony of the man's choice of prop.

In reading historical photographs of American Indians, many scholars only consider the goals and biases of the photographer who has created the image, without discussion of the sitter's intent. As art historian Victoria Wyatt argues, "little attention has been paid to the input of subjects themselves. The implicit assumption has often seemed to be that the photographer controlled the entire choreography, arranging the Native subjects in much the same way as inanimate props" (1989: 170). I contend that many of these assumptions can be traced back to Christopher Lyman and his influential text that accompanied the Smithsonian travelling exhibition: *The Vanishing Race and Other Illusions: Photographs of Indians by Edward S. Curtis* (1982). Lyman is responsible for the first study that was critical of Curtis's photographs after they were re-discovered in Chicago basement in 1972 and brought back into the public sphere.

By way of introduction, Edward Sheriff Curtis (1868-1952) is credited with creating the "vanishing race" trope with his romanticized, sepia-toned images of American Indians. His mammoth undertaking, conducted over the course of thirty years (1906-1930) to record "the old time Indian, his dress, his ceremonies, his life and manners," resulted in a twenty-volume illustrated text with 1500 bound photographs, 700 additional loose portfolio plates, and a foreword by President Theodore Roosevelt.[10] Curtis wanted to recapture what he conceived to be the "authentic" Indian; that is, as Indians lived before the arrival of Europeans. To do so, he carefully removed all evidence of "modernity" by cropping, retouching, costuming and

[10] Given Roosevelt's image as a consummate outdoorsman and other circumstances of the time (i.e. the idealization of American Indians within the Boy Scouts/Campfire Girls groups), it was apposite for the President to write the foreword to Curtis's text. See: "Edward S. Curtis's The North American Indian" Library of Congress, American Memory website. Accessed August 1, 2012. http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award98/ienhtml/curthome.html

employing lighting tricks that provided a "hazy" pictorialist composition to the scenes. The first image of his *North American Indians* project, titled *The Vanishing Race-Navajo* (Fig. 2.13), is commonly considered to be a thinly-veiled metaphor for Manifest Destiny with its Native riders moving through a dark landscape towards a ray of light in the distance. For Sandweiss, "[by] titling his signature image, *The Vanishing Race*, Curtis simultaneously proclaimed the fate of the American Indian and asserted the heroism of his own photographic salvage project" (2002: 219).



Fig. 2.13 The Vanishing Race – Navajo, 1904

Like most images in his greater project, Curtis altered this photograph to heighten the drama and develop a more melancholic mood. In this case, he achieved it by scratching into the plate with a stylus and using a retouching pencil to add theatrical highlights and to enhance the much of the existing landscape. By outlining the figures and providing more definition (especially to the branches in the right corner), he stressed "the pictorial effect above ethnographic documentation" (Lyman 1982: 80). Of course, photographic manipulation and alterations have been in effect since the invention of the medium, but Curtis touted his *North American Indian* project as being "scientifically accurate" and "affording unquestionable

authenticity" (as cited in Gidley 1998: 44). Still, like his contemporaries, he costumed his subjects to the extent that the same buckskin shirt can be found in at least five different portraits of men from different tribal communities.[11] Despite taking artistic license on his work, he continues to garner praise all these years later for his "ethnographic" photographs which have been a *major* influence on the images of American Indians. According to Lyman, "their ethnographic significance is frequently and uncritically reiterated, along with legitimately glowing accounts of their artistic value" (1982: 148).

In an attempt to challenge the ethnographic veracity of Edward Curtis's work, Christopher Lyman brought to light what is now one of Curtis's most famous instances of retouching. In the image titled, *In a Piegan Lodge* (1910), a clock between the two men has been retouched out of existence in the final published shot (Figs. 2.14-15).



Fig. 2.14 *In a Piegan Lodge*, before retouching

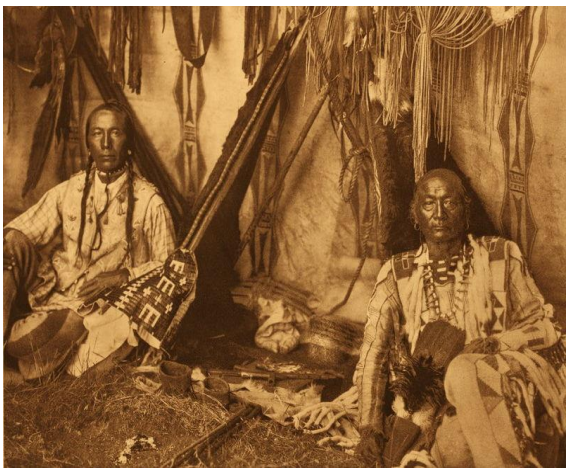


Fig. 2.15 *In a Piegan Lodge*, after retouching

Undoubtedly, Curtis's intent was to produce an image of "authentic" Native Americans who were untouched by Western influence. But in constructing this view of the ethnographic present, he pandered to the popular taste for exotic Others. As Lyman states, "the composite image of

[11]See figure 18 for one example of this shirt. The other examples may be found in Makepeace (2001) and Lyman (1982).

'the Indian' that Curtis bequeathed to us was a product of his consciousness and was designed to appeal to the consciousness of his audience.... Ironically, popular allusions about 'Indianness' were so ingrained that had Curtis's images been more accurate, his audience would most likely have thought them to be lying" (1982: 6, 83). Indeed, we must read these images as a product of a particular time and place, and based on an understanding of the contemporary culture of the picture maker. But what of the people depicted? What do they have to gain from partaking in this representational fakery? As Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor asks, "Why would native people pose to create a portrait simulation, a pictorialist image not their own, for photographic adventurists who later nominate their pictures as the real, and the ethnographic documents of a vanishing race?" (Vizenor 2000).

Apparently the Native subjects were not always so willing to participate in picturing "every phase of Indian life" including "their handicraft, games, ceremonies, etc." (Gidley 1998: 44). For example, the Native participants of the Yeibichai prayer refused to wear their ritual masks in public to stage the Nightway ceremony for Curtis's lens (Lyman 1982: 66-67). Instead, they insisted that he make the masks and related costuming for them so that the regalia would not have religious significance. This only seems fair, since Curtis hoped to photograph a winter ceremony in the middle of spring (Faris 1996: 108). Furthermore, the Navajo participants surreptitiously secularized the ritual dance by performing it in reverse. They quite clumsily (but ingeniously) danced it backwards "and kept bumping into each other" while they held their rattles in the opposite hands—a point made later by Yeibichai dancers who viewed the photos and related film reel in the 1980s (Lyman 1982: 69). This trickery amounted to a form of passive-aggressive behavior, or the types of "symbolic compliance" and "hidden transcripts of resistance" as expressed by historian James Scott (1985). Indeed, Curtis was probably unaware

of the deception. As Erin Younger (Hopi) notes, "these photographs are of interest in our times not only because they provide a visual record of certain individuals, but because they contain bits of information about the relationship between photographer and subject" (Masayesva and Younger 1983: 19).

With both contemporary and current Native American communities aware of the fictions presented in Curtis's images, "why," Gerald Vizenor (Ojibwe) asks, "several generations later, would natives embrace these romantic pictures as real moments of their own cultural memories?" (2000). Perhaps it is because Curtis's images are largely frontal portraits that provide detailed, close-up views of ancestors (Figures 2.16-19). As author George P. Horse Capture (Lakota/Gros Ventre) explains, "Indians are extremely grateful to see what their ancestors look like or what they did and we know they are no stereotypes. No one staged the people. And we see them at their classic finest" (1993: ix). And he would know, because his great-grandfather sat for Edward Curtis in 1909 (Fig. 2.16). "So that's what you look like," he writes with poignancy, for "we have legends regarding of many of these great men, but we have never actually seen them" (ibid). Curtis's images have been reclaimed by family members, and he photographed so many people that it is not uncommon for a tribal members to be related to a Curtis subject, or to know someone who was. Native American author, Louis Owens (Choctaw/Cherokee) claims that "two of my friend's aunts were also photographed by Curtis; her grandfather and another aunt can be found in a Smithsonian book. Today, the family proudly peruses and displays these photographs" (2003: 192). For many Native people, Curtis's photographs constitute some of their earliest, and perhaps only, family pictures of relatives (Kavanagh 1996).



Fig. 2.16 Horse Capture, 1909



Fig 2.17 A Tewa Girl, 1922



Fig 2.18 Hollow Horn Bear, 1908

Yet the photographs by Edward Curtis do more for American Indians than just serve as visual confirmation of family. His photographs have helped shape a collective imagination as a Native nation. Historian and author Vine Deloria Jr. (Hunkpapa Lakota) considers that "drawn increasingly together as an ethnic group and away from their traditions as distinct communities with sometimes malevolent feelings towards other tribes, Indians saw in the Curtis pictures an opportunity to universalize the nobility and wisdom suggested there and claim it as a natural, sometimes genetic, Indian trait" (1982: 12). This sentiment is echoed by Rayna Green (Cherokee) who claims, "there isn't an Indian house that I have ever gone to that doesn't have an Edward S. Curtis photograph on the wall. Curtis gave us a memory of our ancestors.… These in many ways became part of the collective Indian memory. Not even tribally specific—we all love them because we, too, want to remember when we were glorious and noble" (1992: 155). Finally, George Horse Capture notes that "the only photograph hanging in our tribal council chambers is of a tribal member taken by E.S. Curtis. Another likeness from the same source adorns a community park. These images are of our people and they are close to us."[12]

[12] As cited in Makepeace 2001: 201. This use of imagery for cultural revitalization in public spaces can be likened to the performances of powwows within Native communities.

Native communities are taking in Curtis's images and claiming them as their own. Originally intended to memorialize what was deemed a "vanishing race," the images now function to show indigenous pride and presence in the world linking the people to each other and to their pasts. By curating and controlling the pictures, indigenous communities are staking claim to their identities and advancing their own histories and narratives. For example, anthropologist James Clifford came into contact with a Curtis image at the Kwagiulth Museum in British Columbia and expected it to have a generic caption like the one presented here of "A Tewa Girl" (Fig. 2.17). Instead, the image was re-captioned by the tribe, and the subject of the photograph was identified by name. Clifford wrote that "holding the Curtis portrait in Cape Mudge Village, I realize that it represents an individual, named ancestor" (1997: 127-129). What he was holding was not an original Curtis print, but a postcard for sale in the Kwagiulth Museum gift shop.

Selling the Shadow

The act of receiving monetary compensation for an image or a "modeling fee" is a long-standing practice in the art world. Edward Curtis's first Native model (1895), Princess Angeline, the oldest surviving daughter of Chief Seattle, was paid for her time by the photographer. "I paid the Princess a dollar for each picture made," Curtis stated, and "this seemed to please her greatly and with hands and (Chinook) jargon she indicated that she preferred to spend her time having pictures made than in digging clams" (Gidley 1998: 88). Curtis's gesture was significant with regard to his reciprocity, as was the woman's entrepreneurial act. Furthermore, considering the purchasing power of the dollar in 1895, this rather significant amount would have been difficult for the impoverished elder to refuse. Yet there are cases where American Indian people have declined substantial amounts of money for their photographic image. For instance, the Northern

Paiute Ghost Dance prophet, Wovoka, "turned down an offer of five dollars for his picture"—not necessarily because the price was too low, but due to the Federal prohibitions against the Ghost Dance movement and his involvement therein (Jacknis 1990: 189).

Obviously, images of famous figures were more in demand, so the subjects could dictate their price. In 1915, a contemporary journalist seemed astonished to find that the Apache leader, Geronimo had his own sliding scale of fees, whereas a portrait made with an ordinary hand camera cost ten cents, using a tripod increased the price to twenty-five cents, and, "if he were ushered into a studio, as far as he was concerned, 'the sky was the limit'."[13] Geronimo charged all types of photographers from casual to professional. In dealing with government delegation photographer De Lancey Gill, Geronimo charged a $2 fee (and demanded an additional quarter, claiming that he was not given the full amount), and thereby enjoyed "the distinction of being the only Indian who made Mr. Gill pay him for posing."[14]

Notable figures often profited from their celebrity status and supplemented their income with the sale of photographs. As Joanna Scherer explained, "charging a fee for a photographer to make one's image or selling one's photograph was a long and honorable tradition among both Euro-American and Indian celebrities" (Scherer 2006: 121). For instance, the African-American civil rights activist, Sojourner Truth, sold copies of her image to finance her travels and speaking engagements (Fig. 2.19). Reportedly, her favorite image was captioned: "I Sell the Shadow to Support the Substance" (Painter 1996: 189). In a similar fashion, Sarah Winnemucca, while on the lecture circuit, charged 50 cents for an autographed carte-de-visite (Scherer 1988: 192). Although public speaking engagements were a popular venue to sell one's photograph,

[13] "Shooting Indians with a Camera," *Detroit Free Press*, August 22, 1915: E5.
[14] Ibid.

commercially-savvy indigenous celebrities marketed themselves at locations with far more foot traffic, such as World Fairs and Wild West shows.



Fig. 2.19 Sojourner Truth, 1864



Fig. 2.20 Sitting Bull, 1884

Some Native individuals, including Geronimo and Sitting Bull, actively sought out photo opportunities to profit from the sale of their image. According to his autobiography, Geronimo promoted himself at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904, reporting that "I sold my photographs for twenty-five cents … I also wrote my name for ten, fifteen, or twenty-five cents … I often made as much as two dollars a day, and when I returned I had plenty of money—more than I had ever owned before" (Geronimo 1915: 197). Despite the fact that selling pictures was a commercially successful venture for these Native celebrities, we must remember that the circumstances surrounding their celebrity status—that they were considered an exotic, vanishing, and conquered peoples—marked their daily lives, and that they were living under increasingly oppressive conditions. However, my point is that they made the best of their situation by recognizing the demand and engaged in image-market practices for their own benefit.

For example, not to be taken advantage of by Buffalo Bill and his Wild West Show, Sitting Bull, the famous Hunkpapa Sioux Chief, negotiated a contract that allowed him exclusive rights to sell his image. According to anthropologist Markus Linder, Sitting Bull set up an arrangement with a St. Paul studio to serve as the sole photographer and distributer of his portrait (2005: 10). In an effort to maintain copyright, Sitting Bull "scrupulously refused to let anyone else make any sort of picture of him," an act which foreshadows indigenous image-rights and visual agency (ibid). "He was a good businessman who knew how to earn money by selling his photographs and by autographing almost everything people would buy" writes Linder (ibid: 2). Indeed, most of his pictures in circulation are autographed with his scrawling signature at the bottom (Fig. 2.20). So successful was he in his endeavor, that at one point, he ran out of photographs to sell and had to enter a studio in Montreal to replenish his supply (ibid: 10).

Native Regulation of Photography

The sale and control of photographs is not limited to Native individuals—for entire tribal communities have collectively controlled and restricted photography. The most prominent example is the Hopi. "As the tourist industry began to boom," author Erin Younger notes, "Hopis charged photographers one dollar to bring cameras on the reservation. Additional payment was often either offered or requested" (Masayesva and Younger 1983:20). Payment did not exclusively take the form of cash. For example, in one case, visitors tried to snap pictures of Hopi women who were building a wall, but "each of [the] twenty-three women requested a new dress before allowing photographers to take their picture."[15] The Hopi, like other Native

[15] Masayesva and Younger 1983: 20. While there is early anecdotal evidence of Native peoples demanding payment for their images, it is difficult to determine whether or not women and children received the same amount as male tribal members.

communities, became skilled at bartering with photographers. They recognized that visitors often traveled great distances to see them, and to ensure their cooperation in the image-making process, they required some form of compensation. According to Nigel Holeman, the former director of the Zuni *A:shiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage Center*, "Zuni people began to see photography as a form of economic exchange … community members actively controlled rather than passively endured an encounter with a photographer. … many Zuni people saw photography as an opportunity to profit financially" (1996:101-102). What he is describing is a transactional relationship, one in which both parties exercise free will and recognize the terms of the arrangement. However, this relationship would be tested by the technological improvements that brought vast numbers of new photographers to the tribal communities.

In 1880, George Eastman revolutionized photography with the invention of dry plates thereby eliminating the need for on-site developing equipment. Shortly thereafter in 1888, he mass-produced a simple hand-held camera with the slogan, 'You Press the Button, We Do the Rest.' Before long, "Kodak's inventions had put fifty thousand photographers on the scene almost overnight and photography was no longer the domain of the professional" (Richardson and Fleming1993:12). Amateur photography clubs quickly formed, and their members would often take field trips to go "Kodaking." For instance, Pasadena, California, became a hub for amateur photographers—especially those interested in the American West. The Pasadena Camera Club comprised some of the most prolific photographers of the Southwest tribes including George Wharton James, Adam Clark Vroman, and Charles Fletcher Lummis of the famous "Pasadena Eight."[16] Together, they would partake in outings to photograph the regional

[16] "The Pasadena Eight" included: George Wharton James, Adam Clark Vroman, Charles Fletcher Lummis, Frederick Monsen, Carl Moon, C.J. Crandall, Horatio Rust, and Grace Nicholson, per Mitchell (1981): 140.

Native communities, and over the course of forty years (1890-1930), they collectively took tens of thousands of photographs.

Witnessing and recording indigenous rituals was perhaps the most popular attraction for amateur photographers. In particular, the Hopi Snake Dance, with its handling of poisonous snakes, was a magnet for both Native and non-Native visitors. Held biannually over the course sixteen days in August, the Snake Dance culminated in a performative prayer for rain in which priests danced with live snakes in their mouths. "From the 1890s on, the Snake Dance was the most frequently described and photographed Indian ceremony in the Southwest" (Eldredge et al 1986: 89). Through the images and reports of amateur photographers, it is possible to see the impact that photography had on this ritual. For example, in 1895, Adam Clark Vroman attended his first Snake Dance and reported that there were approximately forty tourists in attendance (Graves 1998: 148). Just two years later, he counted over 200 visitors to the Snake Dance. The popularity of the event is clearly illustrated in the image by "Pasadena Eight" photographer, Ben Wittick (Fig. 2.21). In his photograph from 1897, a large group of Euro-American onlookers is mixed with local tribal members who surround the event space. Within the lower left side of image, it is possible to see one of the many photographers who has set up a tripod to capture the action.

However, George "Ben" Wittick is mentioned as part of the Eight by Bush and Mitchell (1994) and by Goodman (2002) so I will include him here as such.



Fig. 2.21 Snake Dance at Hualpi, Moqui Indian Village, Arizona, Aug. 21, 1897

Policing photographers became increasingly more difficult as the crowds swelled. In the hot desert heat, visitors would sometimes become unruly and disruptive. While attending the Snake Dance in 1902, journalist and photographer George Wharton James complained that visiting photographers aggressively angled for a good shot, "kicking down another fellow's tripod and sticking his elbow in the next fellow's lens" (1902: 7-8).

Irritated with the disruptions, indigenous community members reacted against the presence of photographers. At the Hopi village of Santo Domingo Pueblo, the (often physical) responses to photography are well documented. In 1913, the *Santa Fe New Mexican* newspaper reported that the Hopi "cast showers of pebbles at Kodak fiends" who were trying to photograph the Corn Dance.[17] Five years later, the same newspaper ran a headline stating: "Photographs Prohibited and Cameras Busted by Indian Guards."[18] In 1926, a visitor to the Happiness Dance at Santo Domingo testified that "there were two busloads on the tour, and as they drew up to the pueblo, full half the men grabbed their cameras, jumped off the bus, and started snapping away at the dancing Indians. Without a sound, Indians poured out of every doorway, all carrying clubs … there was a general smashing of camera" (as cited in Lippard 1992: 29). The English novelist

[17] *Santa Fe New Mexican*, August 5, 1913.
[18] *Santa Fe New Mexican*, August 3, 1918.

D.H. Lawrence, who lived in New Mexico during the 1920s, stated to a biographer that "several kodaks were broken" by frustrated tribal members at one of his visits to Hotevilla Pueblo (Brett 1933: 60).

Permitting photography and controlling spectators was different for each tribal community. For example, "decisions about whether photography would be permitted during a religious activity generally devolved to those responsible for that particular activity rather than those holding positions of communitywide responsibility" (Holeman 1996: 102). *Koshare* (sacred clowns) almost "started a riot" in 1921 when they found a man with a camera, and it was only a matter of time before photography by outsiders was prohibited by many Native communities.[19]

Archeologist Luke Lyon notes that "outright prohibition was the reaction of 21 tribal groups to photography … but the dates of the initial prohibition very" (1988: 246). Taos and Sandia Pueblos banned photography of ceremonies in 1920, Isleta in 1889, and the three communities of San Felipe, Santa Ana, and Zia all banned photography as early as the 1850s (ibid: 239-243). However, these prohibitions were not solely due to the invasiveness of the photographers. Lyon states that there are several reasons to ban photography, "ceremonies were sacred and photography was considered to be interference; a source of loss of ritual power and an act of disrespect. … Indians resented the commercial exploitation of their religion through sale of photographs; and in the 1920s, photographs of their ceremonies might have been used against them as documents by people who objected to the practice of Indian religions" (ibid: 256). The U.S. Office of Indian Affairs helped enforce this ban on photography, but for its own reasons because "photographing ceremonies provided unwanted encouragement for the Indian to retain

[19] Per an article in the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, August 6, 1921.

Native customs and discouraged the assimilation of white ways" (Longo 1980: 12). Not all government Indian agents agreed with the ban, and Agent Leo Crane calling it "foolish," for he thought that continuing to charge a fee for photography was preferential for all parties involved (as cited in Padget 2006: 192). Crane argued that "nearly everyone was happy when he could bang away a roll of films for the family album and for a fee of one dollar. [But now] the tourist loses his chance to vie with Edward Curtis, and the Indians lose their feast money" (ibid).

These measures did not stop expatriate photographers from attempting to snap pictures of village inhabitants. In a 1924 article titled, "Kodaking the Indians," an unnamed Native woman describes her attitude toward outsider photographers as thus:

> A tourist passing through hops out of his machine with his Kodak and says, "Hey, you, line up! I want to get your picture!" Then he chooses a setting and attempts to back us up against it. I wonder how kindly the white people in Los Angeles or San Francisco would take to the idea of our appearing on their streets with a Kodak and demanding that they line up for their pictures. It seems they overlook the fact entirely that we, too, are human beings (Ring 1924: 74).

In spite of a warranted animosity towards visiting photographers, many indigenous people tolerated the intrusions. "Although Hopis were sensitive to intrusions by photographers," Erin Younger states, "they were also interested in the art of the camera. From the start, they readily accepted duplicated prints and often hung these images on the wall of their homes" (Masayesva and Younger 1983: 20). In at least one instance, a Native individual demanded that her photograph be taken. George Wharton James claimed that, while taking a Navajo man's photograph, the wife, who "ruled the roost" insisted that "I make a 'sun picture' of her own" (1903: 229). Of course, this request could be attributed to the fact that James, like the rest of the "Pasadena Eight," made several trips to the Southwest, and local people were undoubtedly

familiar with him. In the case of Adam Clark Vroman, "the Indian became his friends. He never forgot to bring them the promised prints, and they looked forward to his return year after year" (Mahood 1961: 90). Some of his fellow photographers, such as Ben Wittick and Sumner Matteson, were even formally invited into restricted areas to observe ceremonies. As George Horse Capture notes, "Sumner Matteson seems to have had a rare ability to gain the confidence and trust of a people in a very short time. … At any rate, he was allowed to enter and photograph ceremonies and events that were previously forbidden to outsiders. His photographs of the Bear Dance and the Sun Dance are examples of this acceptance" (1977: 70). Photographer Ben Wittick apparently felt so comfortable with Hopi that he attempted, against warnings, to assist in their Snake Dance preparations. A Hopi priest cautioned, "You have not been initiated. Death shall come to you from the fangs of our little brothers" (as cited in Broder 1990: 36). Indeed, Ben Wittick lost his life when he was bitten by a rattlesnake that he collected for the ritual. Since he did not listen or respect what he was being told, he therefore, got his comeuppance.

Photographing Friends & Neighbors

Many photographers were itinerant and visited tribal communities just long enough to capture the scene they desired, but a few lived year-round with them. Understandably, these individuals established long-standing relationships with their neighbors. For instance, Lloyd Winter and Edwin Percy Pond owned and operated a photography studio in Juneau, Alaska, for fifty years from 1894 to 1943. In that time, they established a good rapport with the Northwest Coast tribes, and Lloyd Winter learned to speak the Tlingit language. As Fleming and Luskey note, "trust in Winter and Pond is evident by the fact that the photographers were invited to attend and photograph ceremonial events such as the potlatches that commemorated important

events in an Indian's life—for example a marriage, house dedication or assumption of a position of leadership. … no photographer could possibly have obtained images of these ceremonies without the knowledge, consent and trust of the participants" (1993: 34). After inadvertently witnessing a secret ceremony, Winter and Pond were adopted into the Tlingit tribe and respectively given the names *Kinda,* which translates to "Winter," and *Kitch-ka,* which means, "Crow Man" (ibid: 198). Due to his interest in the welfare of the Native population, Lloyd Winter sought to join the non-profit Alaska Native Brotherhood in 1928. When he passed away in 1945, six Tlingit Indians served as his pallbearers (ibid: 35).



Fig 2.22. Winter and Pond, "Inside the Whale House," Klukwan, 1895

Perhaps Winter and Pond's most famous (and certainly most reproduced) image was taken inside Chief Klart-Reech's House in Chilkat (Klukwan), Alaska in 1895 (Fig. 2.22). Commonly known as "Inside the Whale House," the image depicts twelve male Tlingits standing amongst their most prized possessions and displaying what many believe to be the best examples

of Northwest Coast art (Sturtevant 1978; Emmons 1991; Thornton 2012). The group is posed in front of the elaborately decorated *Rain Screen* and in between two of the carved house posts—the Wormwood Post on the left and the Raven Post on the right, both representing crests of the Gaanaxteidi clan (Emmons 1991: 63-65). In the foreground is a giant basket known as the "Mother Basket" used by the clan to serve guests during ceremonies. All of the regalia pictured, including the dance aprons, the leather "bird wings" and tunics, would be stored in one of the two carved bentwood boxes on display on the second level. On the far left, a man rests his arm on the long, woodworm feast dish that stretches across the upper platform. In addition, he is wearing an apron that, according to oral tradition, was the first Chilkat blanket that came to Klukwan (Wyatt 1989: 132). The only identified figure in this group is Coudahwot, a Chilkat leader, who is located in the center wearing a painted leather tunic and resting his hand on a boy's shoulder. Yeilgooxu, or George Shotridge, the hereditary caretaker of the Whale House, does not appear in this picture, although he does appear in other photographs by Winter and Pond. Yeilgooxu and his people were not forced to open their longhouse to the photographers, nor were they coerced to open their storage containers and don their ceremonial regalia. If anything, they were proudly showing off their material culture and taking advantage of the talents of Winter and Pond, who managed to take a beautiful photograph under very difficult indoor lighting conditions.

Winter and Pond were neighbors, friends, and not ethnographers by trade, so there was little effort to create "authentic" images of Native life. "European clothes feature prominently in their images" historian Victoria Wyatt notes, "suggesting that the wearer may have even chosen particularly dressy European attire for the occasion" (1989: 132). Unlike Edward Curtis who eliminated signs of Euro-American contact, Winter and Pond made no such erasures. For

example, in Whale House photograph (Fig. 2.22) and in other images of potlatches and dances, the Native subjects combine their European-style clothes with their Chilkat blankets and clan hats. As Wyatt pointed out, when these people "participated in their time-honored ceremonies, they were not trying to construct literal reenactments of the potlatches of their forebears. Rather, their dances had living meaning to them; they did not need to eliminate evidence of their contemporary dress in order to find that meaning. … It is likely that Winter and Pond did not ask people to remove this evidence" (1989: 27-28). Winter and Pond also did not pay the sitters to model for them—though they most likely gave them copies. From all indications, the relationship between these photographers and the Native community within which they lived and worked was one of mutual respect.

It is hard to match the fifty-year residential stay of Winter and Pond, but Kate Cory comes close. In 1905, the 44-year-old self-described "maiden lady" moved to Old Orabi Pueblo in Arizona with the intent of starting an artist's colony. Nobody followed the intrepid Cory, so, she famously stated, "I became the colony" (Graulich 2003: 73). For eight years, she lived with the Hopi photographing everyday life and spiritual practices. Cory never sold her photographs nor did she create them with the tourist market in mind. Art historian Sarah Moore describes Cory's work as notable for "its rejection of stereotypes and self-conscious posing, its preference for the vernacular rather than the heroic, and its particular interest in and genuine cultural sensitivity to both the quotidian and the ceremonial life of the Hopi" (Moore 1995: 135). Indeed, there is a relaxed quality to the subjects in her photographs (Figs. 2.23-24).



Fig. 2.23 Hopi schoolgirls in a cauldron, 1905-12



Fig. 2.24 Young married woman with corn pollen, 1905-12

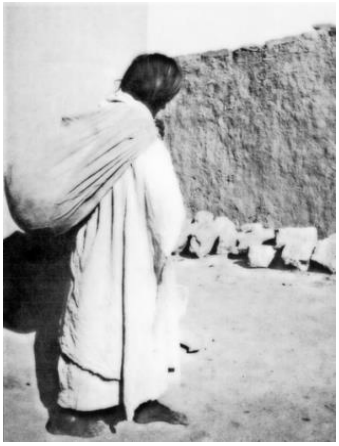


Fig. 2.25 Hopi water carrier, 1905-1912

In many of her images, the people laugh and smile like as if they are conversing with an old friend. They appear comfortable in her presence, and as a result, her photographs give the impression of candid depictions of daily life. Unlike itinerant photographers that only focused on ceremonies and Native regalia, Cory depicted the everyday chores of Hopi existence. In one striking image (Fig. 2.25), she depicts a woman carrying water—which was no small feat for the subject. All water had to be carried up to the mesa from a source 600 feet below, and it was part of the domestic duties of Hopi women (Trenton 1995: 283n12). Cory empathized with the people, and viewed them as human beings, not as curious exotic Others. This is clearly demonstrated in one of her captions where she states, "Mother and twins. Hardly the vanishing race" (Graulich 2003: 103). For her steadfast support of the Native community, the Hopi rewarded Cory by allowing her to enter the kiva—a ceremonial council house traditionally reserved for male initiates. In doing so, she became the first white woman to be permitted into a kiva and she respected their wishes by not bringing her camera into their sacred space (Graulich 2003: 82).

Kate Cory, an unmarried woman who lived among Native Americans during the first decades of the twentieth century, was an anomaly. Yet, the fact that she was a female photographer was not unusual. As C. Jane Gover notes, "it was relatively simple for a woman to become a photographer … women could learn photography on their own or in a variety of schools, clubs, or classes—all open to women" (1988: xvi). At the turn of the twentieth century, many women opened photographic studios as did Gertrude Käsebier, mentioned earlier, and many more traveled the North American continent taking pictures of its Native inhabitants. "Because it was a relatively new field, photography was not hampered by cultural and social traditions of long apprenticeships and male domination, as was true in other art related fields" (Scherer 2006: 51). In addition, most early photographic studios and developing labs were located in the home, and it was this "aura of domesticity that gave an edge of respectability to the profession" (ibid). Hence, photography became a socially-acceptable profession for Euro-American women.

Women photographed the American Indian population for a multitude of reasons. For example, Jane Gay worked as an assistant for ethnologist Alice Fletcher during the summers of 1889-1892 to help photographically document Nez Perce land allotments. Matilda Coxe Stephenson started working for the Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE) in 1899 and used a camera for her fieldwork among the Pueblo tribes from 1904-1910. In the Northwest Territories, Geraldine Moodie started photographing First Nations people and Inuit in the 1890s, and became so famous that the Prime Minister of Canada commissioned her to photograph Northwest Rebellion sites. From 1895-1912, Dutch immigrant Benedict Wrensted operated a photography studio in the small town of Pocatello, Idaho, where many local Sho-Bans frequented her business. Some women managed their own studios, while others got their start working for

famous photographers like Imogene Cunningham and Ella McBride who assisted Edward Curtis with his lab work, or Grace Nicholson a photographer of Northern California Tribes who originally worked as a secretary for George Wharton James. Other women simply traveled the continent and photographed Native populations. Over the course of 25 years (1905-1930), Mary Schäffer toured the Canadian Rockies photographing Stoney Indians. In the American Southwest, Laura Gilpin chronicled the changing landscape and Native peoples from 1916 until her death in 1979. Retired schoolteacher, Gladys Knight Harris, sold most of her possessions, drove from Los Angeles to Kotzebue, Alaska, and spent the latter half of the 1940s creating almost 10,000 photographs of Inupiat people. These women are just a small sampling of the female photographers who chose to photograph Native North Americans during the first 100 years of the photographic medium, from 1840-1940.[20] Despite the large numbers of women practicing photography, cultural critic Lucy Lippard points out that "the photographers whose names we know are virtually all white men" (1992: 18).

This begs the question: Do Euro-American women photographers have an ability to interact with Native American subjects that is remarkably different from that of their male counterparts? It would seem that by virtue of their gender, women inhabit a similar social space as American Indians—that is, a position of inequality within the dominant Euro-American patriarchal society. Native author Louis Owens (Choctaw/Cherokee) asserts that "being by gender profoundly (and probably unconsciously) accustomed to feeling themselves the objects of the universal male gaze, it may be that these women were more comfortable in allowing themselves places within the photographic frames that also contain their indigenous subjects, including the narratives represented by such photographs" (2003: 191). Many photographic

[20] A list of female photographers working between 1870 and1920 is available in Scherer 2006: 14.

narratives seem to reinforce the themes of family and domesticity that were traditionally aligned with culturally-determined concepts of womanhood. For example, the images of Stoney Indians photographed by Mary Schäffer (Figs. 2.26 & 2.27), transcend the visual tropes of the "noble savage" and "vanishing race" by depicting people with human dignity, capable of love and affection for family. The warm smiles and relaxed poses of the sitters attest to a particular comfort with the photographer.


Fig. 2.26 Sampson Beaver Family, 1907


Fig. 2.27 Indian Madonna, 1907

Schaffer photographed these families at eye level, thereby giving the impression that the photographer and subjects are "trading gazes" (Bernardin et al 2003). Lucy Lippard, who has expressed a fascination with the Beaver family portrait, states that it "commemorates a reciprocal moment (rather than a cannibalistic one) where the emphasis is on interaction and communication; a moment in which subject and object are caught in exchange in within shared time" (1992: 37). Furthermore, she perceives the photograph as a cross-cultural relationship that almost transcends race. For her, "Schaffer's photograph is a microcosmic triumph for social

equality as expressed through representation" (ibid). In reality, these interactions were much more complicated.

Female photographers who traveled to the Native communities were not exactly equals with their indigenous subjects. These women were often well-educated and wealthy (or financially comfortable), and took advantage of the mobility that their class afforded them. For these women, it was a journey of self-discovery, an adventure, and a chance to escape the last vestiges of Victorian womanhood. "In search for different ways of being white and female," according to gender studies scholar Deborah Gordon, "they looked to Native Americans and Native American women for the reconstruction of themselves" (1993: 132). Hence, their photographs were not really meant for their American Indian subjects. While they sometimes gave copies of the photographs to the sitters, the larger collection of images would be taken with photographers when they left. In most cases, the pictures were donated to a museum or eventually sold as part of the photographer's estate. If the indigenous people wanted these images, then they would have to pay for them. For example, it has been reported that "a collection of [Grace] Nicholson's photographs, purchased back by the Karuk nation, has been on view in one of the tribal complexes" (Bernardin 2003: 185).

As more tribes consider photographs as part of their cultural patrimony, the desire to have their photographs repatriated and to control the circulation of historic images has grown. A high-profile example is Laura Gilpin's collection of photographs at the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth, Texas. In that collection is a 1932 photograph titled, "Indian Madonna" depicting a Navajo mother and child (not unlike Schaffer's image of the same name reproduced here as Fig. 2.25) that was repeatedly duplicated by the museum and its publishing affiliates. The Navajo descendants of the subject, the Benally family, argued that although their ancestors did willingly

participate in the creation of the photograph, they did not authorize public exhibition or distribution of their image. In addition to the "invasion of privacy" claim, the Benally family cited a Navajo belief that considers publically-circulated images to bring "bad effects on the people in the photographs."[21] Eventually, the Benallys won in a court of appeals, and the image is now restricted to educational use only. This image-rights case is only one example of a larger movement recurring worldwide, and most actively documented in Australia and New Zealand (Myers 1991; Ginsburg 1994, 1995; Lydon 2012).

Although it is relatively easy to track descendants' claims and intents with historical photography, it is more difficult to locate the sitters' goals for their own images. One rare exception is the photographs taken in conjunction with the Wanamaker Expedition. Sponsored by department store magnate Rodman Wanamaker, the Expedition was a series of three excursions in 1908, 1909, and 1913 to campaign for American Indian citizenship in the United States. This endeavor was part of a larger advocacy movement to "save" Native Americans from cultural extinction. As Fleming and Luskey point out, "the Wanamaker expeditions took place at a time when national guilt at what Manifest Destiny had done to the Indians was at its peak. The results were intended to be used as a message of healing for both sides" (1993: 107). Led by photographer Joseph Kossuth Dixon, the expeditions employed photography, film and sound recordings to document "the sunset of a dying race" and publicize the plight of the American Indian.[22] In 1909, the expedition gathered leaders from approximately fifty reservations, mostly

[21]Per court documents. 858F.2d 618: Lillie Benally and Grant Benally on Behalf of Norman Benally, an Adult, Plaintiffs-appellants v. Amon Carter Museum of Western Art Defendant-appellee, accessed online at Justia.com, August 1, 2012. http://law.justia.com/cases/federal/appellate-courts/F2/858/618/446864/

[22]According to Susan Applegate Krouse, Dixon printed and circulated approximately 350 photographs of the 11,000 negatives that he created during the Wanamaker Expedition (2007: 170). "The Sunset of a Dying Race" is one of the more famous images from the Expedition.

on the Northern Plains, to meet as the "Last Great Indian Council" at Crow Reservation to tell stories, reminisce about the past, and have their portraits created (Figs. 2.28 & 2.29).



Fig. 2.28 Chief Pretty Voice Eagle, 1909

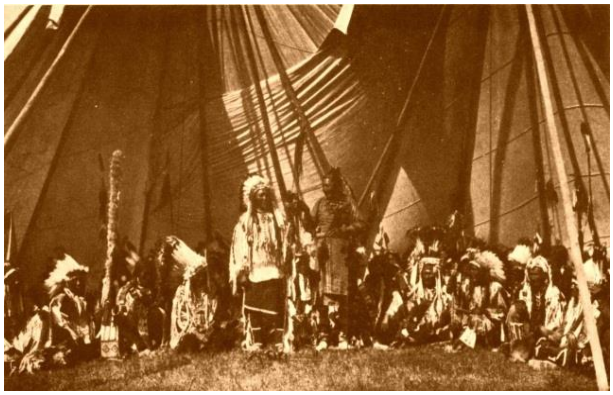


Fig. 2.29 Two Moons addressing the Council, 1909

Although the event was largely intended to evoke nostalgia, the Native participants discussed their hopes for the *future*—especially that of their images. For instance, Yankton Sioux leader, Pretty Voice Eagle (Wabli Ho Waste) stated,

> I was glad to come here and meet the chiefs from all over the county, and see many whom I have never seen before, and talk to them … we cannot go to Washington; we cannot present ourselves there, but the pictures and the record will be preserved there and in great cities, to speak for us. … One great feeling of gratefulness I have about this meeting is that I hope that my grandchildren and their grandchildren will read the speeches I have made here, and will see my pictures. (Dixon 1913: 206)

Pretty Voice Eagle considered the visual and textual records to be representatives that can "speak for" the Indian chiefs. For him, these works have had an active (not passive) agency that can mediate between social relations and perform an act of diplomacy for the people (Gell 1998). As an extension of the elders, these documents are a type of surrogate, or what Cecile Lury calls

"prosthetic culture" (Lury 1998). At the same time, Pretty Voice Eagle saw these documents as his legacy to leave to his grandchildren and their grandchildren. Such hope and expectations for future descendants do not sound like a person who is anticipating the immediate demise or "dying" of his race. This is not to say that the chiefs were unaware of their own mortality. All of the participants in the Indian Council were respected elders between the ages of fifty and eighty years old who recognized that they were making historical documents for their people. As Chief Running Fisher (Atsina/Gros Ventre) stated, "this record and pictures will live when we are all dead" (Dixon 1913: 207).

According to the attendees at the council, the primary beneficiaries of Wanamaker records would be their descendants. As Chief Red Whip (Atsina/Gros Ventre) noted, "the younger generation will read the history of these chiefs and see these pictures" (ibid: 203). This was echoed by Cheyenne Chief Two Moons, who stated that "this record will survive for our children and their children will reap the benefit" (ibid: 208). Collectively, these elders seemed to consider these records as part of their contribution to the histories of their people and as living memories that would inspire next generations. As visual documents, these photographs were intended by their sitters as messages of endurance and commitment to cultural survival.

Their descendants have received the message. For Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor, these images are a component of "survivance" which he describes as "more than survival, more than endurance or mere response; the stories of survivance are an active presence" (1998: 15). To emphasize his point, Vizenor cites Roland Barthes to the effect that "every photograph is a certificate of presence. This certificate is the new embarrassment which its invention has introduced into the family of images" (ibid 159). Native subjects of photography were not always passive sitters or victims of the colonial gaze. They had (and continue to have) active

engagement with photography as consumers and as communities who have enforced restrictions on photographers. Native North Americans demonstrated what photography could do for them: from increasing spiritual power to providing visual exposure as propaganda. They proved that could resist photography as a tool for surveillance by destroying cameras or even performing their rituals backwards to resist visual documentation.

It was not long until "Native Americans synthesized, then incorporated, what was alien and new," and they would be standing behind the camera, instead of in front of it (Silko 1996: 177). In the next chapter, I will discuss the practice of photography by Native Americans. Like their roles as subjects, American Indians were not fixed in a single mode of representation. As I will demonstrate, their intent and motivations in using photography is as diverse as the number of tribal communities.

Chapter 3

Native Practitioners of Photography

> *What is significant about the adoption of alien objects—as alien ideas—is not the fact that they are adopted, but the way they are culturally re-defined and put to use*.
> - Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things"

Many American Indian and First Nations people were introduced to and trained in photographic techniques by early anthropologists or ethnographers who visited their communities. Their photographic output is understandably different than photographers who started practicing the medium on their own as a hobby. Other Native photographers learned the craft at school, or in the army, and spent their time taking well-composed images of community members. This chapter hopes to situate indigenous-produced photography within a complex history of visual economies by exploring a broad range of images created by early American Indian photographers who were working from 1890-1940. My discussion will begin with professional Native photographers—a distinction that I am using to describe individuals who were paid for their photographic work. These people include anthropological informants, field photographers, and studio photographers. Transitioning into Native amateur photography, I will first investigate the images by photographers who learned the medium at an institution, and then I will examine the work of self-taught hobbyists. Whereas the previous chapter presented Native *participation* in photography, this chapter will examine Native *practitioners* of photography.

Professional Native Photographers

Most Native involvement in photography has taken place in front of the lens, rather than behind it. As curator Gerald McMaster (Plains Cree/Blackfoot) points out, "Native people have had, historically, to play the role of the subject/object, the observed, rather than the observer.

Rarely have we been in a position of self-representation. Native peoples have always been the informant, seldom the interrogator or initiator" (1992: 66). However, some of the earliest Native people working in the medium of photography were informants for practitioners of the emerging discipline of anthropology. Two prime examples are both Tlingits who hailed from different parts of the Pacific Northwest: George Hunt (1854-1933) from Fort Rupert, British Columbia, and Louis Shotridge (1882-1937) from Klukwan, Alaska.

The son of a Tlingit mother and Scottish fur trader, George Hunt started his career in 1879 as an interpreter and guide for the Jessup North Pacific Expedition, and ten years later came to the attention of anthropologist Franz Boas who was working among the Kwakiutl (or *Kwakwaka'wakw* as they prefer to be called). In both instances, Hunt contributed ethnographic photographs. "Not only was Hunt one of the earliest American Indians to turn to ethnography," states anthropologist Ira Jacknis, "he was perhaps the first to use the camera as an ethnographic instrument" (1992: 143). Although Hunt probably adopted photography on his own, it was Boas who gave him his first camera and arranged for the Bureau of American Ethnography to pay him $2 for each photograph.[1] This transaction resulted from Hunt's complaints that he did not have adequate means to record his culture, proclaiming to Boas: "Oh if I had your camera with me."[2] Prior to this exchange, Hunt was trained in the medium by a variety of sources. In fact, he may have learned photography known directly from the inventor of Kodak himself, George Eastman. The famous inventor often stopped in the Pacific Northwest and reportedly "instructed the natives on how to operate a camera."[3] Hunt also learned photographic techniques from his

[1] Franz Boas, "Ethnology of the Kwakiutl," *35th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology,* (Washington D.C. Smithsonian Institution,1921): 1222-48..
[2] George Hunt to Franz Boas, February 15, 1896, Franz Boas Professional Papers, American Philosophical Society.
[3] A.M. Wastell, "Alert Bay and Vicinity, 1870-1954," (Vancouver City Archives, 1955): 20, as cited in Jacknis 1992: 146. Since Eastman is not especially known for his own photographic style, we cannot know how much of an influence this training had on the photo-aesthetics of the indigenous community.

brother-in-law, a studio photographer in Victoria who taught him "how to print the potograph [sic]."[4]

Despite his many influences, George Hunt had an unusual approach to photographing his adopted community, the Kwakwaka'wakw. Unlike other contemporary images of the Pacific Northwest tribes that focused more on whale houses and totem poles, Hunt's photographs concentrate overwhelmingly on human activity. Almost all of his photographs depict the Kwakwaka'wakw people of his hometown, Fort Rupert, or nearby Alert Bay, British Columbia. Although Tlingit by birth, Hunt was raised among the Kwakwaka'wakw and took part in their customs, becoming fluent in their language, and eventually marrying into the neighboring First Nations community (Bracken 1997: 243). Trained as a shaman (Native healer), his insider status allowed him special access to Kwakwaka'wakw rites and ceremonies (ibid).

It is important to note that Hunt became a shaman because, according to his autobiography *I Desired to Learn the Ways of the Shaman* (1930), he doubted the abilities of shamans believing them to be charlatans (whom he intended to expose as frauds)—only to later learn that the power of healing comes from the belief in and performance of practicing rituals. This autobiography was reproduced in *The Religion of the Kwakiutl* (1930) by Franz Boas who claimed that the author was a Native man named *Quesalid*. Claude Levi-Strauss based much of his anthropological research on this figure—particularly "The Sorcerer and His Magic" (1963)—and it has only been recently discovered that George Hunt and Quesalid are one and the same (Berman 1994, 1996; Whitehead 2010). However, as Michael Taussig states, "the point being that Hunt … becomes by his own admission a famous shaman not so much despite but because of his profoundly skeptical attitude" (Taussig 2010: 134). With this in mind, George Hunt's

[4] George Hunt to Franz Boas, January 9, 1900, Franz Boas Professional Papers, American Philosophical Society.

photographs should be read as a participant-observer who was acutely aware of his position within the culture.

In an image taken in 1902, Hunt depicted a Kwakiutl shaman and patient during a healing session (Fig 3.1).



Fig. 3.1 Kwakiutl Shaman and Patient, 1902

In the photograph, a healer sucks the illness out of a recumbent patient. The pair are located outside of a wooden structure (most likely to provide light for the photograph), and surrounded by spruce trees. George Hunt (*Quesalid*) is in the image as well, throwing a long shadow across one of the baskets in the foreground. Here the photographer is both a student of shamanism and an anthropologist. As a result, the image illustrates the concept put forth by W.E.B. DuBois called, "double-consciousness" or "the sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of other" (1897).

Like most of his images, Hunt provided a long description for the photograph: "Doctor healing sick man with a basket and sharp pointed stick to drive the evel [sic] spirit away and

spruce tree for the same" (per Smithsonian NMNH catalog 22868). When linguist Judith Berman interviewed Hunt's relative, Emma Hunt, and read such photographic descriptions to her, Hunt initially said that it was the "long way of saying something," then exclaimed, "He's really speaking Indian now!" (1994: 508). Likewise, it is this type of long captioning that Ira Jacknis finds to be particularly indigenous in character as he states, "Hunt's native perspective can be seen in his detailed annotations. He usually identifies the kind of ceremony, its stages and action…participants, and the place" (1992: 147). Overall, Jacknis claims that "Hunt gives a native, Kwakwala, gloss for the action" (ibid).

Indeed, Hunt often showed a series of images portraying action. For instance, in a set of photographs depicting a Hamatsa ("cannibal" society) ritual, he shows the progress of an initiate returning from seclusion in the woods (Figs. 3.2-3).



Fig. 3.2 Hamatsa Initiate being restrained



Fig. 3.3 Hamatsa Initiate tamed

In the first image, the "wild" dancer is restrained by other participants (Fig. 3.3). Hunt's caption reads, "Hamatsa just caught from the Bush Dress in Hemlock branch, Nak!waxdox tribe." With this photograph, he depicts a key part of the ritual, a point where the initiate has been transformed and possessed by a man-eating supernatural being. The next photograph (Fig. 3.4)

depicts the taming of the Hamatsa initiate who is seen dancing in a semi-circle of attendants. This stage of the ritual represents control over human emotions and integration back into society. Presumably, Hunt chose to capture these specific moments because he was aware that they were important steps in the ritual. In other words, he brings his Native knowledge to bear on the photographs. As Jacknis notes, "a review of the Hunt corpus indicates that he did possess a distinctive native approach to ethnographic photography" (1992: 146). Yet, Hunt's approach to photography can be extended beyond his own work. He also had strong feelings about how his culture should be photographed by others.

When Edward Curtis came to the Pacific Northwest from 1912-1915, Hunt served as his principal assistant for both photography and film.[5] He helped Curtis scout for locations, recruit actors and models, procure costumes and props, and provided text and translations (Wilmer 2009: 50). In an image taken for Curtis's project, *The North American Indian,* Hunt's wife modeled as a bride for a traditional Kwakwaka'wakw Wedding (Fig. 3.4).

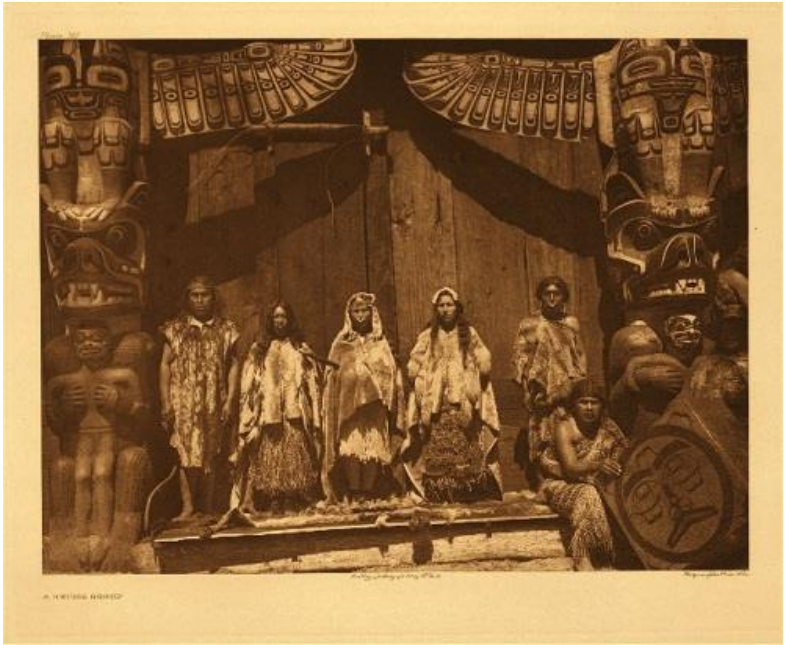


Fig. 3.4 Edward Curtis, Kwakiutl Bridal Group, 1914

[5] In 1914, Edward Curtis was in the Pacific Northwest to film his documentary: *In the Land of the Head-Hunters*.

This image, which Curtis titled "Bridal Group," features six people posed on a platform of a clan house framed by a pair of totem poles. The "bride" is located in the center between two dancers with her "father" on the far left, and the "bridegroom" to the far right behind a seated figure who holds a box drum.[6] In order to focus on the bridal party, Curtis moved in close with his camera, which effectively cropped out some of the totem poles and building.

Hunt had strong words regarding Curtis's aesthetics. He wrote to Boas exclaiming, "about the photo of my wife there is story belong to it. But Mr. Curtice did not take the story or did not care as long as he get the picture taken … he Don't know what all the meaning and the story of it. for on that Picture you cant see the four carved Post under it [sic]."[7] If this statement is any indication, then Hunt had a clear concept of what should be included in the compositions of photographs of his people. For him, photography was much more than just capturing an aesthetically pleasing image—it was a means of facilitating storytelling and expressing Native ways of life. In other words, Hunt would not have cropped this scene in such a way because the details provide an important context for relationships between the community, ancestors, and other-than-human persons. Still, the impetus for much of Hunt's own image-making can be attributed to his ongoing collaboration with Franz Boas, who often requested specific items to be photographed. Their combined efforts at what would come to be known as "salvage ethnography" are apparent in the photography by Hunt.

Hunt's most reproduced images are also his most controversial. The photographs in question were taken in 1903-1904 of the Nootka (Nuu-chah-nulth) Whale Shrine located in the village of Yuqot on Vancouver Island (Fig. 3.5). Only high-ranking Nootka families could hunt

[6] Paraphrased from Edward Curtis's description of the image in *The North American Indian*
[7] George Hunt to Franz Boas, May 4 and June 7, 1920, Franz Boas Professional Papers, American Philosophical Society.

whales, so the shrine was used exclusively by people who were "members of chiefly lineages" (Jonaitis 1999: 5). The two chiefs who claimed to be co-owners of the shrine required proof that he was worthy of admittance. By putting on a demonstration of his shamanistic skills, Hunt, or *Quesalid* has he was known to them, was permitted to view and photograph the site (ibid). Hence, as a "culture broker" Hunt/Quesalid played either sides of his "double consciousness," or two identities, to achieve his goals.

The Whale Shrine consists of four carved whales, eighty-eight carved human figures, and sixteen human skulls—two of which are suspended on posts at either end of a large, wooden canopy. Upon seeing Hunt's photographs of the shrine, Boas insisted that he acquire it for the American Museum of Natural History (ibid). In a subversive agreement with the two chiefs, Hunt negotiated a price of $500 and ten Hamats'a songs, but the chiefs stipulated that Hunt could not remove the shrine until the people were out fishing: "They Made me Promes to leave the House alon ontill all the People go to the Bearing sea and to New Westminster. then they will ship it on the steamer [sic]."[8] Before it was packed for shipping, Hunt took several more photographs of the site. His photographs are the last remaining documents of the complete shrine, because after the American Museum of Natural History acquired the shrine, it was never assembled or placed on display. For over a century, the shrine has been in storage and subject to ongoing claims of repatriation.

According to anthropologist Aldona Jonaitis, "one of the most intriguing features of the shrine is how many people know about it, despite its never having been publically exhibited… Hunt's 1904 photographs…form the basis of what most people know about the Yuquot whalers' shrine" (1999: 20). Ever since its dismantling, the shrine has been represented exclusively

[8]George Hunt to Franz Boas, June 22 1904, as cited in Jonaitis 1999: 59.

through Hunt's photographs in publications, documentaries, and at the museum in a display. And, just like Boas, the public has responded with curiosity and awe regarding the photographs of the Whalers' Shrine.

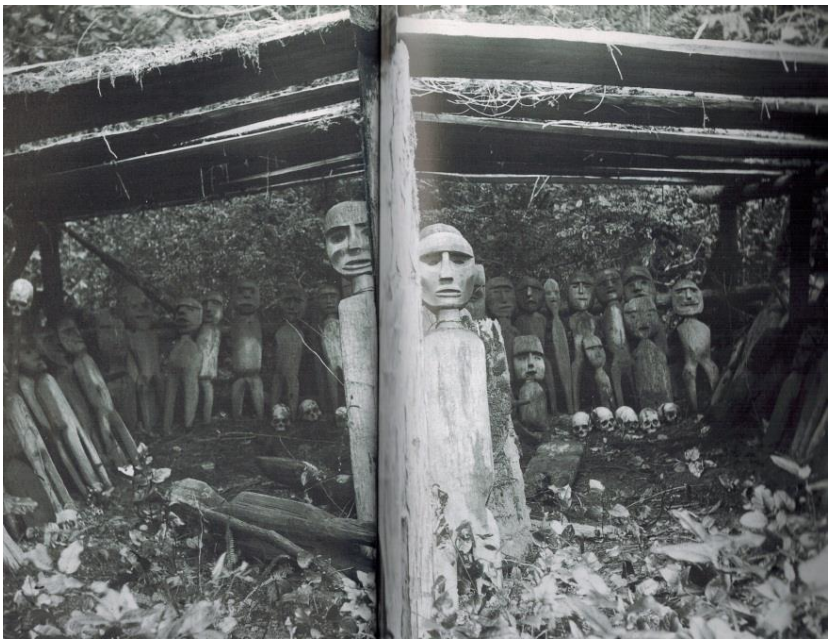


Fig. 3.5 The Yuquot Whalers' Shrine, 1904

"The photographs," Jonaitis claims, "for most people *are* the shrine" (ibid: 72). Hunt's photographs have essentially become the artifacts that retain the "aura" of the original objects (Benjamin 1980), and like the objects themselves, the images have *agency* understood "as material entities which motivate inferences, responses, or interpretations" (Gell 1998: ix). Yet, there is still a sense of loss regarding the shrine—especially for the Mowachaht people, the original owners of a shrine. A documentary by filmmaker Hugh Brody titled *The Washing of Tears* (1994) highlights their struggles to reclaim the shrine and features many of Hunt's photographs. To paraphrase Native author Gerald Vizenor, the images signify the presence and the existence of the objects while simultaneously making us aware of their absence in the world as they are tucked away in a museum reserve (1998: 104).

Although George Hunt is allegedly responsible for collecting approximately *eighty percent* of the Pacific Northwest Coast objects found in museums today, he was just one factor in anthropological efforts at salvage ethnography (Jacknis 1991: 180). Another Native figure who was actively involved in early anthropology and photography was Louis Shotridge.

Born into the high-ranking Kaagwaantaan clan, Louis Shotridge (Stoowukháa) was the son of George Shotridge (Yeilgooxu), the hereditary chief of the Whale House of Klukwan (photographed by Winter and Pond in 1895). He inherited the position of Kluckwan clan chief, and later in life, he would serve as the Chief President of the Alaska Native Brotherhood. Ambitious and highly educated, Shotridge studied anthropology (informally at weekly round-table discussions) under Franz Boas at Columbia University and counted Frank Speck and Edward Sapir among his peers. For twenty years, from 1912-1932, Shotridge worked as an assistant curator at the University of Pennsylvania's Museum of Archeology and Anthropology—making him the first Native North American to serve as a curator at a museum (Williams 2003: 11). In addition to his curatorial duties, he worked as a field ethnographer collecting "ethnological specimens" for the museum and for private interests such as the Wanamaker expeditions.[9] For several years, Shotridge attempted to remove artifacts from the Kluckwan Whale House by claiming, under U.S. laws of inheritance, that he was the rightful heir to collection (Cole 1995: 189-217). His repeated efforts to obtain the objects effectively destroyed his reputation among his people and led to increasing factionalism within the community (ibid). In 1937, he died from a fall off a ladder at his Alaska home but, according to the Alaska State Library, "some believed his mortal injury was made to seem accidental by

[9] Shotridge led the Wanamaker Expedition of 1915 to collect artifacts in the Pacific Northwest.

Klukwan Natives."[10]

During his collecting ventures, Shotridge took approximately five hundred photographs of objects, people, and landscapes of the Pacific Northwest. Like George Hunt, he provided a detailed description of the artifacts including their related myths, stories, and genealogy. For example, his field photograph of the Killer Whale Hat or *Krt-sa xu* (Fig. 3.6) was followed by an article that he wrote for the *Museum Journal* which stated: "When Daqu-tonk died, Gahi succeeded his maternal uncle. It was for him that the Killer-Whale Hat was made. The crest had been originally claimed by a Tsimshian clan, but after they were defeated in a war, it was taken as a spoil by the Nani-ya-ayi clan, the victors, who have used it since as an emblem of courage" (1919: 45).



Fig. 3.6 Killer Whale Hat, 1916

[10] Per *Louis Shotridge, Tlingit Indian Genealogy notes & information 1915-1926*, MS37, Alaska State Library Historical Collections. The cause and rumors of his death are further explored by Engee (1993) and Cole (1995).

This object was one of three highly-regarded crest hats that Shotridge collected in 1916, and according to his correspondence, the hats were extremely difficult to obtain. As he stated, "taking these out from the Drum-house was something like juggling a hornet's nest."[11]

If a group was unwilling to sell an item, Shotridge would photograph it instead. For him, photography was a means to obtain inalienable objects. He used photography to "acquire" villages and landscapes (especially sites of sacred significance) that were physically unable to be collected in whole.[12] In at least one case, he took photographs against the will of a community—confessing that "while the Indians were attending a feast I had an opportunity of making some photographs of the old section of the town which is strictly prohibited, as I was informed by my host" (Shotridge 1919b: 140).

Louis Shotridge once bragged to George Byron Gordon, Curator of American Archeology at the University Museum, that "I know where most of the important things are, and my only obstacle is the everlasting esteem of the native owner for them" (as cited in Engee 1993). Despite being a full-blooded Tlingit and spending most of his time in the field collecting—reportedly 15 of the 20 years that he was employed at the University Museum was spent in the field—Hunt was unable to convince many people to part with their material culture.[13]

[11] Louis Shotridge to George Byron Gordon, June 28, 1918, Louis Shotridge Digital Archive, University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

[12] The concept that photography can change things and people into possessions has been examined by many scholars. For example, Susan Sontag wrote that photography "turns people [and things] into objects that can be symbolically possessed" (Sontag 1977:14), while Susan Stewart considers that photography is a type of souvenir that "reduces the public, the monumental, and the three-dimensional into the miniature … that which can be appropriated within the privatized view of the individual subject" (Stewart 1993: 137).

[13] According to the introduction of the Louis Shotridge Digital Archives, Shotridge only returned to Philadelphia three times to perform his duties as curator. http://www.penn.museum/collections/shotridge/index.html.



Fig. 3.7 Gagu-gam-dzi-wust with the Stone Eagle, the main crest of his ancestors, 1918

For instance, Hunt attempted to collect a stone eagle crest from the Tlingit chief, Gago-gam-dzi-wust, but the chief effectively stated, "over my dead body." Shotridge described this exchange in an article for the *Museum Journal*:

> After I photographed it I suggested to the chief that it would be a good thing for a museum, where people from all parts of the world may see and study it. He hesitated for a moment and then said: "I like to do that, if only I have something besides this piece by which to keep memories of my uncles and grandfathers, but this is the only thing I have left from all the fine things my family used to have, and I feel as if might die first before this piece of rock leaves this last place" (Shotridge 1919: 131).

Within this article, Shotridge included his photograph of the chief with the Stone Eagle crest (Fig. 3.7). In the image, Gago-gam-dzi-wust stands proudly and resolutely behind his cultural heritage. He seems to have a smile of satisfaction—as if he has bested the aggressive collector.

The object of his "everlasting esteem" is in the foreground; close to the photographer who wished to possess it, but well out of reach.

During a collecting trip along the Naas and Skeena rivers in 1918, Shotridge claimed that he made "over a hundred fine photographs … most of which are taken of leading old families of each town" (as cited in Dean 1998: 208).

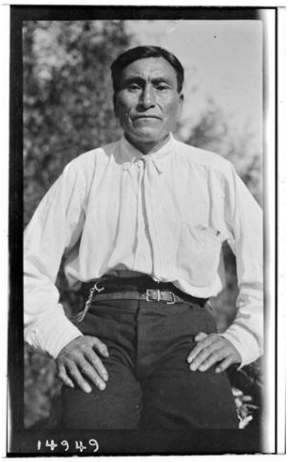


Fig. 3.8 Git-k-cn man, Sept. 1918


Fig. 3.9 A new Tlingit couple, c. 1918



Fig. 3.10 A visit to the fishing camps, August 1918

These photographs range from formally posed portraits to casual snapshots (Figs. 3.8-10) and he pictured Native men, women, and children of all ages, either alone or with family and friends, all of whom are dressed in popular, Euro-American clothing. Unfortunately, many of the sitters are unnamed, or simply identified by their tribal affiliation. For example, in one image (Fig. 3.8) the individual is described as a "Git-k-cn man," but his plain white shirt and dark trousers do not give any indication to his status or rank within the tribe. Another photograph (Fig. 3.9) is captioned, "A new Tlingit couple," but it should be titled "Tlingit family" because a child, presumably theirs, is located between the fashionably dressed pair. A group photograph (Fig. 3.10) does not even indicate the tribal community, or location, but merely notes that the people are en-route to the fishing camps. Despite his long descriptions of artifacts, Shotridge clearly did

not offer the same level of identification to the people that he photographed. Not because he lacked the ability to keep records. Quite the contrary, he had an extensive note-taking system. He meticulously numbered every roll of film and each individual shot. For every photograph, Shotridge provided a subject or object title, place, and date. But for some reason, he did not always record the names of his subjects.[14]

Shotridge's notes do offer other insights into his photographic methods. For example, one card indicates that "color screen used in heavy shadows," while another states that the shot was "taken [with] camera almost pointing at the setting sun."[15] Shotridge also accounted for his poorly-composed "test shots" when he described one photograph as "exposure made to make sure of a picture." Furthermore, Shotridge also used his camera for personal use, recording that "the other 3 exposures are made with personal pictures." Ultimately, his photographs and corresponding notes were used as a type of visual field diary of his collecting trips.

Both Louis Shotridge and George Hunt spent most of their careers as anthropological informants and field ethnographers for their respective cultural institutions. Their photographs were largely conceived of as anthropological "specimens" to be collected and "saved" in museums along with the material culture they amassed. Working between the two worlds—the urban museum and the tribal communities—was not without ethical concerns for these Native visual ethnographers. As Shotridge professed, "the modernized part of me rejoiced over the success in obtaining this important ethnological specimen for the museum, but…in my heart I cannot help but have the feeling of a traitor who has betrayed confidence" (Cole 1985: 265). Shotridge and Hunt may have started to believe the dominant viewpoint that Native Americans

[14] Since he has the names of some of his sitters, perhaps others were unwilling to provide their names.
[15] All of the following quotes are from the Photography Cards (ms37-350-ms37-364) in the Louis Shotridge Digital Archives online at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. Accessed August 1, 2012. http://www.penn.museum/collections/shotridge/index.html.

were a "vanishing race" and that tribal history is best preserved in museums. After all, the early twentieth century saw an active effort on behalf of the government (both in the United States and in Canada) to assimilate Native peoples. Unlike salvage ethnography which attempted to depict traditional ways of life, government assimilation programs hoped to produce records showing Indians adopting Western lifestyles. One Native photographer, Richard Throssel (1882-1933), worked on the Crow reservation for the U.S. Indian Service. Part of his job was to document the daily lives of the Native population to ensure that they were acclimating to a Western style of life.

Photographing for the Government

Born of mixed Canadian Cree and European heritage, Richard Throssel followed his brother from Puget Sound to the Crow reservation in Montana to work for the Indian Agency. From 1902-1911, he was employed as a clerk and field photographer for the U.S. Indian Service. Early in his stay, the Crow adopted him and thereby gave him legal status, tribal identity (at the time, the Cree and did not have federal recognition or a reservation), and land. Their adoption of Throssel did not only benefit him. As his biographer Peggy Albright points out, "by including local, non-Crow Indians in the adoption, the tribe effectively increased the amount of Indian-owned acreage on the reservation and reduced the amount of land available for non-Indian purchase" (1997: 24). During the decade that he lived with his adopted community, Throssel (who is known by his Crow name, *Esh Quon Dupahs* meaning "Kills Inside the Camp") created over one thousand images of the people and conditions at Crow Agency.

In 1910, the Indian Service commissioned Throssel to take pictures as part of a nationwide campaign to fight the spread of tuberculosis and trachoma (an infectious eye disease)

on reservations. Under the direction of field physician, Dr. Ferdinand Shoemaker, Throssel produced a series of "Photographs of Diseased Indians" that illustrated the "unhealthy activities" which the government hoped to discourage (ibid). These activities included poor personal hygiene, unsanitary housekeeping, and general group behavior like sitting on the ground and sharing cups, utensils, or other instruments that could spread germs. One of these "Diseased Indian" photographs (Fig. 3.11) was taken at a sacred event, the Crow Tobacco Society ceremony, and depicts the participants sharing a pipe. Seated on the "dirty" ground and partaking in a ritual that could conceivably spread infection, these people signified the behaviors that put the Indian population at risk. This type of "before" photograph would have been juxtaposed against images that showed the "pleasant, healthful homes of Indians who have taken advantage of the opportunities the Government has given."[16] Throssel also took the "after" photographs that illustrated these "good" behaviors.



Fig. 3.11 Interior of Indian teepee, showing the passing of the pipe, 1910 Photographs of Diseased Indians series



Fig. 3.12 Interior of the best Indian kitchen on the Crow Reservation, 1910

In a photograph titled, "Interior of the best Indian kitchen on the Crow Reservation" (Fig. 3.12), Throssel presents the ideal Native household. In this image, a family is seated at a formal dining

[16] *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*, June 30, 1911, as cited in Albright 1997: 38.

table in a well-furnished home. Using a silver tea pot, the "man of the house" pours tea while his wife and son sit patiently. In the left foreground, bright porcelain wash basins punctuate the scene and remind the viewer of the cleanliness of the people pictured. Unlike indigenous spiritual practices that are associated with unsanitary behaviors and disease, this image portrays acculturation as a healthy and beneficial lifestyle change. Taken together, these images are illustrative of late-Victorian Euro-American ideologies at work. Namely, the belief that places notions of hygiene versus "degeneration" (Roberts 2013: 100). Thus, images that show "aesthetic hygiene" were vital for both modeling behaviors and for assuaging Western (Roberts 2013: 100).

The before-and-after photographs were shown to Native audiences nationwide as part of the U.S. Indian Agency's public health lecture circuit.[17] Like nineteenth-century photographs of "hysterical" patients taken by French and English psychologists (see Didi-Huberman 2004; Showalter 1987), these images were instrumental in defining health and illness. Such measures taken to illustrate, regulate, and control public health are manifestations of what Michel Foucault called "the birth of biopolitics" (2008). Whether or not Throssel's images were an effective tool for changing the public health of Indian people is unknown. However, we do know that his photographs were widely circulated, and according to the 1911 Annual Report of the Indian Commissioner, Throssel's images were shown on "52 occasions to Indians and employees aggregating more than 10,000" (Albright 1997: 38).

By the time the public health images distributed among various reservations in 1911, Throssel was already notable photographer. Early in his career, he was mentored by Edward Sheriff Curtis. Throssel met him in 1905 when Curtis visited Crow Reservation to collect images for his project, *The North American Indian*. As Throssel wrote in his diary: "Mr. Curtis came to

[17] Similar state-sponsored photographs that promote "progress" can also been seen in the colonial imagery of the Belgian Congo. See Roberts 2013: 129-151.

the reservation … and here I saw some real work … [the technique] was in the finishing and getting the light. [I] Became quite well acquainted with him, and was invited to his studio in Seattle and to go through the Portland Fair together a month or so later" (Albright 1997: 26). Throssel took Curtis up on the offer—becoming an informal apprentice. The two men would photograph many of the same individuals (mostly chiefs and elders) in the same romantic, pictoralist style pioneered by Curtis. For example, their photographs of the Crow Medicine man *Bull Goes Hunting* (Figs. 3.13-14) are both bust-length portraits using dramatic lighting and soft-focus imagery to emphasize the aged and weathered condition of the sitter's skin. Close-up portraits of Native elders in this manner are a typical Curtisian conceit; the implication being that the elderly individual is the part of a disappearing race.



Fig. 3.13 Edward Curtis, *Bull Goes Hunting*, 1909



Fig. 3.14 Richard Throssel, *Bull Goes Hunting, the Old Historian*, 1909

As part of her graduate work, American Studies scholar Valerie Daniels conducted a side-by-side comparison of the portraits by Curtis and Throssel (2002). She came to the conclusion that, because Curtis was so invested in the myth of the vanishing race, the techniques, aesthetics, and themes adopted by Throssel speak more to this myth than to an authentic indigenous visual voice. Yet there are some subtle distinctions between the two photographers. Throssel works

with the standard, black-and-white photographic print rather than toning it in sepia. He also seemed to prefer a variety of poses and especially the three-quarter view, while Curtis frequently employed a frontal view of his sitters. Finally, Curtis almost exclusively pictured his Native subjects in traditional dress or in body paint, whereas Throssel allowed the subjects to wear contemporary Western-style clothing.

Building on what he learned from Curtis, Throssel would create a vast collection of photographs documenting the everyday lives of the Crow community, and as he refined his craft, he contrasted his own achievements with those of his mentor. "Since then," Throssel stated, "for this was really the starting point in my work … [I] worked to the extent that others thought me a little off. Many times going without meals for want of time just to shoot pictures. … Curtis has great stuff but he did not learn his profession nights and make the collection in four years, working only Sundays and after hours" (Albright 1998: 26). Throssel's energy and determination to photograph the Crow resulted in a distinctive body of work. Most of his photographs (including those created for the Indian service) exhibit a casual intimacy with his adopted tribe. For instance, one of Throssel's most frequently reproduced images, "Crow Indian Camp" (Fig. 3.15), depicts an intimate and personal moment—the naming ceremony of a new child. In the photograph, the father, Bear Ground, stands outside of a tipi with his new child in his arms while his little daughter, Mary, stands at the edge of a finished picnic feast. Upon viewing this image, Crow elder Mardell Hogan Plainfeather stated that "it has to do with the strong parental love for a child, the sharing of food, the giving of gifts to the namers, the prayers offered for the future of the child, dream sharing, and the clan system, all of which strengthen the ties that still bind the tribe" (as cited in Albright 1998: 120).

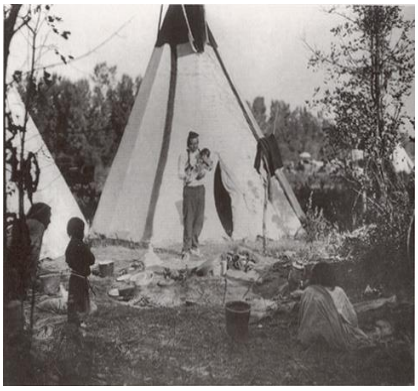


Fig. 3.15 Crow Indian Camp, c. 1905



Fig. 3.16 Baby and biscuit, 1908



Fig. 3.17 Unidentified Crow Couple, Sitting in a tipi, c. 1905

This image was sent to the Indian Service as part of Throssel's duties as a field photographer—perhaps to show that Crow families were healthy and thriving. In another photograph featuring Crow youth (Fig. 3.16), a young girl stares at the photographer while chewing on a biscuit. Framed by a doorway and leaning slightly to the side, she wears a Crow dress decorated with elk's teeth or "ivories." This photograph is one of forty-two images that Throssel supplied to the Wanamaker expedition when Joseph Dixon came to the Crow Agency in 1908-9. Throssel took advantage of the Wanamaker events, such as the Last Great Indian Council, to photograph the various chiefs and elders who gathered on the Crow reservation (Albright 1998: 34). However, many of Throssel's photographs are not formal portraits, but exhibit a snapshot quality, like that of an unidentified couple sitting in a tipi (Fig. 3.17). In this image, a couple appears to be having a friendly conversation and, as the photographer enters the space, the woman flashes a dazzling smile. This is one of the many images that Throssel would take with him when he left the Crow Agency to start his own studio.

Indigenous Commercial Photography

In 1912, Richard Throssel left the Crow reservation for Billings, Montana, to start a photography business—the Throssel Photocraft Company. Using a Thunderbird as his logo, he

emphasized his Indian heritage and aggressively marketed himself as a Native photographer. His logo appeared prominently on the cover of his best-selling product, the *Western Classics from The Land of the Indian* (Fig. 3.18). This illustrated booklet featured thirty-nine photographs from his personal collection (including *Bull Goes Hunting*, figure 14, discussed above), and in the introduction, he described himself in the following terms:

> Richard Throssel is an Indian, Crow allottee No. 2358, Esh Quon Dupahs as the Indian knows him. He belongs to them. His home is among them. Their lives he knows, their traditions and folklore. Because these are shown throughout his work, whitemen look upon him as an artist. And too, they think his pictures are taken from paintings. They are not. They are taken from Indians, real Indians in the Indian country. Therefore we know they are more than just pretty pictures. They are genuine WESTERN CLASSICS (1925).

This language indicates that the product was marketed towards a non-Indian audience and Throssel sought to exploit the popularity of American Indian imagery by promoting his product as coming from an authentic source.

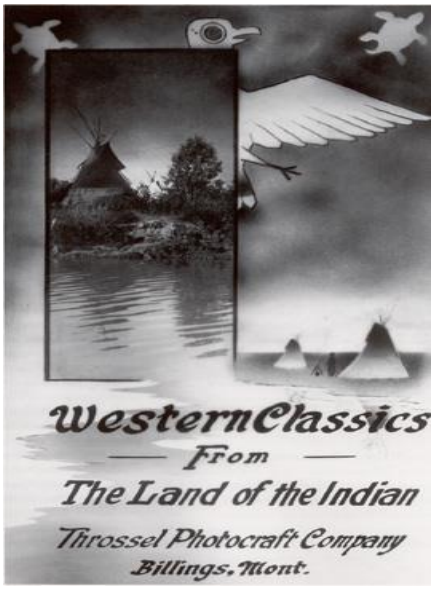


Fig. 3.18 Western Classics brochure, 1925


Fig. 3.19 Richard Throssel, Self-Portrait, 1916

His self-portrait (Fig. 3.19), along with his frequent public appearances as a politician and Indian activist, helped to fashion his image as a modern Native American and self-made businessman.[18] Throssel actively publicized his indigenous identity in relation to his photography business, and "many Crow people came to Throssel's Billings studio to have their portraits taken" (Albright 1998: 43). However, these portraits are not located in the Throssel archives, so if they still exist, they may be located in his customer's family albums.

It is rare to find indigenous photographers owning and operating photography studios during the first decades of the twentieth century. Due to the lack of resources and opportunities, most individuals—and not just American Indians—lacked the financial means to open a business and purchase photographic equipment, and, if they did, the accompanying materials (glass plates, chemicals, print stock) may not have been readily available in their region. Even if someone were able to procure the funds and equipment, the competition from itinerant photographers and the rise of amateur photography may have undercut the revenue of a brick-and-mortar business. Financial reasons are not the only limiting factors, social circumstances may have also come into play. Hulleah Tsinhnahjinne argues that "Native people dealt with forced assimilation, land allotment procedures, and religious persecution … so when photography celebrated its 100th year anniversary in 1939, Native people were concentrating on survival" (1993: 30). However, there are exceptions. One of the earliest Native North Americans to open a photography studio did so before the turn of the twentieth century.

In 1899, Tsimshian photographer Benjamin Alfred Haldane (1874-1941) opened a portrait studio in the small village of Metlakatla on Annette Island in southeastern Alaska. Haldane migrated to the island from Old Metlakatla in British Columbia, approximately 30 miles

[18]Richard Throssel served two terms (1924-1928) as an assemblyman in the Montana State Legislature.

away, as one of the 823 Tsimshian followers of missionary William Duncan (Askren 2002). They relocated with the hopes of securing land rights and the freedom to practice non-denominational Christianity (ibid). Under Duncan's leadership, the group gained Federal recognition and established their new home as Alaska's only Indian reservation—the Annette Island Reserve.[19] With a busy cannery and logging operations nearby, the settlement prospered and could support B.A. Haldane as a "Scenic and Portrait Photo-Grapher." Until evidence to the contrary is found, Benjamin Haldane is the first indigenous photographer to open a portrait studio on a reservation. It should be noted that his work is a recent (re)discovery when, in 2003, 163 glass plate negatives were salvaged from fires at the Metlakatla waste facility.[20]

The existing photographs indicate that Native customers traveled from communities across the region including Saxman, Juneau, and Ketchikan, to visit Haldane's studio (Figs. 3.20-22). In every case, the subjects appear modern and refined—the very antithesis of Native American photographs being produced by commercial photographers like Curtis and Throssel. As art historian Victoria Wyatt notes, "Caucasian audiences rarely saw images of Indians who looked prosperous in European terms" (Wyatt 1991: 29).

[19] Other Alaska Natives communities received land, esp. under the Alaska Native Allotment Act of 1906 which was rescinded and replaced with Alaska Native Regional Corporations in 1971, but they are all known as "villages."
[20] While the Tsimshian do have a tradition of burning the personal effects of family members, this large number of glass plates (featuring different people) appears to have been discarded accidently; Per Akren 2002: 32.

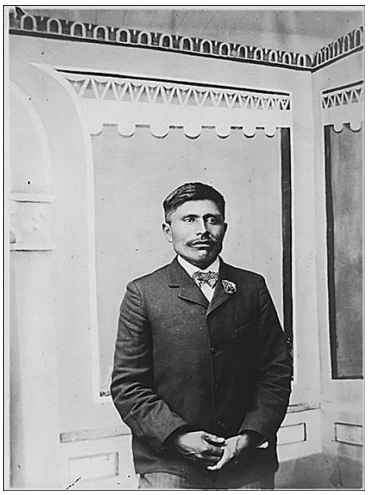


Fig. 3.20 George McKay, Thlinket Indian of Ketchikan, 1899



Fig. 3.21 David Kininnook of Saxman, Alaska, 1907



Fig. 3.22 Unknown First Nations Woman, c. 1899-1910

By fashioning themselves as wealthy and sophisticated, Native consumers actively subverted the prevailing images of indigenous people as universally impoverished. Haldane catered to the needs and desires of his clientele by co-opting portrait conventions commonly found in Victorian photographic parlors such as painted backdrops and elegant furnishings. In this manner, Native customers could commission portraits to depict themselves as upwardly-mobile equals to non-Natives, not as exotic Others. "With the pursuit of positive self-representation," writes historian Carol Williams, "Native Americans revealed themselves as purposeful and strategic consumers" (2003: 141).

In his self-portrait (Fig. 3.23), Benjamin Haldane pictures himself seated in his studio surrounded by his personal interests and tools of his trade. On his left, he has placed his photography equipment, including a large camera on a tripod, a Kodak brownie, and a pair of slide lanterns. To his right, he displays his love for music, including a megaphone, a gramophone, several pairs of headphones, and an open box full of wax cylinders. One item is literally propping him up—a totem pole model on which he rests his right arm. This item is what Celia Lury would call a "prosthesis," a part of his being that extends to and from his physical

self, and "in adopting/adapting a prosthesis, the person creates or is created by) a self-identity" (Lury 1998: 3).



Fig. 3.23 Benjamin Haldane, Self-Portrait in his studio, c. 1899

According to Metlakatla community member and art history graduate student Mique'l Askren (Tsimshian), "B.A. confidently positions himself as physically and metaphorically supported by our cultural values and beliefs and looks directly at the viewer to assert its importance" (2002: 51). She identifies the bottom figure on the pole as *Lax Gibou*, the Wolf Clan, which is his clan crest. Haldane thereby combines his lineage, personal, and professional lives in a single photograph.

Most of Haldane's customers did not hint at their indigeneity through dress or props in their portraits. However, in at least one case, a Native artist wished to highlight his craft. In a portrait of John Robson also known as Chief Giatlins, a Haida argillite carver from Skidegate, British Columbia, the artist sits at a table posed as if carving the lid of an argillite box (Fig 3.24). Because the Roman arch and filigree motifs of the painted backdrop would interfere with

delicate designs on the artwork, Haldane hung a sheet to block the studio background. This action also has the effect of foregrounding the artist and his argillite designs.



Fig. 3.24 John Robson (Chief Giatlins)
Haida argillite carver, c. 1900

Carving argillite (a type of slate rock) is a relatively new post-contact art medium born from the tourist trade. Yet by this time (c. 1900), the carving had already gone through two stylistic phases. When this picture was taken, argillite sculptures marked a return to traditional themes and conventional Haida imagery (Kaufman 1969).

Native traditions and continuity can also be seen in the photographs that Benjamin Haldane created outside of his studio in Metlakatla. For example, images commissioned by parents of local children depict ties to heritage through clothing and material culture. In one photograph (Fig. 3.25), two little girls are photographed on a porch flanking a chair. Propped behind the chair is a model totem pole with what appears to be an Eagle crest at the top. Due to the placement of a crocheted cloth on the chair, it is impossible to read the images located on the bottom registers of the pole.



Fig. 3.25 Young Girls with a Model Totem Pole c. 1900



Fig. 3.26 Boy wearing button cloak and holding a paddle, c. 1900

Askren believes that the cloth was purposely placed to conceal the lower figures and to draw attention and association with the uppermost crest (2002: 51-52). If true, then this photograph was created with specific intent: to convey clan identity while hiding other cultural references, perhaps for reasons now unknown. The fieldwork of Viola Garfield, an anthropologist who worked under Franz Boas at Columbia, seems to support this intent. In her 1939 thesis, she wrote that "natives preserve their tribal affiliations so that any individual can give both the name of his clan and tribe" (1939: 8). In effect, even though Native families may appear as assimilated into Western culture, they are still teaching their children about their indigenous heritage.

In another photograph by Haldane, a young boy is portrayed in full regalia (Fig. 3.26). Standing on a porch and wearing a long, button cloak, the boy awkwardly holds a large dance paddle. Askren indicates that "its large size, along with the adult-sized button robe, suggests that these are being handed down to him, probably by a matrilineal uncle as is inheritance protocol for Tsimshian men" (2009: 99). As is common practice now, the Tsimshian were using

photography to record milestones in the lives of their children. The photograph not only documents the event, it provides evidence that material culture was being bestowed to its rightful heir. This solidifies the boy's acceptance into the group or, as sociologist Pierre Bourdieu notes, "it supplies the means of solemnizing those climactic moments of social life in which the group solemnly reaffirms its unity. … By means of photographs, the new arrival is introduced to the group as a whole, which must 'recognize' the child" (1990: 22). Although we do not know how this particular photograph was circulated within the community (if at all) it does indicate that the parents were still honoring Native customs as they were understood in their day.

Photography at Indian Boarding Schools

At the turn of the twentieth century, almost all Native children in the United States and Canada were educated at Indian boarding schools. One of the first non-reservation Indian Boarding Schools in America, the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, opened its doors in 1879 and served as a model for the over 25 other Federally-funded schools that were scattered across the nation (Adams 1995). Canada had a similar system called the Canadian Residential Schools that started operating in the 1840s. Deadly diseases, forced separation from family, exhausting manual labor, and military marches were just some of the features frequently associated with the Indian boarding school experience. Operating with a gender-specific curriculum that emphasized Euro-American conventions, the schools offered female students classes in sewing, laundry, gardening, baking, and child care, while male students learned farming, blacksmithing, carpentry, and other trades (Adams 1995: 136-164). The goal, according to historian Michael Coleman, was the "extirpation of tribal cultures and the transformation of

Indian children into near copies of white children" which included "labor appropriate to 'proper' gender roles" (1993: 40).

Interestingly, Carlisle Indian School also included photography among its available courses. In 1907, the school newspaper boasted that the institution had built "one of the finest and best equipped photographic studios in the state."[21] However, the students learned about, or at least utilized, the medium much earlier. According to art historian Veronica Passalacqua, "at the Carlisle Indian School, John Leslie (Puyallup) began selling his photography, publishing a book of his works in 1895" (2006: xi). Unfortunately, neither Passalacqa nor I have been able to locate a copy of Leslie's book.

At the Phoenix Indian Industrial School, student Parker Paul McKenzie (1897-1999) left behind several photographs that he took on campus. Before the Kiowa elder passed away at the age of 101, he personally donated his entire photographic collection to the Oklahoma Historical Society including pictures taken by his school sweetheart (later his wife) Nettie Odlety, and a small assortment of official school photographs.

As a young man in the 1900s, Parker McKenzie attended boarding schools on and off the reservation. From 1904 to 1914, McKenzie was enrolled in Rainy Mountain Boarding School on the joint Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Reservation in southwest Oklahoma.[22] By his own account, he did not take any photographs while there:

> At Rainy Mountain, we had no knowledge of picture taking with kodaks. On an occasion [*sic*] Sunday visitors from Gotebo would show and took a few pictures of the students. None of the employees or their family members had kodaks, so

[21] "The Leupp Indian Art Studio*," The Arrow*, Publication of the United States Indian School, Carlisle, Pa. vol. 3 no. 24. Friday, February 8, 1907.

[22] According to an August 1, 1990 unpublished interview with Clyde Ellis, Parker and his brother Daniel McKenzie were enrolled in Rainy Mountain by their father in June 1904. They transferred to the Phoenix Indian School in September 1914 to complete their education.

> they were new things to us when we arrived in Phoenix in September 1914. We soon learned that a few of the students were taking pictures and in no time, some of us Okies began the practice, and after "learning the ropes," we were snapping many pictures.[23]

McKenzie's photographic collection consists of over three hundred images taken with a Kodak Brownie camera during his time at the Phoenix Indian Boarding School (1915-1919). It is remarkable that he was able to create so many photographs, since most historians report that the military-style scheduling that made every moment of a student's day strictly planned. Boarding school life was marked by a "relentless regimentation … nearly every aspect of his [or her] day-to-day existence—eating, sleeping, working, learning, praying—would be rigidly scheduled, the hours of the day intermittently punctuated by a seemingly endless number of bugles and bells demanding this or that response" (Adams 1995: 117). Official boarding school photographs often depict students in class, marching, or doing chores, there are few examples of students relaxing. However, Parker McKenzie's photographs are an exception to this fact.

In a 1915 photograph by McKenzie, Nettie Odlety (Kiowa) and Francis Ross (Wichita), lounge on the grass, propped up on their elbows, smiling at the camera (Fig. 3.27). They both have bows in their hair and are dressed in casual, white sundresses in what one can assume to be an image of relaxed, carefree youth, enjoying their teenage years. This image is the antithesis of the stressed, homesick students searching for a chance to run-away that is so often recounted in boarding school narratives. Similarly, in a photograph taken following year (Fig. 3.28), Doye Cleveland and Nettie Odlety are pictured in their school uniforms and seated on the grass at campus, studying, with books on their laps. Once again, Parker McKenzie has found his sweetheart, Nettie, and snapped her picture.

[23] Letter from Parker McKenzie to Bill Welge, March 10, 1996, Oklahoma Historical Society archives.

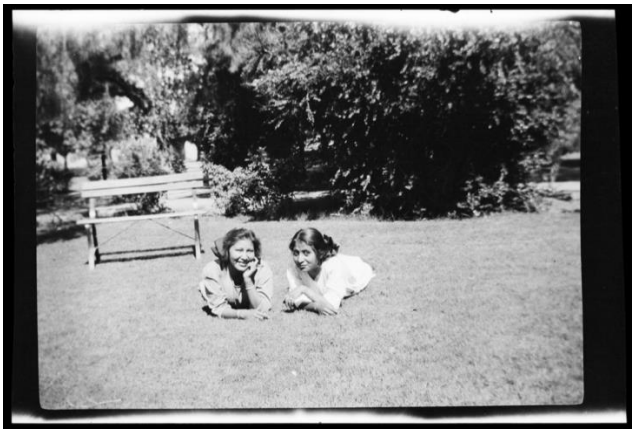


Fig. 3.27 Nettie Odlety (Kiowa) and Francis Ross (Wichita), c. 1915



Fig. 3.28 Doye Cleveland and Nettie Odlety c. 1916

These photographs are just two of the hundreds taken by McKenzie as he roamed the campus taking pictures of his classmates during break. Most depict Nettie alone or with classmates, leading us to believe that McKenzie spent most of his breaks seeking out his girlfriend. The size and subject matter of the collection are evidence that the campus was not always as strictly controlled and regimented as previous scholars have argued.

Indian boarding schools prohibited physical contact between the sexes as much as possible. Like Euro-American boarding schools, dorms were segregated and administration kept a watchful eye on the students. Classrooms and common areas (such as the cafeteria) gave students the opportunity to fraternize and flirt, Parker McKenzie and Nettie Odlety began their relationship by passing notes in class.[24] One photograph (Fig. 3.29) shows the couple together on campus, in front of the Administration building, dated March 1916.

[24] Per McKenzie's letters accompanying his photography collection, Oklahoma Historical Society archives.



Fig. 3.29 Nettie Odlety and Parker McKenzie in front of the Administration building at Phoenix Indian School, March 1916

The administration building, a neutral area as far as proctors are concerned, was the perfect setting for an innocent meeting between school sweethearts. They stand in their own space, not touching or even looking at each other—in fact, while Nettie gladly smiles at the camera, Parker looks off-camera. They stand stiffly with their hands shoved in their pockets, which could be a reaction to being observed by the faculty—they are, after all, posed directly in front of the administration building. McKenzie complained that "keeping the sexes apart was routinely strict … we were under strict discipline, we were never free" (Ellis 2006: 74). Consequently, this image may be one of the only visual examples of an actively courting couple at an Indian boarding school. While there are images of couples at school-sanctioned activities such as school dances or picnics, there are few, if any, focusing on one specific couple as this image does.

Judging from the casual dress of Odlety and McKenzie, the photograph was most likely taken on a Saturday—the one day of the week that Phoenix students were free to choose their own schedule. They could participate in an extracurricular activity, study, relax or sign up for a

position with the "Outing System." The Outing System was a type of paid vocational training at Indian boarding schools that allowed the students to earn some extra spending money, from $10 to $40 per month (Trennert 1988: 133). Considering the time period, this amount was a lot of money for a teenager and these students were often the only breadwinners in their household (ibid). The school established banking accounts for students so that they could save, send the money back home, or spend it on "town day." On select Saturdays, students were allowed off campus to visit downtown Phoenix. Although he did not specifically mention it, McKenzie most likely had his film developed and purchased new film on these shopping days.

Some of the more fashionable hats and dresses seen in his pictures can also be traced to purchases made on these Saturdays, as seen in a photograph (Fig. 3.30) depicting three of McKenzie's classmates.



Fig. 3.30 Easchief Clark (Pro-Wrestler), Ross Shaw (Pima), Andrew Ahhaitty (Kiowa), c. 1916

The three young men are posed by a walkway and appear to be dressed in non-school-issued clothing. Since they each wear different styles of hats, ties, shoes, and slacks, they appear more like sophisticated urbanites than young men who normally wear stark grey school uniforms.

One of the earliest portraits taken by Parker McKenzie at Phoenix Indian Boarding School was of his brother Daniel in 1915 (Fig. 3.31). Daniel is seated behind a desk in the

middle of what appears to be his dorm room with a steel-framed bed in the corner and pennants hanging on the wall, one of which reads "California." A nightstand holds several framed photographs.



Fig. 3.31 Daniel McKenzie (Kiowa), September 1915

By all indications, the students could decorate their space as they saw fit. Daniel sits facing the viewer with his left arm casually thrown over his chair while his other arm rests on his desk behind a pile of books. He presents himself using the entire setting, as sociologist Erving Goffman states, "infuses his activity with signs which dramatically highlight and portray confirmatory facts that might otherwise remain unapparent or obscure" (1959: 30). In other words, he presents himself as a serious student, studying and embracing a new Indian identity. This is not only apparent in his appearance, but in his expression. Daniel appears self-assured with a visually arresting gaze, which is neither welcoming nor challenging. Nearly a year later, Parker would be photographed in much the same manner.

In 1916, Parker created one of his many self-portraits which he titled: *Parker McKenzie, Kiowa, at Main Building* (Fig. 3.32). Like his brother before him, the young man is seated at a

desk, leaning back, with his left arm resting on his chair. His right hand, however, is placed on top of a typewriter on a desk in front of him.

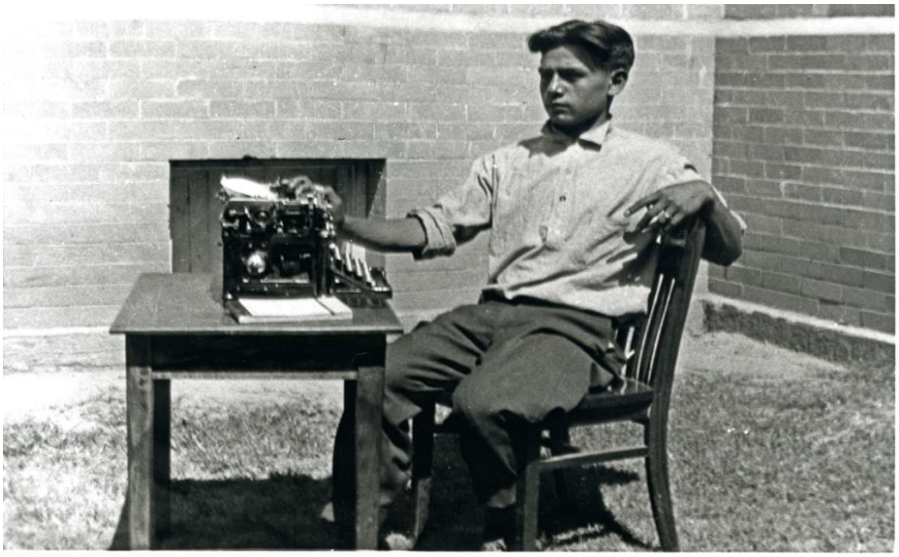


Fig. 3.32 Self-Portrait, Parker McKenzie at Main Building of Phoenix Indian School, c. 1916

The entire scene is photographed outdoors, on the grass, with a school building in the immediate background. Instead of facing the viewer, Parker McKenzie chooses a three-quarter profile, gazing off into the distance. This pose, along with the hand on the typewriter, recalls images of famous intellectuals and statesmen—he is fashioning himself in the canon of traditional Western portraiture, through which "most portraits exhibit a formal stillness, a heightened degree of self-composure that responds to the formality of the portrait-making situation" (Brilliant 1991:10). Indeed, Parker McKenzie styles himself in the manner of a distinguished scholar, as reinforced by McKenzie's later remark that he "owes much to his early training" for becoming a Kiowa scholar and so furthering his cultural heritage.[25] While this image foreshadows the later career of McKenzie, what is even more striking is where this scene is photographed—outdoors.

[25] Parker McKenzie letter to Oklahoma Historical Society dated March 10, 1996, OHS archives.

There is evidence that in some years boarding schools were overcrowded, but never to the point that classes took place outside. This is why McKenzie's placement of the desk and typewriter is such an enigma. Given the rigid military schedule at the school, it would seem that McKenzie had little opportunity to stage such an image, much less the permission to play with school property. According to Robert Trennert, who wrote a comprehensive history on the Phoenix Indian School, "everything operated on a schedule, and the campus resembled an army boot camp. In contrast to the leisurely pace of reservation life, children were required to study, clean their rooms, sleep, and eat at specific times. Sundays were devoted to discipline" (1988:117). Even so, many boarding school students noted that there was ample spare time to socialize, play outdoors, and even date.

When Parker McKenzie lent his camera to Nettie Odlety, she took what may be the only existing candid pictures within a girls' dormitory at an Indian Boarding school. Nettie and her friend, Lucy Sumpty, took turns being photographer and subject in a series of snapshots (Figs. 3.33-36) captured sometime between 1915 and 1916. As the girls alternate posing on the ground and lounging on a bed, the afternoon sun pours through their dorm windows and illuminates the scene. Upon closer inspection, it appears as though they are mimicking each other's pose—from the vantage point as photographer to the body positioning as subject. As photo historian Graham Clark might say, the young women were experiencing a photographic moment, "both of taking photographs and of saturating themselves within a photographic history of their own making" (1997: 218).



Figs. 3.33-36 Phoenix Indian Boarding School - Inside the Girls' Dormitory, c. 1915-1916
Figs. 3.33-34 (upper) Nettie Odlety, Kiowa
Figs. 3.35-36 (lower) Lucy Sumpty, Kiowa

It can be said with some certainty that these girls were enjoying using the camera, snapping photos during unsupervised time. Although girls were more closely supervised than boys, some "still managed to smuggle bean sandwiches out of the kitchen, tell stories after lights out, even hold peyote meetings in their dorm rooms. Private moments knitted students together in shared joy, shared language, or shared mischief" (Archuleta 2000: 48). Nettie Odlety's photographs seem to back up the idea that the dorm rooms were not only a place for sleeping, but a space where friendships were formed, and in this case, visually recorded.

An extensive study of the boarding school experience was undertaken by American Indian historian K. Tsianina Lomawaima who found "a complex network of bonds and divisions that simultaneously bound and segmented the large student population. Girls united in groups

formed by dorm-room association, shared hometowns, Native language ties, company or work detail assignments, or similar personality" (1994: 97). These bonds are illustrated in a photograph taken by Nettie Odlety of her roommates Deoma Doyebi and Ethel Roberts (Fig. 3.37). Nettie captures her friends in a moment of camaraderie with their arms looped around each other's shoulders as they grin towards the camera. Sitting close together, the girls are perched on a bed that has been placed rail-to-rail in tightly packed quarters on a sleeping porch, which, like other sleeping porches of the time, was placed on an upper floor rather than the ground floor thus further assuring their isolation. A chain link fence hovers above their heads and serves as a reminder that they are confined to this school through Federal assimilation efforts.



Fig. 3.37 left to right: Deoma Doyebi (Kiowa) and Ethel Roberts (Wichita), c. 1915

Despite stultifying strategies of assimilation, girls forged friendships that helped them cope with their ordeal. As one student noted, the schools "were started to stamp out the Indian from the Indian, you know, make us all into white people, and you know, it didn't work. Actually … it was the exact opposite: It made us stronger as Indian people. It made us more aware of and more proud of who we were" (as cited in Archuleta 2000: 19).

After Nettie Odlety and Parker McKenzie graduated, they returned home to Oklahoma to start a family. Using their camera, they continued to photograph important scenes and milestones throughout their lives. However, their collection would not match the prolific output of fellow Kiowa, Horace Poolaw, also known as *Py-bo* or "Big Horse."

Photographing for the Army and the Indian Fair

Like Parker and Nettie McKenzie, Horace Poolaw (1906-1984) adopted photography in his teenage years. However, he seemed interested in receiving a formal education in the medium. In 1926, he persuaded a studio photographer to accept him as an apprentice, and around this same time he enrolled in a correspondence course on hand-coloring photographs (Poolaw 1990). By 1943 when he decided to enlist in the army, Poolaw was well-versed in photography. The military sent him to school in Denver for technical training in aerial photography, and for three years in the army air corps, Poolaw trained bomber crews on how to use a camera to document enemy targets.

"Because young Kiowa men were expected to become warriors," stated his daughter Linda Poolaw, "many of Poolaw's contemporaries joined the armed forces feeling that this was not only their patriotic duty as Americans, but an opportunity to fulfill traditional roles" (1990: 13). In a self-portrait created on site at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida (Fig. 3.38), Horace Poolaw and his Kiowa friend, Gus Palmer, are depicted in a fuselage of a military plane. Poolaw is in the foreground holding his camera, while Palmer hunches in the rear grasping the controls of the machine gun. Both men wear brilliant feathered headdresses with their plain, military uniforms. Their war bonnets may dominate the photograph, but it is their intense stares and eagerness to "shoot" that enhances the drama of the scene.

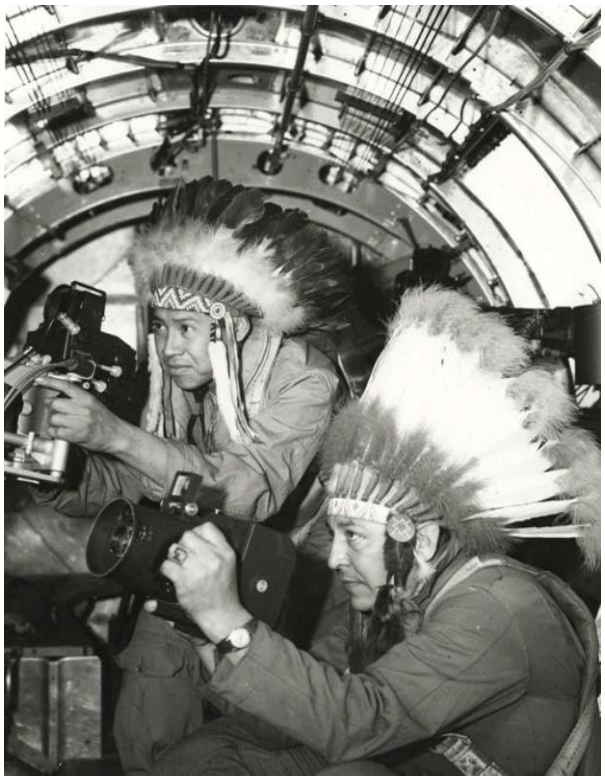


Fig. 3.38 Horace Poolaw, aerial photographer and Gus Palmer, gunner, 1944

This photograph is one of many "self-consciously theatrical poses" that appear throughout Poolaw's work (ibid: 12). In fact, these dramatically-composed images seem very much like film stills (Jerman 2011). Most likely, he was influenced by the Westerns that were filmed in the Great Plains when he was a boy, yet, according to Linda Poolaw, her father was "probably exposed to this style by his older brother Bruce, who performed in a Vaudeville company owned by his wife Watawasso, a Penobscot" (1990: 12). Regardless of the influence, Poolaw enjoyed directing his subjects and carefully composing his photographs. "He would meticulously place people in as perfect a setting as possible," said Linda Poolaw, and "then he took ever so long to make just one or two exposures. Years later, I finally realized that he took such special pains because he didn't have the means to use expensive film. His few exposures had to be perfect" (T. Johnson 1998: 168). Poolaw developed his pictures at home, but the expense of paper and

chemicals prohibited him from printing all of his images. It was not until the 1990s when the family, spearheaded by Linda Poolaw, arranged to print, catalogue, and archive his photographic legacy. At this time, it was learned that over the course of his photographic career (1920-1970), Horace Poolaw took approximately 2,000 pictures of people and places near his hometown in Mountain View, Oklahoma.

Although a prolific photographer, Poolaw was never able to financially support his family thorough photography. However, he did create some picture-postcards of Kiowa leaders to be sold at Indian expositions and fairs. Identification of the sitters has been problematic, and information regarding his images had to be reconstructed later. As Linda Poolaw stated in a television interview with Charles Kuralt, "yeah, I'd get mad at him. Why didn't he…just write something on those things you know. It's hard going back after 60 years and try to identify these people." [26]

One of Poolaw's picture postcards created sometime between 1925 and 1942 features Kiowa elder Harry A-hote or *Kau-tau-a-hote-tau* ("Buffalo Killer"). Although not much is known about the portrait session, Harry A-hote was a relative of the Poolaw family who, during the 1890s, served in the all-Indian U.S. Calvary unit at Fort Sill, and he was an active member of the Ohomah "War-Dance" Society (Smith 2011: 126). Art historian Laura Smith states that "military societies such as these played critical roles in Kiowa pre-reservation structure, cohesion, and survival … these groups were vital to the development and affirmation of Kiowa masculinity" (ibid).

[26] CBS Sunday Morning with Charles Kuralt, April 15, 1992. As cited in Smith 2011: 165.



Fig. 3.39 Harry A-hote, c. 1925-1942

The postcard was not intended to cheapen or lessen the importance of this figure. According to Smith, "among the Kiowa, the possession of a picture postcard of a leader could have served as an affordable way to honor his heroic efforts, as well as a sign of Kiowa strength and determination in the on-going fight for control over their lives" (2008: 78). The iconography helps support such a claim. Harry A-hote wears his hair braided and wrapped in otter skin in the same style of the Peyotists—a Native American religious (and resistance) movement that, during the 1920s-1930s, was being outlawed through legislation (Smith 2011: 127). Postcards featuring A-hote's steely-eyed gaze along with the peyote symbolism undoubtedly found a fan base among the Kiowa and other local indigenous communities.

Yet to be truly marketable, Poolaw's postcards also "had to appeal to a wide range of consumers who were most likely not familiar with the history of the Kiowa or the individuals' biographies" (Smith 2011: 137). In order to conform to popular images of Indians, Poolaw often loaned clothing to his sitters. For instance, Harry A-hote wears a beaded vest that can be seen in other photographs by Poolaw including images of his actor/brother Bruce Poolaw, or "Chief

Poolaw" as he was known on the vaudeville stage. Indeed, this particular vest may have been part Chief Poolaw's costuming. "Because their subject matter revolves around performed Indian identity," historian Hadley Jerman believes that these "photographs could be misconstrued as reinforcing stereotypes" (2011: 106). Such costuming recalls the work of Edward Curtis who provided Indian clothing and props to help support his concept of the vanishing race. However, for Kiowa and other Native communities, wearing Native attire was (and still is) an important means of resistance and expressing indigenous identity. As Kiowa beadworker Vanessa Jennings notes, "the 1920s was a time of defiance. After many years of the Indian agents and some missionaries forbidding Kiowas and other Indians to dress in traditional clothing … putting on those [clothes] was a way to defy those orders and affirm your right to dress and express your pride in being Kiowa/Indian" (Smith 2011: 127-128).

Before the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, the Federal government made many attempts to outlaw indigenous visual and performing arts. As a result, Indian fairs and their current incarnations, powwows, became important instruments of what historian Wilbur Jacobs calls, *contra-acculturation* (1972) or a revival of indigenous culture in a highly modified form. Modeled after popular Wild West Shows, these events included the Craterville Indian fair and the Medicine Lodge Peace Treaty re-enactment. As Linda Poolaw noted:

> Although Craterville and Medicine Lodge were run by white people, they provided the opportunity for Indians from several tribes to dance and celebrate their traditional life style. So when Craterville closed in 1929, Indians from the Anadarko area decided to start a fair of their own. The next year the American Indian Exposition opened in Anadarko where it remains an annual event to this day. From the beginning, Poolaw was the official photographer.
> (Poolaw 1990: 12-13).

Much of what Horace Poolaw photographed at these events was indigenous pride in cultural heritage and the (re)claiming of space. For instance, in a photograph taken at the Medicine Lodge Treaty reenactment of 1928 (Fig. 3.40), Jeanette Mopope and her daughter, Vanette, wear traditional hide-skin dresses while standing in front of a tipi. "Although no longer used as homes," historian William Meadows points out that "tipis remain a principal symbolic link to the Kiowa past" (2008: 142). Fair attendees like the Mopopes would erect tipis onsite, and "the camps used to fill the entire fairgrounds with different tribes clustering in their respective areas" (ibid: 143). Not only did the tribal communities assemble in camps, some individuals embellished their tipis with clan and family imagery. As Meadows states, "a few families have painted tipis, the symbols of which are usually directly linked to the experiences of the owner or some aspect of family history" (ibid). One such symbol can be seen in the photo on the tipi next to little Vanette. These tipis and the camps as a whole served as an important way for the indigenous groups to carve out and claim a piece of the landscape or "ethnogeography," to use Meadows' term (ibid).



Fig. 3.40 Jeanette Mopope and Child, c. 1928



Fig. 3.41 Belo Cozad, Kiowa Flute Player, c. 1927

In another such example of "ethnogeography," Horace Poolaw photographed Belo Cozad (Fig. 3.41), the famous Kiowa flute player at the Craterville fair in 1927. [27] Cozad is wearing fringed buckskin and playing his instrument in front of a tipi. However, our eyes are drawn to a solitary car parked in the background. Unlike Edward Curtis who literally erased any evidence of Western modernity in an effort to show a "pure" indigenous culture, Poolaw depicted Cozad as a contemporary figure who is continuing traditions while participating in a dynamic world. As Parker McKenzie remarked, "back when Horace took his pictures, most Kiowa…took what they wanted from each culture, and left the rest alone. It wasn't easy, but they did it" (as cited in Poolaw 1990: 23). Indeed, the Kiowa were a "culture in transition," and Poolaw brilliantly captured the changes that his community was undergoing (ibid). He purposefully chose a point of view that would allow the car to be seen within the shot. In fact, the image is visually constructed so that the form of the car touches both the tipi and the Native man, linking them together in space. By depicting both traditional and modern elements in the same image, Poolaw rejected the reductive dichotomy that implies that there were only two choices for American Indians: either follow traditional ways of life or join the Western world and assimilate (Simard 1990).

In recent years, Horace Poolaw's photographs have gained wide acclaim through travelling exhibitions, and a retrospective exhibition is planned for the *National Museum of the American Indian* in 2014. Within the Kiowa community, he is a well-regarded individual who continually garners pride for his pictorial record of his people. Fellow Kiowa and Pulitzer Prize winning author N. Scott Momaday states that:

[27] Belo Cozad (1864-1950) is a well-known figure in American folk music. His 1941 recording for the Library of Congress reportedly influenced several different genres of music and musicians including classical composer Aaron Copeland and the American rock group, Jefferson Airplane. Per Eugene Chadbourne, contributor to the AllMusic website, accessed November 1, 2012. http://www.allmusic.com/artist/belo-cozad-mn0001834345

> Horace Poolaw was a photographer of the first rank. He knew, from the time he took up a camera in his hands, how to draw with light. His sense of composition, proportion and symmetry were natural and altogether trustworthy. His vision of his world, perceived through the lens of a camera, was touched with genius. Looking at this life's work, we see that he was the equal of such frontier photographers as Edward Curtis, Charles Lummis, and William Soule; and his native intelligence and understanding of the indigenous world, he surpassed them. He was an artist of exceptional range and accomplishment, and he has given us a unique vision of American Life (1995: 14).

Yet Poolaw was a humble man who never sought celebrity status. According to his daughter, "he always said that he did not want to be remembered himself; he wanted his people to remember themselves through his pictures" (Poolaw 1990: 13). This sentiment would undoubtedly be shared by the next photographer to be discussed, community photographer Harry Sampson.

Photographing Fandangos, Friends and Family

Among the historical images in the National Anthropological Archives are thirty-two photos from the 1920s depicting inter-tribal events, communal hunts, and family gatherings in western Nevada. These are snapshots taken by Harry Sampson (1892-1975), a Northern Paiute and one of the founding fathers of the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony.[28]

Born at Mound House near Carson City, Harry Sampson spent his entire life in Reno, but traveled to nearby Pyramid Lake, Stillwater, and Walker River Reservations for intertribal events called fandangos. He fostered an avid interest in community affairs, serving as both the first tribal chairman for the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, as a position he would hold for almost ten

[28] The Northern Paiute are also known as the *Paviotso* and the *Numa,* meaning "the People."

years, and as an active member of the National Congress of American Indians.[29] Sampson became a respected elder with knowledge of native plants and medicine, and when ethnobotanist Willard Z. Parks was in the area doing research, he called upon Sampson to be one of the primary consultants. In his spare time, Sampson played the clarinet in a band and took photographs with his Kodak brownie camera. Unlike his contemporaries Horace Poolaw and Richard Throssel, who were trained and self-identified as professional photographers, Harry Sampson was a self-taught hobbyist. By the time he passed away in 1975, he had albums full of snapshots.

In May of 1983, the Nevada Historical Society held a month-long exhibition featuring a small selection of Harry Sampson's photographs. Cory Farley, a reporter for the *Reno Gazette-Journal*, reviewed the exhibition noting that "Sampson wasn't a photographer, and if you go to the museum expecting an indigenous Ansel Adams, you'll be disappointed" (1983: 6). Nonetheless, Sampson's images show a sincere interest in the subjects and their surroundings.

Many feature leisure pursuits such as circuses and intertribal events. In one image captioned, "Circus Time!" (1920s), Sampson photographed a large group of people congregated around the entrance of a show tent (Fig. 3.44). According to the information accompanying this image, the circus was held between Reno and Sparks as a region home to the Northern Paiute, Shoshone, and Washoe, as well as those non-Native prospectors who stayed in the area after the silver rush. By setting up between the two towns, the circus could draw customers from this diffuse population.

[29] Per the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony tribal records at the colony office in Reno, Nevada.



Fig. 3.44 Circus Time, c. 1920s

Sampson photographed the scene so that it focuses on the entire mass of people, not just a single person or small group. Like many of his photographs, he did not zoom in on a face or approach so closely that he crops a figure at the waist. Instead, he preferred full-length shots. Although the crowd is moving away from the observer, towards the circus tent, people seem to be directing their attention to something in front of a small outdoor stage. The space is so thick with Native and non-Native bodies that it appears that some people may have got up onto an outdoor stage for a better view. We cannot see around them because Sampson has not placed himself in the center of the action, but rather on the periphery. Just like a person in the crowd straining to get a better view, we are left to wonder what is capturing the attention of the visitors—and why Sampson felt the need to take a snapshot of this particular moment. Art critics John Berger and Jean Mohr consider that "the photographer chooses the event he photographs. … The construction is his reading of the event which is in front of his eyes. It is this reading, often intuitive and very fast, which decides his choice of the instant to be

photographed" (1982: 93). Most likely, Sampson was intrigued by a carnival barker at the entrance to the tent trying to separate the spectators from their money.

In another snapshot probably taken at the same circus, a young Native couple walks together through the midway (Fig. 3.45). Adele Sampson has identified the couple as "Lloyd Alex and Ethel Sam O'Neil - Paiutes, married (now divorced)." It appears as though Sampson was recording his various perambulations around the circus and happened to cross paths with this couple from his community. Lloyd Alex is looking towards the photographer and manages a quick smile, but his wife is looking elsewhere—taking in the event. It is a candid image, slightly blurry, and does not seem to be staged. Like the few individuals visible in the background, they appear to be enjoying themselves, engaged in the sights and sounds of the circus.



Fig. 3.45 Lloyd Alex and Ethel Sam O'Neil, c. 1920s

The most striking element of this image to non-Indian observers may be the most obvious: Sampson has pictured Native Americas *at* instead of *in* the circus. American Indians are rarely (if ever) considered attendees who casually observe the performance. Yet circus route books

have documented the attendance of Native Americans at traveling shows throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As historian Janet Davis points out, "Native American players often met with fellow Indians in the audience after the performance" (2002: 184). Indeed, several route books identify a day (or days) when a large number of American Indians attended the performance. For example, according to the *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show Route Book Season of 1896*, approximately five hundred Ojibwa were in attendance at one of the shows.[30] Considering that such information was recorded in route books, it is surprising that more visual materials have not been discovered. There seems to be a preponderance of photographs depicting Anglo attendees observing the spectacle or posing with Indian cast members, but no published images of Native American spectators at performances.

We do know that the Bureau of Indian Affairs officials did not condone Indian attendance at circuses. If the large number of letters commenting on circuses is any indication, Native audiences caused great distress among Indian agency personnel. In 1889, Indian Agent John Crasnic complained that "the only show that an Indian should be connected with or take an interest in is the State or Country Fair where he can exhibit his farm produce and well-kept stock on the same footing as the white man."[31] The idle amusements at the circus were perceived to be too much of a distraction from the work that was expected to assimilate indigenous people. In Bakhtinian terms, circuses and carnivals allowed for a "free and familiar contact among people" which effectively disrupted the social order. As Bakhtin states, "what is suspended first of all is hierarchical structure and all forms of terror, reverence, piety, and etiquette connected with it—that is, everything resulting from socio-hierarchical inequality or any other form of inequality

[30] In The Official Route Book of Adam Forepaugh and Sells Bros Combined Circuses of 1898, the entry for July 27th states: "Conspicuous among the vast audience were a number of 'big Injun chiefs' from the territory." The following entry for July 28thstates that "Indians and gypsies camped on all roads leading to the city, having come miles to enjoy the wonders promised and fulfilled by America's greatest shows."

[31] Box 578, file no. 35938, Devil's Lake Agency, John W. Cransic to CIA, Dec. 10, 1889, RG 75, NARA

among people" (Storey 1998: 251). In other words, circuses challenge the control of the Indian Agency and its officers.

During the 1920s, James E. Jenkins, Superintendent of the Reno Indian Agency, wrote to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs that "there is the usual percentage of 'loafers'… who cannot overcome the propensity to quit work to go 'visiting' or to attend circuses."[32] Another report from Reno Indian Agency commented on a specific event, the Nevada Round-Up of 1920, which was "greatly augmented this year by the addition of Carnival and Shows." The agent found that:

> Such attractions are too much for the average person to 'pass up' and but few did. It will seem reasonable to assume that it was the rancher who probably neglected his work and went to Reno to celebrate, leaving the Indian with nothing to do but follow his greater inclination and do likewise. Which he did. Many of the Indians entered the various contests and captured several prizes. Unusual gambling was not reported, or observed, and it is believed that the Indians were given due consideration and treated very fairly throughout their stay in Reno.[33]

Although the Nevada Round-Up was a relatively mild form of escapism for the general populace, keeping account of the Native people under their jurisdiction proved to be too frustrating for some Bureau officials. Inspector Endicott of Reno Indian Agency used the circus as another one of his reasons to dissolve the Native community. He insisted that "they will attend the circus and will be taken from their necessary labors on the ranches (especially haying) and the true interests of the entire community will suffer. I again recommend the abolition of this colony."[34]

Because he was actively involved in his tribal council, Harry Sampson was probably familiar with Bureau of Indian Affairs (B.I.A.) concerns and demands. Even before he was

[32] Box 1, file no. 27955, Reno Indian Agency, James E. Jenkins to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, November 22, 1922, RG 75, NARA
[33] Box. 1, no. 57349, Reno Indian Agency, L.A. Dorrington to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 16, 1920, RG 75, NARA
[34] Box 1, file no. 57349, Reno Indian Agency, Washington Endicott to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, July 2, 1920, RG 75, NARA

chairman, Sampson circulated petitions and wrote to the B.I.A. complaining about the rules and treatment by the agency officers. So perhaps his photographs of his people at the circus are actually visual documents of civil disobedience—the Native community going against the wishes of the B.I.A. by attending a circus and using their own money as they saw fit.

Similar to Indian fairs and expositions, *fandangos* were intertribal gatherings where dancing, feasting and various competitions would take place. Although most fandangos have evolved into powwows which focus more on competitive dancing and drumming, three communities still host annual fandangos: the Ely Shoshone and Battle Mountain colonies in Nevada, and the Big Pine Paiutes in California. In the 1920s, however, several of the Great Basin Indian reservations and colonies produced these multi-day events. From his home in Reno, Sampson traveled to fandangos at reservations in Fallon, 60 miles to the east, Walker River, 100 miles to the southeast, and Pyramid Lake, 35 miles to the northeast. If his snapshots are any indication, Sampson was often in the front row ready to document the action. He was not alone in his travels—the number of people and cars featured in his photographs attest to the popularity of these gatherings. At the fandangos, Sampson recorded a wide variety of traditional and newly conceived competitions.

While attending a fandango at Schurz, a town on the Walker River Indian Reservation, Sampson documented a pie-eating contest (Fig. 3.48). Competitive eating became popular at county fairs during the early twentieth century and apparently, the trend was incorporated into indigenous gatherings (e.g. Suddath 2008).[35] Since its beginnings, eating contests have been a male-dominated sport, and this example was no different. Bent over a wooden table, the men

[35] Although some indigenous gatherings (such as potlatches in the Pacific Northwest) had eating events that could be considered "competitive" because they challenged rival clans to consume unappealing food (like grease), these events were not structured as a timed contest, nor were they open to all in the same manner as competitive eating games at county fairs and fandangos. For more information, see Jonaitis 2006.

hurriedly devoured the contents of their pie tins while a mixed group of Native and non-Native men, women, and children cheered them on. Sampson photographs the scene by holding his Brownie camera at chest level and slightly tilted, which results in the dramatic angle of the photograph.



Figs. 3.48-51 Fandangos (clockwise from upper left)
Fig. 3.48 – Pie Eating Contest, Walker River Indian Reservation, c. 1920s
Fig. 3.49 – Tug-o-war, Fallon Indian Reservation, c. 1920s
Fig. 3.50 – Wrestling, Fallon Indian Reservation, c. 1920s
Fig. 3.51 – Handgame, Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation c. 1920s

In another photograph taken at a fandango in Stillwater on the Fallon Indian Reservation (formally known as the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe of the Fallon Reservation and Colony), Sampson pictured a group of women playing tug-o-war in front of a small group of spectators (Fig. 3.49). Although Adele Sampson recognized the site and provided the rough date of the

1920s, she was unable to identify any of the people in the image. In the center, a man holds a striped flag that probably designates the midpoint marker for the contest. The female competitors pull with all their might, and even in the grainy black and white photograph, it is possible to see the dust being kicked up. Feats of strength can also be seen in another photograph taken by Sampson, possibly during the same trip to Stillwater.[36] In this image (Fig. 3.50), two men wrestle in an arena delineated by sticks and surrounded by a large audience. Several cars can be seen in the background, and because the point of view is slightly elevated, Sampson may have shot the image from atop an automobile in the foreground. Furthermore, if the rows of cars are any indication, then the event as a whole was well-attended.

"Automotive mobility" according to historian Philip Deloria, "allowed Native people to imagine an even broader vision of Indian country, one that transcended individual tribes and places and helped create new expressions of the pan-Indian and Intertribal" (2004: 153). Attendance at fandangos and other intertribal events might not have been possible without cars given the vast distances between the tribal communities in the Great Basin Region. As Deloria states, "it is no coincidence that the rise of an intertribal powwow circuit began at the same moment as Indian people were acquiring and using automobiles" (ibid). Perhaps the ease in travel can also account for the influx of non-Native games and competitions that found their way into intertribal events.

Although the Great Basin tribes assimilated certain games from Euro-American culture like competitive eating and tug-o-war, they still preferred to play their favorite game of chance—the handgame (also known as the stickgame). Due to technological constraints, crowds, or just preference, Sampson only photographed one half of the handgame at any given time.

[36] Adele Sampson also identified this image as Stillwater Indian Reservation, 1920s, and recognized the central spectator (with his back to the viewer) as "Chubb-I, a.k.a. Harry Stevens."



Fig. 3.52 Handgame,
Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation, c.1920s



Fig. 3.53 Handgame,
Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation, c. 1920s

He either depicts the team holding the sticks known as "the hiders" (Figs. 3.51 & 3.52), or the opposite team, who is guessing the correct order of the sticks (Fig. 3.53). Surrounding the players are the attendees who are not just disinterested observers, but actively cheer on their team and bet on the results. According to the *The People* exhibition at Nevada Historical Society:

> Gambling, especially the handgame, has always been a favorite pastime of the People [Native Nevadans]. Traditional forms of gambling were (and are) regarded as important forms of entertainment and social discourse, not as 'vices.' In contrast to the European pattern, gambling matches were often a part of religious festivals, and success at gambling was believed to depend upon spiritual powers.[37]

Although it has elements of spirituality, the handgame may be photographed. In fact, it is probably the most photographed traditional activity of the Northern Paiute, especially by anthropologists and tourists.

During the 1920s, Sampson recorded the subsistence activities of his people, such as fishing, rabbit hunts, and mudhen drives. One of these photographs, taken on the east side of Winnemucca Lake (Fig. 3.54), illustrates how the mudhen (or coot) drives were communal

[37] Exhibition available online at the Nevada Historical Society website. Accessed August 1, 2012. http://museums.nevadaculture.org/index.php?option=com_wrapper&Itemid=304

affairs. Every fall, families would set up camp along the lake and join in the cooperative effort to round up the birds which would then be skinned, roasted onsite, and the strips of skin would be woven into blankets.[38] Sampson presents a glimpse of this event, depicting his fellow community members, Mark Jones and his son, the Winnemucca Family, and Sara Moore, among their provisions at camp.

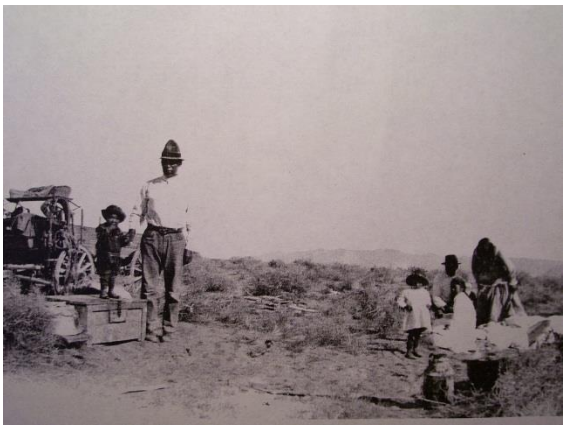


Fig. 3.54 Mudhen drive time, c. 1920s



Fig. 3.56 Nina Smith, Ella and Charlie Winnemucca, c. 1920

In many of the photographs that depict daily activities, the subjects actively engaged Sampson, attesting to the level of familiarity with the photographer. In a snapshot portraying Nina Smith, Charlie and Ella Winnemucca (Fig. 3.56), all three turn and acknowledge Sampson's presence. They might even be posing for his camera, but it is difficult to read since the image is slightly blurry. The group is fishing for Cui-ui, a lake sucker fish and their primary food source, at a dam on the Truckee River near their home in Pyramid Lake. To take this photograph, Sampson had to travel thirty-five miles northeast of his home in Reno to the Pyramid Lake Reservation where this band of Northern Paiute lives. Known as the "Kuyuidokado" or *Cui-ui Eaters*, this band takes its name from an origin story that ties the group's existence to Pyramid Lake and the fish.[39] It is important to understand that during the

[38] Per the Nevada State Museum website, Accessed August 1, 2012. http://www.clan.lib.nv.us/content.asp?id=379
[39] Per the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribal website. Accessed September 1, 2012. http://plpt.nsn.us/story.html

1920s, the BIA was pressuring the Northern Paiute to abandon fishing and so encourage farming in an effort to assimilate their communities (Knack and Steward 1984). Simultaneously, the government was erecting several dams, including the one pictured in this image, to divert water to more populated areas. The Cui-ui fish, native to Pyramid Lake and tied to tribal identity, was going extinct. By the mid-1930s, less than ten years after this photograph was taken, these same people would fight for their water rights to keep the fish alive. Sampson often visited his friends at Pyramid Lake and was undoubtedly aware of their ongoing struggles with the government.

In 1924, at the same time that Harry Sampson was taking snapshots of his people, Edward Sheriff Curtis arrived in the Reno area to create images for his project, *The North American Indian*. In his Northern Paiute or *Paviosto* images, Curtis photographed two of Sampson's community members (unknown individuals) around Walker Lake. In one set of images, an indigenous man is pictured in a breechcloth fishing with a gaff-hook (Figs. 3.56-57). Poised on the water's edge, the man breaks the glassy surface of the lake with his fishing pole. In both cases, he is depicted as a lone figure in an otherwise empty landscape.

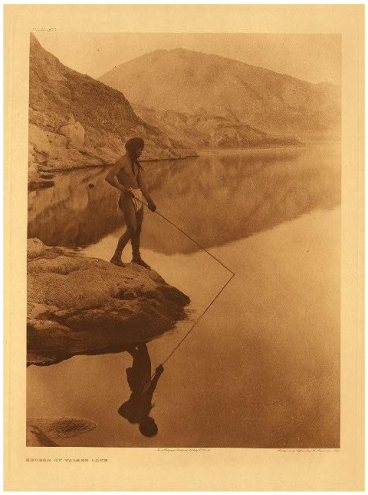


Fig. 3.57

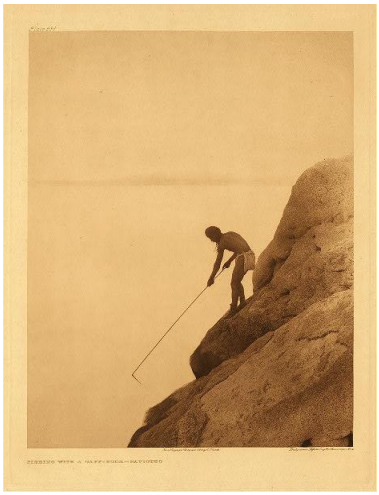


Fig. 3.58

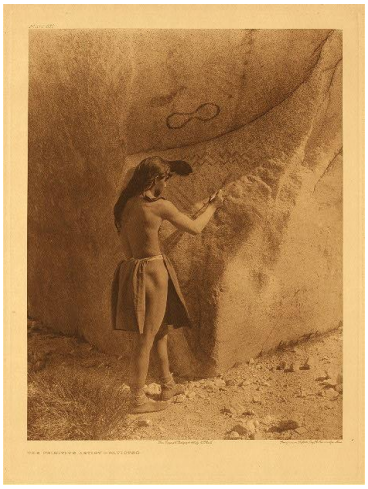


Fig. 3.59

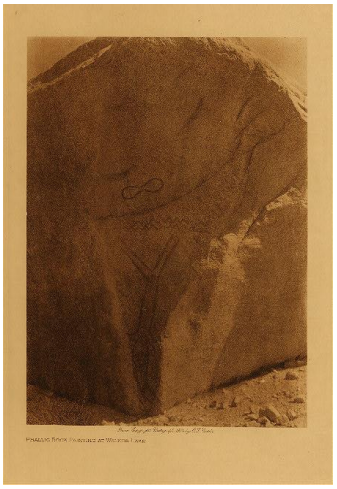


Fig. 3.60

Edward Curtis, *The North American Indian*, volume 15
Fig. 3.57 - Shores of Walker Lake
Fig. 3.58 - Fishing with a gaff-hook – Paviotso
Fig. 3.59 - The Primitive Artist - Paviotso
Fig. 3.60 - Phallic Rock Painting at Walker Lake

In another pair of images, a Native teen in a loincloth is depicted as a "primitive artist" creating "phallic symbols" on a rock face (Figs. 3.58-59). He stands with his back to the viewer, leaning against the rock and drawing with his right hand. Curtis titled this image "The Primitive artist – Paviotso," and provided the following description: "A side of the glaciated bowlder [sic] near the southwestern shore of Walker Lake is covered with phallic symbols in faded red."[40] To ensure that the viewer clearly sees the artwork, Curtis took another photograph of the boulder alone (Fig. 3.60). In both the fishing image and the artist photograph, the central figure is shown dressed as per an earlier state of indigenous existence while inhabiting a rather picturesque landscape.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Curtis wanted to evoke what he conceived to be "traditional" Indians as they lived before the arrival of Europeans. To do so, he carefully removed all evidence of contemporary life and photographed his subjects in romantic poses

[40] Edward Curtis, *The North American Indian*, v. 15, online accessed November 1, 2012, http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?curt:5:./temp/~am mem_3W97::

performing "traditional" activities. Lucy Lippard considers that "he has inadvertently provided us with a target on which to focus our changing notions of 'authenticity.' Curtis is attacked most often, and most legitimately, for his lack of ethnographic veracity" (1992: 25). Indeed, as noted above, Curtis frequently provided costumes and other props, dressing up his subjects to appear more "native." His photographs are largely anachronistic and often characterized by dress that is inappropriate for the tribe. For example, Curtis must have provided the loincloth for the men to wear in the Paviotso images, since it is different from the traditional fringed or feathered style of the Northern Paiute dress. "By this date," the Nevada Historical Society points out, "denim Levis had largely replaced the traditional eagle-down kilts."[41]

Whereas Harry Sampson's images show the Great Basin tribes as a mixed community coming together to take part in sustenance activities and intertribal events, Edward Curtis depicted the people as lone individuals and distinct Native groups. According to W. Richard West, Jr. (Cheyenne), the former director of the National Museum of the American Indian, "Curtis imposed his own vision and understanding of reality on the subjects he photographed rather than reflecting what may have been their very different perceptions of that same reality" (T. Johnson 1998: xiii). Curtis's images of indigeneity ignored the realities of contemporary life and instead represented a romantic past. "The image conveyed in the photograph is basic to how we, as Indians, conceive of ourselves as actual and real beings," states Acoma Pueblo scholar Simon Ortiz, and "this, I believe, is the difference between the representation of Indian people as icon and emblem, which too easily becomes The Vanishing American, and the actual and real people that Indians truly are" (2004: 7). Curtis's iconic images of the "vanishing" American

[41] Nevada Historical Society, *The People: A History of Native Nevadans Through Photography*. Virtual exhibit accessed November 1, 2012, http://museums.nevadaculture.org/new_exhibits/nhs-expeople/eth591.htm

Indians are frequently circulated while many Native-produced photographs like those of Harry Sampson languish in archival storage boxes.

In 2005, Clayton Sampson selected thirty photographs from his father's collection and donated them to the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe Senior Center where the framed and matted prints now adorn the walls of the community room. "Tribal elders are ecstatic at the work," Sampson said, for "many were small children at the time the photos were taken, but they can still identify the subjects."[42] This installation of privately taken images can be considered a type of gifting—of furnishing memories and their related stories to the community.

Through my case studies in the next two chapters, I will discuss this type of transmission and performative quality of photographs in greater detail.

[42] Per my phone conversation with Clayton Sampson in June 2009. He is also quoted similarly in Josh Johnson, "Rare Photos of Fallon Tribe Unveiled Saturday," *Lahontan Valley News*, May 6, 2005, np

Chapter 4

Performances of Memories
Case Study #1: George Johnston

The instances of native eyes in the aperture are continuous narratives that counter the closure of discoveries and cultural evidence in photographs.

- Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabe), *Fugitive Poses*

In previous chapters, I have discussed the participation in and practice of photography by Native North Americans. Here begins one of two case studies in which I focus on the performance of memory in relation to Native American photography. As mentioned in the last chapter, I am defining the performance of memory as an act of transmission. Like scholars Susanne Küchler and Walter Melion, I consider that "memory is defined as a process precipitated and shaped by the relaying of visual information" (1991: 3). This process, I argue, is an ongoing series of performative acts that starts with the conception of images and continues through their exhibition, and so participation in and practice of photography must come into play. Creating memories as well as the display and transmission of those memories via exhibition are a large part of both of my case studies through which I shall explore how "memory is actively constructed as a social and cultural process" (ibid: 4). In order to achieve this goal, the case studies will be presented as chronological cultural histories of memories. However, as Allen and Mary Nooter Roberts have stated, "in order to reconstruct any culture's history, one must begin with an understanding of what that culture means by history and memory in the first place" (1996: 30). Therefore, before discussing the photographs, I will start with a brief biography and community origins of each photographer. This chapter will focus on George Johnston, an Inland Tlingit from Teslin, Yukon Territory, and the next will concentrate on Jennie Ross Cobb, a Cherokee from Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

Teslin Tlingit Community Origins

Located in the Pacific Northwest, the Tlingit are a group of fourteen tribes that occupy the coastal region of Southeastern Alaska. Lesser known are the Inland Tlingit, located on the border of British Columbia and Yukon Territory in and around the villages of Atlin and Teslin. Understanding the relationship between Inland Tlingit and their coastal cousins helps to illuminate the photographic imagery of George Johnston (1897-1972), a Teslin Tlingit also known as *Kaash Klaõ*.

The origins of the Inland Tlingit are somewhat contested. Tlingit oral tradition dictates that "the Teslin Tlingit people are descendants of the Taku Qwan who, in the early 18th century, moved and they started a way of life separate from that of their coastal relatives."[1] However, anthropologists believe that rather than emigrating from the coast, many Inland Tlingits may be direct descendants from an interior Athabaskan-speaking people who adopted the Tlingit language through trade and contact, eventually becoming "Tlingitized" (McClellan 1981; Emmons 1991; Olsen 1991). This theory stems from the fact that the Inland Tlingit dialect is quite different than the coastal Tlingit dialect. During her interviews with the Teslin Tlingit, anthropologist Catharine McClellan found that "Teslin informants say: 'This isn't the real Tlingit. The real Tlingit is at Juneau. The Juneau people are smoother when they talk. They laugh at this way. We are too fast and we cut off the words too quick.' Atlin people echo these sentiments" (1953: 48). This different dialect is probably the reason that the coastal Tlingit call the inlanders *gunana* or "strangers" (McClellan 1981: 469).

Another reason why the Inland bands were traditionally classified as *gunana* by the coastal Tlingit could be due to their perception of the interior as a space for social outcasts

[1] Per the Teslin Tlingit Council website accessed August 1, 2011. http://www.ttc-teslin.com/heritage.html

(McClellan 1953: 50). Several Tlingit stories end with a figure being exiled to the interior lands (DeLaguna 1960). Perhaps the best example is an origin story titled, *Why People Came to Teslin*:

> One woman stayed right with that man [her cousin] and they had children…And they were trapping. They had deadfalls. He was getting fur to pay his shame back—they were cousins…His people and her people were all one people anyway, but it caused shame. Therefore they got together and hunted them down like animals. They didn't catch them for years and they couldn't find them. He never had a chance to get down to the ocean again. … She went out to dig roots in the spring. By that time she had six kids. … they saw her and recognized her and they asked her where he was. And she told them, "Don't do anything to him. He'll pay you back in full. We know we have caused you shame." And they never said a word to her, just asked where their camp was … they went right up the creek and saw all their winter signs. That's how they found him there. And that man was lying down in the house and they chased him. As soon as he heard them he ran out. They tried to stab him. But he had nothing on his feet. It was slushy and he had taken off his moccasins. They chased him around the lake. ... He ran till the bottom of his feet wore off and all the sinews were out. He couldn't run off the lake, it was too deep snow. "Well, he said, I've given you a run for my life. But don't let those caches go to waste. Use them and don't hurt my children nor their mother." And they killed him there. That's how they first came up here.[2]

This story is not only important for turning a space into a place, but it also describes a particular nomadic way of life for the interior First Nations. With the ocean nearby, the coastal Natives had easy access to a food source, but the Inland Tlingit did not have the luxury of being sedentary. They had to go berrying in the spring, net salmon in the summer, catch ducks in the autumn, and hunt and trap animals in the winter (Oberg 1973; Schuster 2010). Apparently this

[2] Narrated by Pansy Bailey of Teslin on March 9, 1951 to Catherine McClellan. As cited in McClellan 2007: 695.

constant movement was “a prime favorite among coastal dances that simply mimes the poor interior peoples wandering about unceasingly in search of food” (McClellan 1953: 50).

Despite any differences between the coastal and Inland Tlingit groups, anthropologist Julie Cruikshank notes that, “ties with the coast have always been a source of pride for the inland Tlingit families” (Cruikshank 1975: 54). George Johnston made many trips to the coast to learn about his heritage, or, as he said, “so that we are sure of who we are” (ibid). During these trips, he collected art and artifacts, studied Tlingit customs and ritual practices, and learned traditional stories and songs. His nephew, Sam Johnston recalled that, “George knew all of the stories. He believed in all of that old Indian religion” (Geddes 1997).

One of the oldest photographs in George Johnston’s collection was taken by a relative while he was visiting Juneau at the turn of the twentieth century (Fig. 4.1). In the image, a fifteen-year-old Johnston stands (second from the right) with other First Nations children in front of what appears to be a large longhouse. Everyone is dressed in traditional regalia except for a pair of girls in white dresses; one of whom is off to the left watching the others.



Fig. 4.1 George Johnston in Juneau, c. 1910

Whether intentional or not, the group arranged themselves in ascending height order, from left to right. The tallest boys, including Johnston, wear ceremonial dance shirts adorned with clan crests, while the girls wear less elaborately decorated shawls. Johnston did not identify this particular event, nor did he provide the identities of the other children in the image. However, an analysis of the clan crests does give some indication as to the identity of the young adults. As Frederica De Laguna states, "an emblem or crest almost always designates a kin group" (1991: 32), and so this feature of the photo would have been significant to Johnston and those with whom he shared the image.

Two matrilineal moieties, Raven and Wolf, form the basis of the Tlingit social system.[3] These moieties are further sub-divided into a number of clans, each with their own crest. Under the Raven moiety, the prominent crests include the Raven, Owl, Salmon, Frog, Sea Lion, Sun, Moon and Ocean, while the Wolf moiety has the Wolf, Eagle, Bear, Killer Whale, Shark, Halibut and Thunderbird (Emmons and DeLaguna 1981: 213). George Johnston hailed from the high ranking *Yanyeidí* clan (Wolf moiety), and although the wolf was their crest, in the photograph Johnston is wearing a killer whale ceremonial shirt. According to anthropologist John Swanton, "the killer whale is claimed especially by the Daqlawe'dî, Tsague'dî and the Wucketā'n…yet it is used by other wolf clans" (1904: 415-416). Perhaps to honor a visiting relative, the hosts gave Johnston the regalia to wear for the event. This brings into question the status of the other people in picture. Are they visitors as well? Each appears to be wearing a different crest. The boy to the left of Johnston is wearing a raven crest, while the young man to the right is displaying a bear. Since "all Raven clans are supposed to have a right to the Raven emblem" (ibid), then conceivably the boy with the Raven crest is from that moiety. With this same line of

[3] The moieties are also known as Raven/Crow or Wolf/Eagle dependent upon the region of Tlingit territory in question. For example, the Inland Tlingit have Crown and Wolf moieties. For more information see Emmons and DeLaguna 1991.

reasoning, the boy wearing the Bear crest is, like Johnston, from the Wolf moiety.

Most likely, the photograph was taken by a proud parent or relative in order to document the event. It has the hallmarks of what photo historian Dave Kenyon refers to as a "rites of passage" type of image—recording a stage of social life and involvement in community traditions (1989: 28). However, it should be noted that the photograph does not actually depict the ritual *in progress* for which the children are dressed. In fact, it is rare to find early photographs taken by Native photographers *during* an indigenous ritual or ceremony. Even modern photographers such as Victor Masayesva, Jr. (Hopi), state that, "you cannot violate the silences just as you would not intrude on ceremony. … refraining from photographing certain subjects has become a kind of worship" (1983: 10). While there is a generally a self-imposed restriction to photographing sacred events within most Native communities, this image—as well as many others—indicates that the same prohibitions do not necessarily apply to picturing participants in their regalia either before or after an event.

Photographs of clan members in ceremonial dress seem to have a larger function than just recording an event for posterity. On more than one occasion, such images have been gifted to kin as a remembrance of heritage. For example, David Hammond, a Tlingit from Marsh Lake, Yukon Territory, had an amateur snapshot "taken before the turn of the century" of coastal Tlingit in regalia (Cruikshank 1975: 54). He claimed that a relative from the coast sent him the picture to "remind" him of his Tlingit ancestors (ibid). Likewise, George Johnston presented a copy of his Juneau photograph to his daughter, Dolly. Furnished to reinforce family identity, these images help protect against cultural amnesia and serve to connect the inland bands to the coast. These photographs are, in effect, performing memory as signposts that point towards the coast as the origin for Tlingit culture.

Biography of George Johnston

At the end of the nineteenth century, George Johnston's family migrated from the Nakina River near Juneau, Alaska, to their new home in Teslin, Yukon Territory (or *Deisleen Aayi* in Tlingit, meaning "long, narrow waters").[4]



Fig. 4.2 Putting a Dirt Roof On - Johnston Town, BC, c. 1910
left to right: (roof back row) William Johnston, Rosie Morris, David Johnston, Daisy Johnston, Livingstone Johnston, Bessie and Ruth Johnston. (roof front row) Paddy Johnston and George Johnston (seated holding shovel); (foreground) Philip Johnston and two unknown children with their backs to the camera.

Their new homeland was filled with friends and relatives who also migrated to the southern Yukon during the 1800s. Like most groups in the area, the Johnstons had a winter camp. "Johnston town," as it was called, was located just inside British Columbia on the southern shore of Teslin Lake. The Johnstons spent their summers with other families in the village of Teslin on the north shore. An early photograph from George Johnston's collection shows his large, extended family taking a break during a community project (Fig. 4.2). They are pictured in Johnston Town in the process of installing a sod roof on Chief Billy Johnston's home. Except

[4] George Johnston's year of birth is debatable. The Yukon Archives and the George Johnston Museum have claimed three possible years: 1884, 1894, and 1897. Based on the age he appears in some of his early photographs, I am placing his birth in 1897.

for two children who are turned away from the photographer, all of the people in the image have been identified by community members. This includes George Johnston who is seated in the center, holding a shovel, and ready to participate in the task. Yet the image is not just a record of the people present on that day, it documents living, collective cultural activities.

By photographing part of the building process, knowingly or not, Johnston has helped to safeguard knowledge of this construction technique. Using earth to insulate dwellings is a building tradition was passed down for generations, but relatively few such structures remain today. Without photographic documentation, this aspect of material culture—although still recalled by village elders—could well be lost to history. As Peter Nabokov and Robert Easton have noted, "a number of house types were not recorded ... [and] like the oral traditions which passed them along, the intimate knowledge of their construction materials and building skills was always a few generations away from disappearance" (1989: 50).

The same photograph documents the construction of the *permanent* encampment eventually known as Johnston Town. Unlike Western photographs that romanticized indigenous peoples as nomadic residents who lived in temporary abodes "at one with nature," this image depicts the Teslin Tlingits establishing their community, building homes, and staking claim to land. In her analysis of Western photography, Tuscarora artist and scholar Jolene Rickard argues that "the Indian was constructed as part of the 'natural' landscape but not as owner" (1998: 64). Indeed, photographs such as this that recorded the development of property were instrumental for the Teslin Tlingits in asserting their title to the land. For instance, their land-rights claims commenced in 1973, the same year the George Johnston Museum was established and these photographs were on display. Community-building images such this photograph became embedded in the collective consciousness and helped serve as justification for land claims.

Approximately ten years after this photograph was taken, the Johnston family left Johnston Town, making Teslin their permanent residence. Located on the Canadian route to the Klondike goldfields, Teslin briefly became a boomtown during the famous Yukon gold rush of 1897-1898. At that time, the Hudson Bay Company opened a trading post in the village to serve the traveling prospectors and the local population. As a popular crossroads and as a central base from which to hunt and trap, Teslin grew as Tlingit families like the Johnstons moved there.

Teslin is remote, but not entirely secluded, for the First Nation villages of Atlin (Tlingit) and Carcross (Tagish) are about fifty miles away. Among these three Native communities, the inhabitants traded, "went visiting," and found spouses from other clans. A network of trails was still in use until the Alaska Highway was built through the area in 1943. George Johnston used these trails to visit Lucy James, a Tlingit from the *Kukkkittan* or Crow clan, living in Carcross whom he would eventually marry. They had one daughter named Dolly, but tragedy struck when Lucy died in a hunting accident in 1935 leaving Johnston a widower with an 11-month-old child. Johnston never remarried and he raised Dolly with the help of his family. Dolly Johnston remembers that "I used to go hunting with him. I used to go fishing with him. And I used to go woodcutting with him. He used to tell me how it's done—that's what he taught me."[5]

Hunting and trapping were, and still are, a way of life for many people in the Yukon. Rich with fur-trapping funds in the early twentieth century, Teslin community members often traveled to Whitehorse, the nearest large city, 100 miles to the northwest, in order to trade and get supplies. With no roads to get there easily, the Teslin Tlingits went by boat in the summer and by dog sled or snowshoe in the winter. On such a trip in 1928, George Johnston stopped by the newly opened Taylor & Drury Motors and purchased the first car the dealer ever sold—a

[5] Dolly Johnston interviewed by Carol Geddes in her documentary, *Picturing a People: George Johnston, Tlingit Photographer*, 1997.

1928 four-cylinder model AB Chevrolet.[6] His fur pelts covered most of the $900 purchase price with $26 dollars extra for the bumper and a spare tire (ibid). George Johnston did not know how to drive, so the dealer's son gave him lessons.[7] In turn, he taught his brother to drive, but according to community members, Johnston was the only one ever known to drive the car.[8] His daughter Dolly recalled that she was not allowed to sit next to her dad in the auto—for that space was reserved for his camera.[9]

George Johnston purchased his first camera sometime between 1910 and 1920 from Eaton's mail order catalog (a Canadian retailer similar to Sears, Roebuck & Company).[10] According to the Teslin Historical and Museum Society, "George had no tripod and rarely used a stand or prop, preferring hand-held shots. He stored his camera in a home-made hide box in order to transport it with him in the car, boat, and on foot in a pack. No one else was invited to touch the camera or use it."[11] Using a developing kit, Johnston processed all of his film in a back room of his bush cabin. "He learned how to develop his own pictures," says his nephew Sam Johnston, and "I think that was almost like today's Polaroid, you're gonna see your pictures right away, and I think he really liked that … all the photographs you see are his. He developed on his own. He learned how to do that. It must've taken quite something, for a person that never went to school or anything, to still come out with photos like this" (Geddes 1998).

The Yukon Archives attributes 319 photographs to Johnston, but he gave many away more as gifts, so there may be other images still in private hands. The primary subject matter of

[6] "First Sale," *The Whitehorse Star*, Monday, June 11, 1962.
[7] George Johnston to Father Tanguay, unpublished tape-recorded interview, March 1968, Yukon Archives
[8] George Johnston Museum website, (Accessed May 5, 2012) www.yukonweb.com/community/teslin/museum/page3.html
[9] Per Sharon Chatterton, Director of the George Johnston Museum during an undated interview with Dolly Johnston.
[10] Although the George Johnston Museum has not located his original camera, it is reported to be a Kodak 616 Bellows. However, the 616 was not in production until 1932, so his first camera was probably a Kodak 116 Bellows which was first available in 1899. Per *The History of Kodak Cameras* located on the Kodak website. Accessed November 1, 2012. http://www.kodak.com/global/en/consumer/products/techInfo/aa13/aa13.pdf
[11] Per George Johnston Museum website.

his images was his community, and he "was an impulse photographer, stopping people at their work, rushing off to photograph something he'd hear was happening about town or recording the seasonal activities of his own family."[12] One thing is for certain, "he always had a camera with him," Sam Johnston said, "no matter where he went, whether he was beaver hunting or wherever he is, he always took pictures" (Geddes 1997).

Johnston's images are dated between 1910 and 1945—a period recalled as the "Golden Times of the Teslin Tlingit" because the community was economically, socially, and culturally stable (Thornton 2000: 155). However, near the end of World War II, George Johnston abruptly stopped taking photographs. A devastating measles epidemic, changes to the trapping laws, a lower price for furs, and the Alaska Highway (which bisected their lands) all brought irrevocable changes to the lives of the Inland Tlingit. Essentially, there were "fewer good times to photograph" (Geddes 1997). Before he passed away in 1972, Johnston was told by community leaders that the local museum, which was in the planning stages at the time, would be named in his honor. Presently on display are his car, photographs, and personal collection of Tlingit artifacts alongside other locally-donated items such as snowshoes and button blankets.

George Johnston's Photography Collection

In this section, I will contextualize George Johnston's photographs by focusing on their content and providing Teslin Tlingit commentary, when available. For purposes of clarity, I have divided the imagery into three main themes: hunting and trapping, Johnston's automobile, and village gatherings.

[12]George Johnston Museum website: www.yukonweb.com/community/teslin/museum/page3.html

Hunting and Trapping Images

One of the earliest photographs in George Johnston's collection is a self-portrait with his young nephew, Matthew Jackson, while the two were on a hunting expedition "somewhere south of Juneau" (Fig. 4.3). Frontally posed, they stand on a bare patch of ground before a snowy landscape and hold hunting rifles that are almost as tall as they. Identification of the site and subjects was made by Johnston's daughter, Dolly Johnston, whose remarks regarding this image are rather telling, for she includes information on the legacy of the firearms, stating that "Frank Johnston [her relative] now has the Savage 300 gun" as seen in the picture. This comment points to the importance of guns within the Teslin Tlingit community.



Fig. 4.3 George Johnston and Matthew Jackson, c. 1915



Fig. 4.4 Edward T. Jack of Atlin and Daisy Johnston of Teslin, c. 1920

By the time George Johnston was photographing his people, guns were long incorporated into Tlingit life. According to anthropologists George Thornton Emmons and Federica de Laguna, "within little more than a generation after the first introduction of firearms, the Tlingit hunters had become dependent on them for subsistence.… by 1827 ... the Tlingit had become so

dependent on firearms that they could not kill a single animal without them" (1991: 132). This statement is supported by Johnston's images, although belied by other hunting methods like trapping that remained important. A large percentage of Johnston's subjects, both men and women, are depicted with their guns. For example, Edward T. Jack of Atlin and Daisy Johnson of Teslin proudly display their firearms for Johnston's camera (Fig. 4.4). As this photograph suggests, Inland Tlingit women were just as accustomed to using guns as the men. "Women were equally at home out on the land," states Teslin Tlingit Carol Geddes, "showing confidence and strength in hunting, fishing, and trapping" (Geddes 1998).

Customarily, Inland Tlingits taught both girls and boys hunting and trapping skills at an early age. As elder Moses Jackson claimed, "well, myself, I learn trapping and hunting from the old people. I teach my kids what I know, and they are pretty good. I teach my Jane how to set snares for gophers" (McClellan 1987: 320). Likewise, Tlingit elder George Sidney stated that, "the first time I start trapping was with my grandpa. The first I remember was 1924 when I was going out trapping. It was a beaver hunt, special.… My grandpa, he shows me how to hunt, how to get some meat for the winter, and how to fish" (ibid). George Johnston participated in this tradition of teaching the youth to hunt, and he photographed his endeavors.


Fig. 4.5 George Johnston, c. 1930


Fig. 4.6 Unidentified boy, c. 1930

In a pair of images created sometime between 1930 and 1942, Johnston and an unidentified boy are pictured next to their game (Figs. 4.5-6). In the first, Johnston is seated in the center flanked by the guns and two dead geese (Fig. 4.5). He proudly displays his spring catch—a beaver—by propping it against his forearm and leg. Most likely, this photograph was taken by his young protégé, so the child was not just learning hunting techniques, but photography skills as well. In the other photograph, the subject and photographer reverse positions, and the young boy is posed on the far side of the scene (Fig. 4.6). Unlike the previous picture in which the guns were somewhat haphazardly placed, Johnston seems to have arranged the objects to be in perfect alignment. To take the photograph, he stepped forward and to the left, so that the edges of the frame were filled with the boy and the items. In taking the time to compose the scene, Johnston probably wanted to convey the message of a successful hunt—and teaching exercise.

This photograph was not taking *during* the hunt. According to social anthropologist Garry Marvin, who has written extensively on hunting and hunting photography:

> Most hunting photographs do not record the hunter in the act of hunting, they record the end of hunting. While hunting, the hunter is absorbed in looking outwards towards the animal (a parallel with the tourist who looks outwards to a site/sight of interest), and this is not usually recorded. Photographs recording the hunter with the dead animal reverse the angel of view: the hunter poses behind the animal, looks towards the camera, and not towards the animal. As with tourist photographs, trophy photographs involve a pause and concern with pose (2010: 113).

Posing to take a "trophy photograph" suggests hunting for sport and the desire to have a souvenir of the event, but that may not be the case here. Although some Inland Tlingits worked for Yukon outfitting companies as big-game hunting guides, or opened their own

outfitting business as did Tagish/Inland Tlingit Johnnie Johns, I could find no historical evidence of First Nations people hunting for sport. According to Teslin Tlingit Virginia Smarch, "they [ancestors] never thought 'well there's an animal. I'm going to kill it.' They had to have a need for that animal before they killed it. They never killed anything just for the sport of killing, because in their ways that was wasteful. And they believed strictly in that—that they had to treat their animal spirits right, or else they would go without" (McClellan 1987: 322). Belief in animal spirits and more specifically, "Animal Mother," endured into the 1940s and 1950s, which "laid down certain rules for the proper way for humans to treat her animal children" (McClellan 2001: 90). Since Johnston "believed in all of that old Indian religion" (per Sam Johnston), then perhaps, rather than a "trophy" of the kill, his photographs memorialize the animal spirit through the pictures he made.

Regardless of the intent, George Johnston's hunting images demonstrate a very conscious posing by the people with their game in the manner described by Garry Marvin. For example, in three different images from Johnston's collection, Tlingit hunters can be seen standing beside their kill (Figs. 4.7-9). In one image, George Sidney cradles a gun in his left arm while using his other hand to point a knife towards a dead bear in the foreground (Fig. 4.7). The vast expanse of the Yukon landscape stretches out behind him, giving the illusion that he is utterly alone in the hunt. In another image, Dick Morris grips the neck of a bald eagle to position it towards the camera, and with his other hand, he gently spreads its wing (Fig. 4.8). In performing this action, he is not trying to make it appear as though the eagle is flying, but to better display its feathers and wingspan.

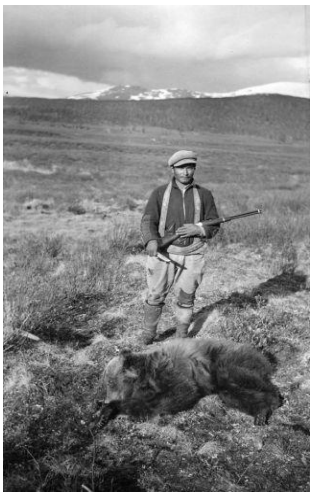

Fig. 4.7 George Sidney, c. 1930


Fig. 4.8 Dick Morris, c. 1930


Fig. 4.9 George Johnston, c. 1930

Like Marvin maintains, "the posing of the animal is not, as others have argued, to pose the animal in the most lifelike position; hunters are not ashamed of their actions and do not seek to simulate life out of the death they have brought about. Rather, they pose the animal to reveal the physical qualities that the hunter most admires, for example, its size, the quality of its horns or antlers, the size of teeth or paws, or its general beauty" (2010: 113). Johnston's desire to illustrate the physical qualities of the animal is evident when he holds the head of a bull moose in such a way to display its full rack of antlers (Fig. 4.9). Thus, in respect for the animal's spirit, he honors the age and power of the beast that has given its life to the hunter.

Like most photographs, hunting images were intended to be narrated by their subjects. "The hunting photograph is a record of a different order, for it is the record of a relationship that will be recounted in great detail later," states Marvin, "the narrative of a hunting photograph involves accounts of how it was to be there, the difficulty or ease of approaching the animal … and how it was to take the shot. The photograph marks the end of the fleshy, hunted animal and the beginning of the process of re-creating and re-enlivening it in a cultural form" (ibid). Unfortunately, George Johnston's photographs are not accompanied by original commentary

from their subjects, but they are no less "enlivened" by narration. For instance, in an account preserved in the Yukon Archives, Teslin Tlingit elders contributed their stories of a serendipitous hunt. Upon viewing the image of David Johnston and Maude the horse taken by George Johnston (Fig. 4.10), the elders recalled the following story which now serves as the caption to this image in the Archives:



Fig. 4.10 David Johnston and Maude (the horse) going to Johnston Town, c. 1930

> This sled was pulled by oxen from Hazelton, B.C. [a distance of more than 1,170k] up the Telegraph Trail towards Johnston Town. The Army took a lot of stuff like sleighs and toboggans for souvenirs, but they [the family] still have the bobsled. The sled was pulled by oxen, but he [David Johnston] ran out of feed and they were killed. David got runners, built the bobsled, and shod the horse. By hitching a horse to the sled, it was useful for winter hunting. About four miles south of Morley Bay, some moose thought the horse was another moose. The moose in this photo were felled in two shots by George Johnston.[13]

George Johnston was such a gifted hunter that each moose was taken down with a single shot. While his younger brother hurriedly butchered the moose to pack it out and to safeguard it from

[13] This story was collected by the Yukon Archives during the Teslin Tlingit Council Project Elders meeting held in Teslin on March 10, 2009. The George Johnston Museum replicates this story with slightly more detail. My citation includes information from both institutions.

scavengers, Johnston took another shot—with his camera. The photograph not only records the almost mythic abilities of George Johnston, but points to the resourcefulness of David Johnston. Furthermore, the photograph helped to generate a collective memory about landscape, perseverance, and skills that are now inscribed within the historical record.

Trapping – The Fur Trade

During the early twentieth century, the Teslin Tlingit economy flourished due to the fur trade. Among his people, George Johnston was an exceptionally talented trapper who became relatively wealthy from the sale of his pelts. Anthropologist Julie Cruikshank, who interviewed him in the 1970s, noted that "during the First World War, fur prices were high. Mr. Johnston remembers when a silver fox was worth $700" (1975: 43). This amount is validated by the records from the Anglican Diocese of Yukon. In 1914, they recorded the price for silver fox at $1,000 and the price for a black fox slightly higher. Even into the Great Depression, the prices for fur remained high. "In 1928 fox is a good price," claimed Teslin Tlingit elder George Sidney, "Cross fox was worth over $600 or $400. In 1930 prices come up more. That time outside there was a depression. I never know anything about it" (in McClellan 1987: 320). So while most of the Native and non-Native population struggled during the first part of the twentieth century, the Inland Tlingit lived a relatively comfortable lifestyle.

With fur a key commodity for the Tlingit, it is understandable that trapping would be a theme of George Johnston's photographs. As Cruikshank noted, "most of these photographs were taken between 1910 and 1940 when furs brought Indian families a sizeable income. The pictures reflect the optimism of those years" (1975: 41). In many of Johnston's images, people are posed in front of pelts. For example, one photograph depicts a young girl and boy standing

in front of thousands of dollars' worth of lynx and fox furs (Fig. 4.11). Clasping her hands together, the girl stands very erect, while her little brother stands nearby wearing snow goggles and holding a rifle at his waist.[14] By depicting the boy with a gun in front of the catch, Johnston may have been cracking a visual joke implying that it was he who collected all of the pelts in the background. It could also be that the image is meant prefigure the boy's role in growing up as a successful trapper—or that the gun itself was to be honored by the picture.


Fig. 4.11 Two children standing in front of furs, c. 1930


Fig. 4.12 George Johnston and Edward Jack, c. 1930

Another image features a similar composition of individuals standing before a string of pelts. In a photograph of George Johnston and Edward T. Jack of Atlin (Fig. 4.12), Johnston is kneeling on the left and holding a rifle upright while Jack steps towards him, looking down, and untangling a wire snare in his hands. Trade goods are clearly evident in the image and include a metal canteen strapped across Jack's chest, and a dark, long-necked pipe clutched in his teeth. The silver fox, grey fox, and coyote pelts are recognizable commodities, and effectively serve as a conspicuous display of wealth. Certainly, the Teslin Tlingit remember this period as the "Golden Times" of their people (Geddes 1997). This economic prosperity made it possible for

[14] These children have been identified, but there seems to be some confusion as to who they are. In one version of this image, they are identified as Don and Eva Porter, and in another version, they are identified as Moses and Ida . I have elected to have to treat them as anonymous figures until the identification is confirmed.

George Johnston to buy developing supplies, purchase film in bulk, and to make a much larger purchase—a new car.

Johnston's Automobile

George Johnston is famous for owning the first car in Teslin. Every Teslin Tlingit with whom I spoke seemed to be able to speak of the purchase and use of George Johnston's automobile. The following is a brief summary of their memories interwoven with his photographs of the car.

In 1928, George Johnston purchased a new, four-door, four-cylinder, Chevrolet Model AB from the newly opened Taylor and Drury car dealership in Whitehorse. At that time, the Yukon had very few roads and those that did exist were, at best, thinly disguised wagon trails. Therefore, the car was sent by river on the sternwheeler "Thistle" which was operated by Taylor and Drury to deliver goods to their trading posts along the Yukon waterways. The Thistle had been built in Teslin, and at some point during its operation (1919-1929), George Johnston photographed it (Fig. 4.13).



Fig. 4.13 The "Thistle" – the boat that brought George Johnston's car to Teslin in 1928, c. 1920

This image is one of his few photographs that does not focus on people, and it is not known whether it was taken while the Thistle was delivering his car. In an audio-recorded interview with Catholic priest Jean-Paul Tanguay, George Johnston recalled his anticipation in waiting for the Thistle. "I look for my car every time, my gosh, I was waiting a long time to see my car," said Johnston, "pretty soon somebody say, 'Steamboat coming!' they come around the point and I just walk to the top of the hill to watch. I just wanna see my car."[15] Although the Thistle had a distinguished career as a delivery vessel and a spectacular demise when it sank in Lake Labarge in 1929, its memory in Teslin has been forever commemorated as the carrier of Johnston's car. Even relatively recent scholarship on the history of the Yukon comments on the Thistle's role in transporting George Johnston's car to Teslin.[16]

While waiting for his car to arrive, Johnston and his brothers widened an existing footpath to accommodate the vehicle, but it would be another three years before the ambitious Johnston was able to cut a five-mile stretch of road. When the car arrived, Pearl Keenen (neé Geddes) who was ten-years old at the time, remembered that most of the village gathered on the beach to see the unbelievable arrival of an automobile in remote, roadless Teslin. Many Tlingits and Yukoners in general had never seen a car before, and its arrival was marked by some theatricality. The car would not fit on the deck of the Thistle, so it had to be sealed in the hull in Whitehorse and cut out of the boat when it arrived in Teslin. Charlie Taylor, who delivered the car, noted, "next was the chore of getting the prize off the boat and onto the beach. It got stuck in the sand and George asked some of the young men to help get it out of the sand. About 20 of

[15] Johnston interview with Father Tanguay 1968.
[16] Wuttunee 1992; Coates and Morrison 1992; and Yukon History website www.hougengroup.com/yukonhistory.

them came forward and picked the car right up and moved it onto the bank" (per interview with MacDonald 1987: 13-14).

This would not be the only time that the car became stuck. During the winter, Johnston used the frozen Teslin Lake as an extra ninety miles of roadway. One time while driving about fifteen miles south of Teslin village, he broke through the ice. Johnston recalled, "I try to swing around to go back, but my car go down just like that, and it's solid ice again. I just go dig him out, and pull it out of the ice, and put it in the bush … spring time when the ice opens I went over there with a nice big boat. I cut a big tree and make a big raft and put the car on it" (per interview with Father Tanguay). He photographed the calm aftermath as the car was rafted back to Teslin (Fig. 4.14).



Fig. 4.14 Rafting the car back to Teslin, c. 1930

In the image, three boats are tethered together in order to tow the raft carrying the car. Showing a long diagonal and dramatically plunging landscape, this photograph is probably the most aesthetically unusual in Johnston's collection.

Initially, people told George Johnston that he was "crazy" to bring a car into the "bush."[17] He and his brothers became the laughingstock of town until Teslin Lake froze over and, "driving up and down the frozen lake, they hunted for wolves. During that first winter they shot more than 60 wolves from the car and were paid $75 for each pelt. Laughing at the Johnston brothers and their car became a dead pastime."[18] This new use for his car was photographed by Johnston (Fig. 4.15). Unlike his other hunting images that pictured a single hunter modeling with game, this image portrays an entire hunting group gathered behind dead wolves. The car is close behind them, positioned at an angle and parallel with the shoreline of the frozen lake. In the center is his good friend, Edward Jack of Atlin, holding a gun and surrounded by six other unidentified men.



Fig. 4.15 Hunting with the car, c. 1930

Although Johnston was praised by his community for hunting more efficiently, motorized hunting represented another innovation introduced to the Inland Tlingit by Johnston, marking a departure from their established practices. In fact, hunting from a motorized vehicle does not

[17] Johnston interview withTanguay.
[18] "Rapid Transit in the Bush," *Alaska, Magazine of Life on the Last Frontier*, (November 1971) 29.

appear to have been previously recorded in the history of Native North Americans. Some forty years later, the invention of the snowmobile would expand the hunting ground of most First Nations hunters, but the role of machines in hunting is more commonly cited in the literature of the early American West when passengers on trains would shoot at bison. However, as historian Philip Deloria has noted, "in truth, automobile purchase often fit smoothly into a different logic—long-lived Indian traditions built around the utilization of the most useful technologies that non-Indians had to offer" (2004: 152). Indeed, this type of indigenous ingenuity, or "indigenuity" as scholar Daniel Wildcat calls it, is evident in George Johnston's life and work (2009: 67).

Johnston showed great resourcefulness in caring for his car. When he ran out of gasoline, he fueled it with naphtha, a flammable solvent that was often used in lanterns. When a tire blew out, he sewed it up and patched it with moose hide. In this period before anti-freeze, he kept his car's radiator water over a fire, and when he spotted game out on the frozen lake, he replaced the water and "with one crank he was off."[19] Animals became frightened by the large, black automobile lumbering towards them, so in order to facilitate hunting, Johnston camouflaged the car with white house paint which had to be repainted every winter. In other words, his "indigenuity" seemingly had no bounds.

[19] George Johnston Museum wall label.



Fig. 4.16 Hauling Freight (fur and grub) on Teslin Lake, c. 1938-1945

In an image that depicts his car painted white (Fig. 4.16), Johnston is not using it to hunt but instead to haul "fur and grub." Standing in front of the vehicle are his young relatives, Titus and Paddy Johnston, along with Father Drean (Teslin Catholic priest 1938-1953), and Watson Smarch. Although it was being used to haul a sledge as seen in this photograph, the car "always had shotguns in the front seat for hunting," so Johnston was prepared if game crossed his path.

Johnston's white car remains a particular source of pride and fascination for the local Yukon population. Marketing materials for the George Johnston Museum invite visitors to "find out why he painted his car white each winter," for example, and in my conversations with local people, including the front-desk agent at my motel in Whitehorse, I was asked the same question. Yet, except for a few Teslin elders, most people have not seen the car painted white because in 1962, Johnston traded the car back to Taylor and Drury's dealership for a truck. Opting to use it as a promotional vehicle, the dealer restored the Chevrolet to its original condition and later donated it to the George Johnston Museum in Teslin. Many have seen the white car in postcards and heard stories about the First Nations man in Teslin shuttling around his friends for a fee.

Johnston was an "indigenius" entrepreneur—to adapt David Wildcat's neologism (2009: 67). He operated his car as a community taxi, charging one dollar each way and naming his business the *Teslin Rapid Transit Company*. In a photograph that has become a popular postcard (Fig. 4.17), Johnston is flanked by Angela Carlick and Fannie Morris who were passengers from Lower Post, British Columbia, and daughters of Johnston's close friend, Liard Tom.



Fig. 4.17 "Teslin Taxi," 1944

Based on this image, Johnston's use of assistants to operate his taxi company has become local lore. However, Angela Carlick, one of the women portrayed, and her son, Roy Carlick, sought to set the record straight about the photograph when they wrote to local historian, Jim Robb who featured their story in his column for the *Yukon News*. The story that follows exemplifies how photographs instigate narratives:

> Here is the story about the famous postcard of George Johnston and car, as told by my mother Angela Carlick. She was 16 years old in the photo and now she is 83 years old. She is left of George Johnston. Her sister, Fanny, is standing on the right. George also took them on a tour of his photo studio at his house.

Angelea Carlick then takes over the telling of her story:

> This picture was taken outside of George Johnston's house in July 1944 at Teslin, Yukon. My dad, Liard Tom, knew Johnston and was a good friend of him and also with a lot of other people in Teslin. Johnston drove down to Lower Post BC, in July 1944 to pick up Liard Tom and family for a trip to Teslin and Whitehorse, Yukon. My family on this trip included my mom Ada, my sister Fanny, and my brother Frank. This was the first time I had seen Johnston. My dad understood and could speak the Tlingit language of the Teslin people. He had made many trips with his dog team to Atlin BC, for food and would travel to Teslin visiting with friends.… There were a lot of people in Teslin. We would stay in Teslin for about two weeks while my dad was visiting with Johnston … Johnston would take us all in his new car to Whitehorse for a trip. Fanny and I would go shopping for new clothes and hats at the stores in Whitehorse. We went back to Teslin, and Johnston would take this picture of us with his own camera. We were all standing in front of his car by his house in Teslin. Fanny and I were posing with Johnston wearing the new clothes and hats that we bought in Whitehorse. I was 16 years old in that picture. He also took another photograph of us that included my mom and dad, and I think his daughter Dolly. Johnston would drive us back to Lower Post after this visit with Liard Tom (Robb, "Teslin Taxi," 2011).

With her statement, Angela Carlick corrects the historical record, reclaiming her identity by conducting "memory work" for the community. According to Annette Kuhn, "memory work is a method and practice of unearthing and making public untold stories, stories of 'lives lived out on the borderlands,' lives for which the central interpretive devices of the culture don't quite work" (1995: 9). By publically sharing her memories of this event, Angela Carlick re-contextualizes the photograph and causes us to focus less on George Johnston and his taxi business and more on the relationships that his business fostered. As historian Philip Deloria points out, "Automobiles must have seemed

particularly useful for the way they opened up the new while continuing to serve older cultural ideals. The car offered transportation for the frequent visits and gatherings so often part of native life" (2004: 154). Yet George Johnston's automobile was so unusual and so novel in the southern Yukon that it became a remarkable aspect of regional life.

Johnston named his car "Sequeet," meaning "my little slave/like my son," and it was practically a part of the family appearing in the background of many of his photographs. Some elders have fond memories related to taking a ride in Sequeet. For example, Pearl Keenen remembered what she was wearing when Johnston picked up her family for a ride (Fig. 4.18).



Fig. 4.18 Friends and family posing with Sequeet, c. 1935

She stated, "Let's see … that's Louis Fox, and Andy Smith and his wife, and my two brothers Ted Geddes and Clifford Geddes. Mom made me that sweater and it was white and orange color and she knit that herself. Soon as we used to see people coming then we used to run and put on our best dress and make sure our hair was all brushed and everything with our best gear" (Geddes 1997). Like Angela Carlick, Pearl Keenen remembers that taking a ride was *more* than taking a ride—in other words—it was an *event*. Furthermore, pictures of people using the taxi service indicates the prosperity of the First Nations in this area who were economically and

socially stable, with sufficient disposable income to pay Johnston to transport them between homes and shopping areas and pose for his photos that instantiated the event.

The Community

As previously mentioned, the Teslin Tlingit thrived between 1920 and 1942. During this time, they had relatively little contact with non-First Nations people, and most of the families still made a living hunting and trapping. Village life was tranquil and punctuated by communal gatherings like picnics, holidays and sports days. "Spring and summer were the times when families came together in large numbers to visit, relax, fish, and discuss the winter. Days were long and warm and the pace of life changed with the season. Summer events became social occasions when people had time to enjoy each other's company" (Cruikshank 1975: 131).

Then, as now, Teslin Tlingit families congregated every Dominion Day or "Canada Day" as the July 1st holiday is now known, to picnic and participate in games of skill. Johnston had his camera on hand to photograph such events. His images depict villagers of all ages taking part in games and races held throughout the day (Figs. 4.19-20). Many of these photographs are a blur of unidentifiable figures running across the landscape in competition. In each case, a small group of spectators is cheering on the participants, and everyone is wearing their best clothes. "We'd all have new clothing for July 1st," Teslin Tlingit citizen and Yukon assemblywoman Marianne Horne told me.[20] To celebrate the national holiday, Teslin Tlingit also proudly displayed the Union Jack (background, Fig. 4.20).

[20] Per my discussion with Marianne Horne at the George Johnston Museum on July 1, 2012.



Fig. 4.19 Teslin, July 1st, c. 1940



Fig. 4.20 Canada Day Celebrations, Teslin, c. 1940

Enthusiastic celebration of their country's confederation or "birthdate" is not exclusive to the Teslin Tlingit, for similarly patriotic festivities can be seen throughout Native North America. In his discussion of American Indian patriotism, historian Paul Rosier states that "Native Americans adapted 'American' holidays to their particular public history culture.… [for] to act patriotically meant both to celebrate the continuities of tribal patriotism and its protection of ancestral homelands" (2009: 10). Around the Fourth of July holiday, Hollowbreast, a Cheyenne journalist reported that "Independence Day is here and once more comes the time to celebrate the 4th as seen fit, be it a rodeo or Indian dance … the Fourth of July as interpreted in the Cheyenne lingo is mid-summer festival" (as cited in Rosier 2009: 10). In Canada, the nation's holiday is also close to the summer solstice (June 21st), so perhaps the proximity to the longest day of the year would have added significance for the Tlingit. After all, the solstice would be selected by the Assembly of First Nations in Canada as the date in which to celebrate National Aboriginal Day (enacted in 1996).

When I visited Teslin on Canada Day in 2012, it seemed as though not much had changed in the seventy years since Johnston took his photographs. The Union Jack, as seen in his pictures, was on display. Families gathered for a pancake breakfast, competed in relays, and had an afternoon "Dominion Day" tea service. Although the Canada Day tradition seems well

established in Teslin, local Marianne Horne claimed that "before the celebrations moved into town, they were on Picnic Island. Everyone would go out there."[21] This reminds us that the Canada Day celebration is a relatively recent occurrence that is not necessarily tied to a specific locale as much as it is to the date and the sentiment of the event. Eric Hobsbawm would call this an "invented tradition" or, "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" (1983: 2). Overall, Canada Day celebrations are an important part of sustaining collective identity for the Teslin Tlingit. For brothers Daryl and John Peters, great-nephews of George Johnston, "Canada Day is a great time to celebrate and see family and friends…. Yeah, it's much better than funerals and other times that we get together."[22]

In addition to Canada Day, the community gathered for sports days and church picnics. During the 1940s, Teslin had a girl's baseball team. George Johnston took several of the group photographs, and appears in some of the pictures with the players. One of his photographs (Fig 4.21), taken at a church picnic at the mouth of the Nitsulin River, features the team lined up in two rows. Although over half of the girls are wearing a shirt and tie, they do not appear to be in an official uniform. While examining this image with me, a Yukon First Nations woman expressed how the figure in the top right, identified as Margaret Morris (neé Sidney), "seems to always grab my attention … with that cigarette and bat. She looks like a feisty gal."

[21] Interview with Marianne Horne, July 1, 2012.
[22] Per interview with Daryl and John Peters on July 1st 2012.



Fig. 4.21 Girls Baseball Team, c. 1941

For me, another image in this series has that "detail that attracts me … [and] overwhelms the entirety of my reading" (Barthes 1981: 42). In a group portrait that includes a few local men (Fig. 4.22), a young boy kneels on the ground next to George Johnston holding a camera pointed directly at the viewer. Identified as Harry Morris, he does not look down into the viewfinder of his camera, but stares directly out at us, almost challenging us to look at him.



Fig. 4.22 George Johnston with the Girls Baseball Team, c. 1941

When I see this image, I wonder—did George Johnston inspire him to take photographs? Was he as a prolific photographer as Johnston? What became of his images? Unfortunately, by the time I was conducting my field research, the elder Harry Morris had just passed away and I was unable to contact his family members.

The World War II unleashed the forces that would lead to the end of Johnston's photographic career. In the spring of 1942, the Teslin Tlingit were surprised by the arrival of United States soldiers building the Alaska Highway. "Many of them knew nothing about the construction projects until surveyors, or in some cases bulldozers, arrived in their communities" (Coates and Morrison 1992: 73). Teslin residents recalled that "a Carcross man visited their community with news of the building of the highway, [announcing that] an army battalion was moving cross country from Carcross to Teslin. They believed him, but still had trouble comprehending the scale or purpose of the project" (ibid). When the troops arrived in Teslin, "the fact that they were blacks, the first most local people had ever seen, only added to their confusion and surprise" (ibid).

In addition to the strangers and earthmovers, the troops also brought with them illnesses for which the Inland Tlingit had no immunity. In 1943, a total of 128 of the 135 Teslin Tlingit were sick with measles (Coates 1991: 102). They tried to help themselves to no avail. For instance, the Anglican Diocese reported that "Bessie Johnston, a young Tlingit woman from the community, assisted with the care of her people, helping with the cooking and cleaning for sixty patients in the makeshift hospital while also caring for her parents at home. Having worked herself to exhaustion, Bessie herself caught measles, lapsed into a coma, and died within twenty-four hours" (Coates and Morrison 1992: 79).

The Canadian government was aware of this tragedy. According to the reports of a Canadian officer working on the highway project:

> The Indians of Teslin and Lower Post bands until the advent of this new era have been almost completely isolated from contacts with white people and have had the least opportunity of creating an immunity to white peoples' diseases. Consequently they have been distressingly affected by the new contacts…The band of Teslin suffered epidemics of measles and whooping cough, which in some cases developed into pneumonia, last year, and now are plagued with an epidemic of meningitis and have suffered three deaths so far from the latter. There is no doubt in my mind that if events are allowed to drift along at will, but the Indian bands at Teslin and Lower Post will become completely decimated within the next four years. The problem is how to prevent this, or at least to ameliorate conditions as far as possible.[23]

In an effort to stave off the illness, the government tried vaccinating the population, and George Johnston was there to take a group portrait of inoculation day (Fig. 4.23). Pictured among the Tlingit men, women and children are the parish priests, a nurse, and a pair of U.S. army doctors. They are posed rather formally in center of the village, between the houses and pelt-drying lines.



Fig. 4.23 Inoculation Day, Teslin, c. 1943

[23] Yukon Archives, Letter from C.K. LeCapelain to R.A. Gibson dated July 17, 1943. As cited in Coates and Morrison 1992: 77-78.

According to the caption provided by Dolly Johnston, "twelve people died in one week in Teslin. Villages all over the Yukon and places as far as Fairbanks, Alaska were hit hard. Empty villages were seen, people had died off."[24]

Throughout his life, George Johnston photographed funerals, but the ones due to the devastation wrought by disease were particularly hard. In his way of honoring the dead, Johnston continued to photograph funerary preparations and the corresponding potlatches (Figs. 4.24-25).


Fig. 4.24 Building Grave Fences in Teslin c. 1940


Fig. 4.25 Funerary Proceedings, c. 1940

One of his images depicts a pair of grave fences being created (Fig. 4.24), and another the Tlingit custom of placing clothing on the fences (Fig. 4.25). Although earlier Tlingits practiced cremation, after contact with missionaries their memorial practices changed, and like contemporary Euro-Americans, they entombed their dead and built small fences around the gravesites. By the 1940s, the Teslin Tlingit were using lathes to create more elaborate grave fences like the ones seen here, but they continued their practice of building small grave houses. Inside these structures, they placed objects belonging to the deceased. Archival footage in the

[24] Yukon Archives, caption to image 82/428 #37 (PHO 59)

form of home videos shows the grave houses being disturbed and ransacked by soldiers and their wives who were temporarily stationed in area.[25]

The death and devastation occurring in the Inland Tlingit community was reflected in the activities of Teslin's children. In a picture taken in the 1940s, George Johnston depicted five Teslin children playing "funeral" (Fig. 4.26). One child is in a makeshift casket while the others act as grim little pallbearers. The scene takes place on the porch of a store with cream soda bottles visible through the window.



Fig. 4.26 Teslin children playing "funeral," c. 1940

This image is a sad reminder of that time and when viewing and discussing this photograph, the local people responded with grief, frustration, and anger—especially those who were born well after the picture was taken. Thus, they exhibit what scholar Marianne Hirsch calls, *postmemory* which, "describes the relationship that the 'generation after' bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before—to experiences they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images and behaviors among which they grew up" (2012: 5). For Teslin Tlingit Carol

[25] Geddes' documentary *Picturing a People* (1997) features film clips from servicemen stationed in the southern Yukon during the 1940s-50s, and in these clips, the picnicking couples can be seen disturbing the gravesites.

Geddes, "the building of the Alaska Highway in the early 1940s was just such a disruptive experience for many First Nations people in the Yukon, and its legacy persists today. A foreshortened sense of the future and its possibilities is a common aftermath of traumatic experiences—and rapid cultural change can be traumatic" (Geddes 2003: 65).

After the highway was completed, George Johnston ceased taking photographs, and concentrated his efforts on operating a general store. Locals, who were children during the 1950s and 1960s remember Johnston's store and the products that he carried, especially the pink popcorn and soda. A few people that I interviewed mentioned that he sold his photographs as postcards, but none could remember exactly which photographs he offered. In the Yukon Archives, I located some of his photographs that had been printed on postcard paper including the pictures that feature hunters and their trap lines, but postcard stock was a popular and inexpensive backing and does not necessarily indicate that "postcards" per se were meant to be created. Although we may never know which photographs George Johnston offered for sale, we do know that he moved his store closer to the highway to take advantage of the highway traffic.

With the Alaska Highway open to the public in 1948, the village of Teslin became accessible travelers making their way across northwest Canada. As they passed through, tourists would stop for gas, purchase crafts, and sometimes buy Native-made objects. Pearl Keenen, a respected Tlingit elder who was in her twenties when the Alcan Highway was completed, remembers Tlingit cultural heritage being removed by passing motorists. Over a cup of Dominion Day tea, she informed me that "white people from out-of-town bought them old Tlingit costumes and things. They just took them from us. The people just *stole* them. And those pictures are the same way. And if they were to come back, they would be charged with stealing" (Keenan 2011). Her comments reflect the distress that the Teslin Tlingits felt over the loss of

their material culture, and a sustained resentment for the ongoing impact of how their lands were opened to outsiders due to the highway.

In the early 1970s, The Teslin Community Club, a neighborhood organization in charge of community events, lobbied for a museum to retain and display their cultural heritage. Led by Bonar Cooley, a local non-First Nations historian and preservationist and his wife, Bess Cooley, a Teslin native and respected elder known for her expertise in the Tlingit language, the Teslin Community Club sought the support of its elders. According to Bonar Cooley, the elders were not familiar with the concept of a museum, so he and his wife "went around visiting and explaining exactly what a museum was and what it could do for them."[26] He quickly added that "since Bess grew up in the area and was fluent in Tlingit, she did most of the talking" (ibid). Agreeing that a museum was needed to preserve their culture, the elders lent their support. Even though the Cooley's contribution to the formation of the George Johnston Museum was instrumental, the creation of the museum can be linked to a larger movement within Native North America where communities have sought to (re)claim and control their own material culture (Simpson 1996). Anthropologist Ira Jacknis considers that "what had changed was the Native attitude toward museums … Natives now had understanding of the archival function of museums, that they might be the best places to preserved fragile, old artifacts. … [and] there was also the pragmatic realization that programs such as these were the only way to make contemporary collections" (2002: 215). Other reasons for adopting museums would be the economic development of Indian lands and the commercial benefits related to attracting tourists.

Although George Johnston was just one of the many elders approached, he was decidedly the most high-profile figure. Already famous for his car and entrepreneurial spirit, Johnston also

[26] Per phone conversation with Bonar and Bess Colley conducted in August 2011.

had a sizable collection of art and artifacts, and well as his own photographs. The act of "naming the museum after George Johnston wasn't a difficult decision for the Teslin residents" (*Whitehorse Star*, July 11, 1975). Unfortunately, he would not live to see his namesake institution open, as he passed away while tending to his traplines during the winter of 1972.

George Johnston Museum

The second half of this case study will examine how George Johnston's photographs are engaged to perform memories in the George Johnston Museum. Inspired by James Clifford's *Four Northwest Coast Museums* essay (1997), a walk-through of the museum will be presented, from entry to exit.

Upon entering the museum, visitors find themselves in a U-shaped vestibule which wraps around the front of a façade—a faithful reproduction of George Johnston's storefront (Fig. 4.27). On the wall next to the façade is a photograph of Johnston standing in front of his store taken by Catherine McClellan during her research among Inland Tlingit in 1951 (Fig. 4.28). Using this image as a model, the museum created a replica of the store, complete with white clapboard, blue trim, and soda signage.



Fig. 4.27 Johnston Store façade



Fig. 4.28 George Johnston in front of his store, 1951

The entrance to the museum is a performative space. All patrons must step through the storefront to visit the museum, thus taking part in the spectacle of figuratively returning back in time. For most, and especially those from out of town, it is a minor theatrical experience when a smiling George Johnston welcomes them into his store via his portrait photograph. For locals, it is a site that captures and triggers memories from childhood, and from their collective "Golden Age." For example, shortly after I photographed the façade (Fig. 4.27), a family of four came into the museum. As the two children ran ahead, the father paused, looked up and said to his wife, "Johnston's Store. I remember going to this place when I was young. Hey kids, come back here! I wanna show you something." The children dutifully came to their father's side, and he motioned to the façade telling them, "I used to go there for pop and sweets. We spent a lot of summers hanging out on that porch." He then pointed to the photograph and said, "that's old George there. He was always nice to us." After a brief, reflective pause, they all walked into the "store."

This exchange is an example of what Gaston Bachelard termed *topoanalysis*. Architecture affects memory and helps a person recall cherished moments. "Topoanalysis, then, would be the systematic psychological study of sites of our intimate lives. In the theater of the past that is constituted by memory, the stage setting maintains the characters in their dominant roles" (Bachelard 1994: 9). In this case, the "stage" would be Johnston's store, and the "characters" those Teslin Tlingit who frequented the store as children. The museum display serves to crystallize their childhood memories. As Bachelard asserts, "memories are motionless, and the more securely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are" (ibid). Yet, individuals may challenge any such "solidarity of memories" (ibid).

According to local artist Pauline Sidney, the George Johnston Museum store façade is incorrectly realized.[27] She remembers it as being painted red and white, not blue and white. The Teslin Tlingit Heritage Center where she is a guide holds a different photograph of Johnston and his store taken by Edward Bullen who was an anthropology grad student in the late 1960s. In that picture (Fig. 4.29), a much older Johnston stands on the porch of his store—painted red and white—underneath a sign stating "Johnston Store Trading Post Indian Craft."

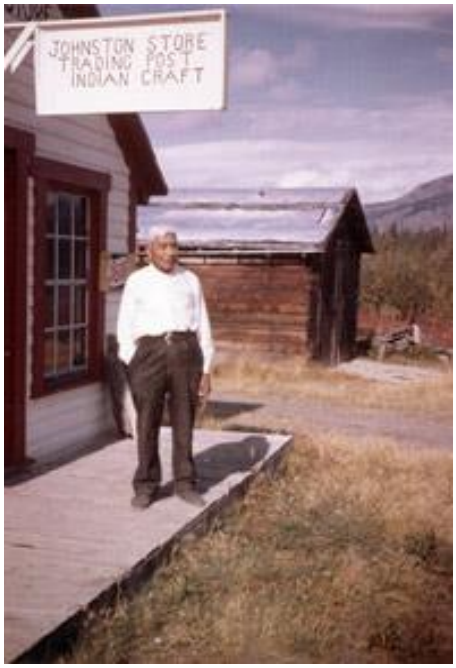


Fig. 4. 29 George Johnston in front of his store, 1967

For Pauline Sidney, this picture is no less legitimate than the one used to design the exhibit at the George Johnston Museum. This opinion reveals the tensions between history and memory as defined by Pierre Nora. "History … is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past … memory … only accommodates those facts that suit it" (1989: 7-8).

[27] Per my conversation with Pauline Sidney on July 2, 2011 at the Teslin Tlingit Heritage Center.

The museum's reconstructed store functions much like Johnston's. In addition to serving as the visitor services area, the museum store sells locally-produced canned preserves, arts and crafts, and copies of Johnston's photographs printed on heavy postcard stock and sold individually for $1 or a package of seven for $5 (Fig. 4.30). Of the seven available images for purchase, four are portraits of people with Johnston's car, and the others of children posing next to animal pelts.



Fig. 4.30 George Johnston picture-postcards

When I asked why these particular photographs were chosen, the museum manager stated that these were the clearest and most distinct to duplicate and that they were also the best-selling images over the years. Curious if these picture-postcards were popular with locals, I asked a few of my Teslin contacts if they owned any of these images and they did not. Ultimately, I was unable to gauge how the Teslin Tlingit felt about having pictures of their relatives and clan members sold to tourists as inexpensive postcards. Was there a feeling of loss like Pearl Keenan

expressed? Was the very institution established to safeguard their culture wrong for commodifying it? Do any of the subjects pictured in the postcards even care that their image is being circulated? We do know that some of the subjects in the photographs, such as Angela Carlick (previously mentioned in reference to the Teslin Taxi image), want to share their memories and correct the historical record. However, except for George Johnston, the postcard captions do not name the people pictured nor do they provide any "thick description" of the culture (Geertz 1973). In fact, the lack of personal information in the captions may help to shift these relatively private, amateur photographs into the public realm thus making them more fit for tourist consumption.

As postcards, George Johnston's photographs perform memories for tourists. The main reason for acquiring a postcard is its souvenir quality, either for oneself, or as a "gift" to be mailed to another (Stewart 1984). "As souvenirs, postcards fit into frames that people use to organize the flow and memory of their travel experiences" writes sociologist Bennetta Jules-Rosette (2007: 19). Operating as portable signposts that aid in tracking one's movement while travelling, postcards are used as mnemonic devices to remember locations. Postcards function within the tourist experience as "symbols that sustain notions of exoticism and authenticity of destinations" (Markwick 2001: 417). Collecting postcards thus becomes a means of "mapping one's way" through a particular cultural geography and physical landscape (Rose 2008).

Postcards also serve to remember friends and family who were left at home. They can be personalized and inscribed, literally, with private meaning. Historian Gillian Rose notes that looking at postcards involves a different way of seeing: "maybe you would merely have glanced at it [the image] before reading the message on the reverse far more avidly; if the card had been sent by a lover, maybe you'd see it as some sort of comment on your relationship" (2001:26).

Hence, postcards become integrated into the tourist's own narratives—often triggered by what is written on the back. Indeed, the phrase "Wish you were here!" seems inseparable from the act of writing and sending a postcard. The written message may also call attention to the exoticism of the place or peoples, thus functioning in opposition to what the Teslin Tlingit might think of the same postcard as a heritage portrait. Finally, postcards can be "a basis for *communitas*-after-the-fact as tourists who have done the same things are brought together" to compare and reminisce about similar experiences (Smelser 2009; emphasis in original). For these reasons, the postcards are social actors for the tourist, performing memories and safeguarding against forgetting. Johnston's photographs thereby become a vehicle for the memories of others.

The Albums

Although George Johnston's photographs are on display in every room of the museum, the largest number is on display in the vestibule surrounding the store façade. On the left arm of the U-shaped room are two albums with eight leaves each (Figs. 4.31-32).


Fig. 4.31 Album #1


Fig. 4.32 Album #2

The first album features Teslin Tlingit people and the second, mounted below an enlarged image of the village on Dominion Day, concentrates on the buildings and landscape of Teslin. Because Johnston primarily photographed people, the former album is predominantly composed of his photographs, while the latter includes pictures taken by missionaries, anthropologists, and Canadian mounted police. Although each of the albums has a general theme (portraits and landscapes, respectively), there does not seem to be a clear narrative. For example, in the first album there is an image of a grave marker, then a picture of three men and a dog followed by a single portrait of a man, then grave fences on a boat, and finally a photograph of a potlatch. This seemingly random arrangement of imagery gives viewers the impression that they are looking at a scrapbook—a feeling reinforced by the captions which appear to be handwritten with a felt-tip marker.

The exhibit design itself, the album, breeds a sense of familiarity. Patrons are meant to casually leaf through the images. Rather than just passively staring at framed images mounted on the wall, viewers must actively engage the photographs in a type of performance that has them interacting with the objects. As Elizabeth Edwards maintains, "this high level of haptic participation in the activation of the album marks its unique materiality" (2004: 68). Because many museumgoers walked away from the albums mid-way through and subsequent viewers did not take the time to push the entire leaves back to one side in order to start from the beginning (not that it is necessary, since there is no chronological or narrative structure to the displays), the later viewers picked up where the earlier patrons left off, so that their viewing strategy was defined by, and in concert with, other attendees.

The behavior of the audience and any vacillations in their attention span could be attributed to an absence of contextual information on the museum labels. Rita Davie, a student-

worker from Whitehorse who was employed at the George Johnston Museum admissions desk for the last two tourist seasons remarked that "people would like better labels on certain things. Some things don't have enough info on them because we don't know where it came from or what it is" (Davie 2011). The George Johnston Museum is working to improve their archival records by asking the local community to contribute their stories about the objects and photographs.[28] However, thus far, the information received has not been incorporated into the label copy.

Throughout the George Johnston Museum, most of the labels that accompany the photographs provide only the names of the subjects and the archival sources—very little interpretative text is provided. For instance, one caption in the first album simply states: "Edgar Sidney – The Name Giver. George Johnston Photograph, Father Tanguay Collection." Although there is plenty of space for more text, there is no effort to explain the process of name giving or the importance of this particular figure to the community. Anthropologist Aldona Jonaitis points out that this method of "minimalist interpretation" with "labels that provide little more information than the artist's name and the title and date of the work" is conducted because, "some museum professionals believe interpretation is simply not needed because art transcends the commonplace and 'speaks' a universal language that is understood by all. Herein lies the major problem" (Jonaitis 2002: 19). Yet this minimalism may reflect a more holistic approach to museum display. As Gloria Cranmer Webster (Kwakwaka'wakw), former curator and co-founder of the *U'mitsa Cultural Centre* in British Columbia, stated "one of the things that I was criticized for when I was at the Centre was that there were no individual labels. That didn't seem really important to me because it was the whole collection that was meaningful, not individual ones" (Clavir 2002: 160).

[28] The George Johnston Museum has recently used Facebook to upload images in order to solicit information from the community regarding their collection.

While I agree with Jonaitis that museums, as educational institutions, should provide sufficient textual information for guests, I think that community institutions such as the George Johnston Museum are chronically understaffed with a single person frequently serving in many capacities as curator, registrar, fundraiser, and even janitor. "More often than not," writes anthropologist Patricia Pierce Erickson, "museum staff members never get to accomplish their ideal plans for the galleries" (2002: 189). This seems particularly endemic to Native museums. Tom Hill, Director of the *Woodland Cultural Center* in Ontario, commented that "our museum has also been experiencing under-funding, renovations, professionalization of staff, increasing cost of acquisitions, and high cost of exhibitions" (2002: 13). Keeping the doors open, lights on, and museum operational are the primary goals of the minimal staff—with label copy being well down on the list of priorities. However, any insufficiencies in labels at the George Johnston Museum may actually benefit the local constituents.

By providing simple, identifying information in the captions, rather than lengthy fact-laden paragraphs, the museum (perhaps inadvertently) makes it easier for local people to tell their own stories with and through the images. Community members may thereby construct their own narratives without the interference of authoritative, institutional text getting in the way. This lack of text also compels local viewers to use their own memories to recall the people and events pictured. Historian Martha Langford, who has written extensively on photographic albums, states that "the album functions as a pictorial aide-memoire to recitation, to the telling of stories. The showing and telling of an album is a performance" (2001: 5). By involving a photo album in the act of sharing personal history, the speaker has the potential to transmit memories to the subsequent generation. Elizabeth Edwards similarly argues that "the performative habit of photography, especially its dynamic potential for repeated engagement, mirrors the

performativity of memory which…becomes inherited identity" (2006: 70). Through such a process of teaching, actions may be learned and embodied so that physical gestures (pointing, pausing, motioning to the images) becomes inherited, leading to what Richard Schechner calls "twice-behaved behavior" (1985: 36). This type of repeated or "restored" behavior is best illustrated in the documentary film about George Johnston shown in the museum.

Literally Performing Memories - The Documentary Film

To the left of the main entrance to the gallery is a screening room. In this space, the documentary *Picturing a People: George Johnston, Tlingit Photographer* (1997), is shown on a continuous loop. Written and directed by award-winning Teslin Tlingit filmmaker Carol Geddes (or *Shul Tlen* in Tlingit), the film features local actors re-enacting Johnston's life and re-creating some of his photographs (Fig. 4.33). "Sequeet*"* (Johnston's car) also makes several appearances in the film. However, the automobile shown is not the original vehicle, for Geddes purchased a 1928 Chevrolet to stand-in as the famous automobile. In addition to the actors, the film features interviews with many Teslin Tlingit elders including Pearl Keenan, Sam Johnston, Dolly Porter (Johnston's daughter), and others who personally knew George Johnston and who could testify to the events in his photographs.



Fig. 4.33 Film still from *Picturing a People*, 1997

The documentary sets up a division between the "Golden Age" of the Teslin Tlingit (1900-1945) and the destruction of their way of life due to creation of the Alaska Highway. In an article for *Artic Anthropology* (2003), Geddes remarks that her film

> starts by looking at the more traditional lifestyle through the eyes of George Johnston, the main character. George Johnston took photographs—he was a very well-known photographer, and his photographs are quite popular throughout the Yukon. Then the film talks about the war years when the highway was constructed.… At the end of the film, there is a reflection on that time, on the meaning of that struggle, on the difficulties that the people went through, on how they affected one man's own life, and how *the people today can recall a better past through the photographs that he took* (2003: 69, emphasis mine).

In other words, the Teslin Tlingit may use Johnston's photographs as means to remember and collectively imagine a glorious past.

For Geddes, the documentary format is a "vehicle for traditional storytelling" and by extension, Johnston's photographs are as well. By using photographic imagery to tell stories, the images become what Theresa Harlan (Santo Domingo/Jemez Pueblo) calls "message carriers" (1993:3). Johnston's pictures can "carry on the work of historical message carriers in their reliance upon Native knowledge to communicate information regarding Native culture and its future" (ibid). In addition to communicating information, such messages may be powerful agents in the lives of present-day Teslin Tlingit. For instance, Geddes suggests how positive and empowering visual storytelling can be for Native peoples. "One way storytelling and narrative heal is by helping families, communities, and even whole cultures develop and maintain a sense of who they are in the face of disruption, conflict and change. Without this anchoring sense of identity, it is difficult to remain healthy in a rapidly changing world" (Geddes 2003: 69). She

witnessed first-hand how visual storytelling can affect people. In reference to her documentary, Geddes has stated that

> when this film came out, I found that people were coming up to me and telling me that this film helped them, and this was so important to me because it helped especially the younger people understand their history. It helped them understand what happened…. It was really important to me that people understand where we came from and what a beautiful culture had existed in the past when people were living traditional lives (2003: 70).

The therapeutic properties of her film are thereby activated through a collective nostalgia for the "Golden Age" of the Teslin Tlingit.

In focusing on the culture that "had existed in the past when people were living traditional lives," Geddes also brings attention to the fact that George Johnston adopted new technologies to enhance his "traditional" way of life. Indeed, he was an entrepreneurial individual and an exemplar of "indigenuity" (Wildcat 2009: 67). By using documentary film as a means for "traditional storytelling," Geddes also appropriates new media to facilitate old and ongoing social practices. Anthropologist Faye Ginsberg tells us, "indigenous people have been using a variety of media, including film and video, as new vehicles for internal and external communication. ... [thus engaging] in the construction of their contemporary identity that integrates historical and contemporary lifeworlds" (1991: 92, 99).

Wildlife Gallery

Moving left from the screening room, the visitor enters a wildlife gallery that highlights traditional Tlingit hunting and trapping activities in the Yukon. Located along one wall is a full-sized diorama of a trapper's cabin. Throughout the gallery are mounted animals and vintage hunting implements including and traps, stretchers, and sleds. Unlike many ethnographic

dioramas, the George Johnston Museum does not include mannequins in its exhibit design, nor does it "confine their representations to glass box display cases … as a form of cultural imprisonment" (Ames 1992: 3). Instead, the human relationship with the objects is demonstrated in an approachable manner through personal snapshots.

Four photographs—three by George Johnston and one by anthropologist Douglas Leechman—are used to illustrate the four seasons (Figs. 4.34-37).


Fig. 4.34 "Summer"


Fig. 4.35 "Autumn"


Fig. 4.36 "Winter"


Fig. 4.37 "Spring"

Each image portrays Inland Tlingits acting in accordance with seasonal activities. For example, in "Summer" taken by Leechman, two Teslin fishermen have laid out their bountiful catch on a deck, while in "Autumn" and "Winter," people are posed with their game, and in "Spring," Teslin families are preparing for trapping. For early Inland Tlingits, "the procurement of food [was] a year-round endeavor … [for] in such a subsistence economy, the spatial, temporal,

social, and project contexts become integral parts of one's conceptions of places—their boundaries, their links, their meanings—the basis for place intelligence" (Thornton 2008:126). Other scholars have called this concept "local knowledge" (Geertz 1973) or have stated that "wisdom sits in places" (Basso 1996), but here, Johnston's images link the site, community, knowledge, and time in a complex matrix. Therefore, these photographs of the seasons can stand "not only for subsistence but also for learning and growing up, for family ties and social structure, for continuity and change, and, in the end … Tlingit culture itself" (ibid).

These photographs provide context for exhibited objects, acting as performative vignettes for the subsistence activities of Teslin Tlingit. As Elizabeth Edwards suggests, "fragments of experience, reality, happening (whatever you want to call it) [are] contained through framing, and … [each] is performative in that it constitutes one or more bits of meaning that are related and projected into larger frames of performance, [as] 'scenes' that are sequences of signs embodying a narrative" (2001: 17). Yet, the images are also photographs taken in the past during the season in which they help to narrate. In effect, these pictures are artifact themselves from that given time period.

The Floating Wall

Just outside the wildlife gallery on a floating wall in the center of the main gallery is an oversized reproduction of the Coastal Tlingit "Whale House" photograph taken by Winter and Pond (Fig. 4.38). The exhibit is designed with a type of "boutique lighting" that, as Steven Greenblatt observes, "creates a pool of light that has the surreal effect of seeming to emerge from within the object rather than to focus upon it from without," which tends to "provoke or heighten the experience of wonder" (Greenblatt 1991: 48). Furthermore, the image is inset into the wall

and framed under a pitched roof, thus giving the illusion that the viewer has entered into the sacred space of the coastal Tlingit. The theatrical exhibit design paired with the prominent placement within the museum gives the impression that this image should be read as an important work to the Inland Tlingit; but the lack of interpretative labels makes this impossible.

As previously mentioned, many photographs in the museum do not have caption information. This image is no different. Director Sharron Chatterton claimed there was no need, for "everyone knows that this is the famous Whale House image," was her response to my question about the lack of labeling.[29] I do not share this view.



Fig. 4.38 Kluckwan Whale House image in the George Johnston Museum

Visitors may recognize the image, but that does not necessarily mean that they know its author. From the entrance (and even before, when considering marketing materials), the museum identifies George Johnston as a Tlingit photographer. Therefore, visitors are likely to credit this image to him. Yet, correct attribution is not the issue at stake here. As art historian Michael

[29] Per my conversation with George Johnston Museum Director Sharon Chatterton on July 2, 2011.

Baxandall argues, "to select and put forward any item for display, as something worth looking at, as interesting, is a statement not only about the object but about the culture it comes from" (1991: 34). Indeed, the Whale House photograph performs the role of linking Teslin Tlingit to the coast and testifies to the importance of their coastal heritage to their ontology. The photograph is located almost in the center of the museum—at the symbolic heart of the institution, so guests are intended to take notice. Even though visitors walk by this image as they enter and exit the main gallery, it is not the most prominent feature in the museum, however.

The Car

George Johnston's car is the marquee exhibition in the museum (Fig 4.39). Parked on a thrust stage in the main gallery, the fully-restored 1928 Chevrolet is displayed in front of a large photo-mural of Teslin trappers heading out after the first snowmelt through the same image as "Spring" (Fig. 4.37) to be seen in the wildlife gallery.



Fig. 4.39 George Johnston's car – museum exhibit

Extending out from the mural in an illusionistic fashion is a thin layer of white "snow" that covers the space beneath the car. Overall, the exhibition design places the car *in situ*. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett writes, "recreated environments, reenacted rituals, or photo-murals, places objects (or replicas of them) in situ. In-situ approaches to installation enlarge the

ethnographic object by expanding its boundaries to include more of what was left behind, even if only in replica, after the object was excised from its physical, social, and cultural settings" (1991: 389). Indeed, the theatricality of the space is underscored by the repetitive nature of the surrounding imagery.

The automobile is completely surrounded by images and simulated sounds. A framed photograph on the wall to the left appears to be taken at the same time as the image from the photo-mural. But in that photograph, the car appears alongside the trappers' sleds and dog teams. On the wall to the right is a framed picture of the car being rafted back to Teslin (Fig. 4.14, discussed earlier). While viewing the exhibition, the visitor can hear the *Picturing a People* documentary as it plays on a continuous loop in the room nearby. This overload of environmental stimuli creates a sense of *synesthesia* or the "aggregative formation of sight and sound, combining simulated image content, mise-en-scene environments and atmospherics [that] directs a polysensory experience at a receptive subject" (Dziekan 2012: 77). This experience is further expounded by the additional text and images that explain the importance of the car.

Mounted to a podium near the rear fender of Johnston's Chevrolet is an album titled, *The Story of Teslin's First Car* (Fig. 4.40), recounting the "social life" of the automobile through Johnston's photographs (c.f. Pinney 1997). Each page displays a different incarnation of the car, from the white-painted hunting auto to the black neighborhood taxi. Brief passages provide historical and anecdotal information, and the last page of the album features four current snapshots showing the installation of the automobile at the museum (Fig. 4.41).



Fig. 4.40 Album #3 - Teslin's First Car


Fig. 4.41 Detail of Album #3 - recent snapshots

One of these snapshots (top right) illustrates how the village inhabitants came out to support, observe, and assist as the vehicle was *enshrined* in the museum—this latter an appropriate term given how the community treats the car like an iconic object. By placing the car in the museum where it can be viewed but not used, Teslin Tlingits have ensured that the automobile's *aura*—the combined effect of its unique existence, presence, and "authenticity"—is maintained (Benjamin 1968). Although Teslin's first car is memorialized in a shrine, it still has an active, vicarious life outside of the museum walls.

Beyond the Museum

Teslin Tlingits associate their histories with George Johnston's car. Because the original automobile is on loan to the museum and cannot be removed for routine community use, the Teslin Tlingit Council (their governing body) purchased the replica 1928 Chevrolet that was acquired by Carol Geddes for use in her documentary film. Now used for community events, this automobile with its "1928" license plate has effectively become an "invented tradition" (Hobsbawm 1983). Most prominently, the car led the opening ceremonies of the biennial *Ha Kus Teyea* celebration (meaning "the Tlingit Way") in the summer of 2009. For almost a year, a

photograph of this event (Fig. 4.42) served as the introductory image on the Teslin Tlingit Council website. The image features Teslin Tlingits dressed in clan regalia and walking in a procession behind the car.



Fig. 4.42 *Ha Kus Teyea* Celebration, Teslin, June 2009

Following performance studies scholar Diana Taylor, this act would be an "embodied performance" that plays "a central role in conserving memory and consolidating identities" (2003: xviii). But what memory or memories are conserved in this performance? Johnston's car once provided rapid—and novelty—transit for a community that was accustomed to painstaking crossing of vast distances on foot or sledge. By marching behind the car, the Teslin Tlingit honor a vehicle that brought their community closer together during their "Golden Age." Yet, the end of their Golden Age has been directly attributed to rise of automobile use with construction of the Alaska Highway (Geddes 1997). Perhaps then, the performance "makes visible (for an instant, live, now) that which is always already there: the ghosts, the tropes, the scenarios that structure our individual and collective life" (Taylor 2003:143). By including the

automobile in procession, the people are honoring the car and the man who brought it into their community.

Johnston's association with the vehicle is exemplified by another photograph taken at the *Ha Kus Teyea* opening celebrations (Fig. 4.43). Here George Johnston's nephew, Sam Johnston, and granddaughter, Lorraine Porter, are seated in the car and serve as grand marshalls for the "Tlingit Way" parade. Besides the driver, they appear to be the only two people permitted this honor.



Fig. 4.43 *Ha Kus Teyea* opening celebration with Sam Johnston and Lorraine Porter, June 2009

According to the village newsletter, the *Deslin Neek: Voice of the Teslin Tlingit Council*, the subjects are "Johnston's direct descendants" (photo caption, August 2009). As such, they serve as a flesh-and-blood link to their famous ancestor, while the car functions as both a historically significant object of material culture and as a stand-in, or surrogate, for the late George Johnston himself. Furthermore, by riding in the "family" car, the descendants perform the memory that was recorded in Johnston's photographs. In other words, this is not the first time that family members have been photographed riding in Johnston's car through what Richard Schechner calls "twice-behaved behavior." As Diana Taylor states, "performance becomes visible, meaningful, within the context of a phantasmagoric repertoire of repeats" (2003: 144). Since Johnston's

substitute car is available for local use and can be brought out for all manner of heritage parades and community events, the possibilities for repeat engagements and embodied performances appear endless. "Multiple forms of embodied acts are always present, though in a constant state of againness," writes Taylor, for "they reconstitute themselves, transmitting communal memories, histories, and values from one group/generation to the next" (2003: 21).

Indeed, the next generation of Johnstons are continuing to enact the performance of memories through embodied acts. In May 2013, for instance, Cassie Johnston, the great-grandniece of George Johnston, dressed up as her famous ancestor and presented his life through photographs at Yukon Heritage Day in Whitehorse (Fig. 4.44). According to the George Johnston Museum, the "young historian" worked with the museum to assemble her collection of images for display on Facebook.



Fig. 4.44 Cassie Johnston and her George Johnston Display at the Yukon Heritage Fair, Whitehorse, May 2, 2013

However, her display "is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images" (Debord 1994: 4). Indeed, by enacting and embodying the image of George Johnston, the young relative and her photographic display perform as cultural mediators between her family, the Teslin Tlingit community, and larger Yukon society as a whole.

A cult of personality has grown around George Johnston, fed by a considerable number of images by, of, and in homage to him. As a result, the next generation of Teslin Tlingits are learning about him, not only from family oral histories, but from engaging with various images and objects circulating within their community including the Geddes documentary film, Johnston's photographs, his car "Sequeet," and of course, the museum and its exhibitions. As Richard Candida Smith argues, "enactive presentations, if successful, actualize a space where the situations of others, normally vanishing into the patter of the media, become substantial" (2006:4).

Conclusion – Whose Memory?

As a public face of the Teslin Tlingits, George Johnston has become the unofficial "ambassador" for the community. Pearl Geddes told me that he is "a dearly beloved Tlingit brother," and a large part of the local community seems to echo this sentiment. Yet, some Teslin Tlingit residents have mixed feelings regarding the George Johnston Museum and the growing iconic status of its namesake. During my interviews, community members expressed concerns that too much emphasis has been placed on a single tribal member and his experiences, and that the museum does not accurately represent their community as a whole. For instance, Sam Johnston said that "sometimes it bothers me that George gets all the credit, but not my dad or anyone else. There are more of us than just George!" During a long, hot afternoon, Sam

Johnston shared his life story with me, reminiscing about his father and the struggles that Teslin Tlingits had to overcome to gain their land and legal rights. Such narratives were no less valid or compelling than the stories featured in the museum about George Johnston.

In his influential *Predicament of Culture*, James Clifford poses the question: "Who has the authority to speak for a group's identity or authenticity?" (1988: 8). Although Clifford is posing this question in reference to post-colonial *inter*-ethnic relations, it can be asked of *intra*-ethnic relations as well. In this case, authority has been vested by the Teslin Tlingits in their community museum, with the assumption that the institution will represent them in whole. However, any such culturally constructed "'wholes' are not given but constituted, and often they are hotly contested" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1991: 389). Collective memories are disputed when individuals feel that their histories are inscribed without their inclusion in the process so implied. "Memory is timeless and frameless," writes Mary Nooter Roberts, "and when pinned down in particular histories, other particular histories will challenge" (1996: 119).

While frictions and differing perspectives are well documented in larger national museums that attempt to represent the indigenous and local, much less attention has been paid to smaller "contact zones" within local communities such as the George Johnston Museum. "The majority of studies make the assertion that a local museum is representative of the community," states anthropologist Gwyneira Isaac, but "although tribal museums are recognized as forums that affirm tribal identity and as institutions that have sought to reestablish traditional practices, few studies have explored in any detail how these concepts operate on the ground" (2007: 14-15). Indeed, the community museum can be a contested site of power and identity politics. For instance, George Johnston Museum Director Sharron Chatterton stated that "the museum has sometimes been a divisive force in the predominantly First Nations community. … it has been

seen as a repository as First Nations artifacts run by non-First Nations people."[30] She is referring to the by-laws of the George Johnston Museum that require a college-educated curator/director to head the institution. Most local First Nations people do not have a college degree, and if they do, it is not in heritage management. Consequently, the George Johnston Museum has yet to have a Teslin Tlingit or other First Nations individual as curator or head of the site.

In addition to museum-staffing issues, the emphasis on a single tribal member has long been a site of contention as Sam Johnston and others have voiced. For instance, after being awarded a grant by the Department of Canadian Heritage to create an online exhibition for the *Virtual Museum of Canada* website, the George Johnston Museum developed an exhibition entitled "George Johnston and *His World*: Life and Culture of the Inland Tlingit" [emphasis mine]. By referring to Johnston so prominently, the museum risked further alienating their constituents. Yet the museum is not alone in their valorization of Johnston. As articulated in an interview, documentary filmmaker Carol Geddes recognized that this was a concern and acknowledged that "I wish I could go back an include more of the community, explain more about the culture and the background of the people in the photos."[31] Perhaps if George Johnston were alive and actively engaged in the presentation of the Teslin Tlingit at the museum named for him, a broader story might have emerged—but we can never know.

Unlike Johnston, Jennie Ross Cobb's experience and involvement with a heritage institution helped to secure the space as a site of memory for her community. In the next case study, I will discuss the ways in which Ross Cobb and her photographs have participated in Cherokee public history.

[30] As cited in the *Yukon Historical & Museums Association Newsletter*, Fall 2004, p. 3.
[31] Carol Geddes discussion with the author, July 1, 2011.

Chapter 5

Performances of Memories
Case Study #2: Jennie Ross Cobb

We don't look very interesting if you are interested in feathers. Historical photographs and paintings in certain time periods do not include us, because we did not look like what they wanted us to look like.
- Rayna Green (Cherokee), "Repatriating Images"

Cherokee photographer Jennie Fields Ross Cobb (1881-1959) started taking photographs around 1894. Not only does her debut pre-date George Johnston's output by twenty-five years, it makes her one of the earliest American Indian photographer on record.[1] Like Johnston, she primarily photographed friends and family, but unlike him, she rarely appeared in her own images. Only a few professionally-created portraits of her exist, and one (Fig. 5.1) was taken shortly before she assumed stewardship of her family's house museum in 1949. This museum, called the George M. Murrell Home, is of similar importance to her community as is George Johnston's automobile and other artifacts at the eponymous museum, are to the Teslin Tlingits. The antebellum Murrell mansion appears frequently in Cobb's images, and the Cherokee Nation understands it to be part of their cultural heritage.[2]



Fig. 5.1 Jennie Ross Cobb, c. 1945

[1]John Leslie (Puyallup), a student at Carlisle Indian School, reportedly published his photographs in 1895, but I have been unable to find any record of his publication or the images that he created. For more information see Tsinhnahjinnie and Passalacuqua: 2006: xxvi.

[2] Even though the George M. Murrell Home is owned and operated by the State of Oklahoma, the Cherokee Nation is no less supportive of their activities. They have donated thousands of dollars to the Murrell Home educational fund and they have included the home in their list of Cherokee historical sites in Tahlequah.

In this case study, I follow the "social life" of Jennie Ross Cobb's photographic collection, starting and ending with her family dwelling, now understood as the historic George M. Murrell Home. Not only were many of Ross Cobb's photographs taken and developed there, but the images were later instrumental in the restoration of the house. The fact that she grew up in an upper-class family during the Gilded Age has as much to do with *why* she photographed as to *what* she photographed.[3] More importantly, she was born into a prominent Cherokee Nation family.

Jennie Ross Cobb was the great-granddaughter of Principal Chief John Ross (1790-1866).[4] Along with Sequoyah (1767-1842) who was the creator of the Cherokee syllabary, John Ross is perhaps one of the most notable figures in Cherokee history (Cherokee.org). He led his people from removal in the Southeast to rebuilding their community in Indian Territory, and then through the upheavals of the American Civil War (Cherokee.org). Hence, scholars often refer to John Ross as one of the "Cherokee founding fathers" and his family as "Cherokee aristocracy" (Perdue 1989; Anderson 1992; McLoughlin 1992).

A Brief History of the Cherokee

The Cherokee (*Tsalagi*) originally inhabited an area that encompasses the Western part of North Carolina and adjacent states including portions of Tennessee, Georgia, and South Carolina. In 1828, a gold rush in Georgia led to an influx of white miners onto Cherokee lands. To solve this "Indian problem," the Federal government, under President Andrew Jackson,

[3] I am using the phrase *Victorian era* to refer to the style and sentiment of nineteenth century rather than to the specific historical period of Great Britain.

[4] Principal Chief is the highest political office for the Cherokee. According to anthropologist Christina Beard-Moose, every Cherokee village had "two chiefs—a war chief and a peace chief. Over the entire Cherokee Nation was a third chief who was known as a principal chief. Where his home was located was considered the capital of the Cherokee Nation" (2009: 46).

passed the Indian Removal Act (1833) which relocated the tribe to territories west of the Mississippi. Principal Chief John Ross tirelessly lobbied against removal. Although he was initially successful in bringing the case for tribal sovereignty to the United States Supreme Court (*Cherokee Nation vs. Georgia*, and *Cherokee Nation vs. Worchester*), Ross's political tactics delayed but did not prevent the removal process.

In the winter of 1838-1839, most Cherokee were forced from their lands to undertake what is now known as the *Trail of Tears*. A small group in North Carolina successfully resisted, staying on the lands that they owned to become the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. The rest of the tribe, including neighboring Seminole, Muscogee, Choctaw, and Chickasaw—or the *Five Civilized Tribes* as they are sometimes known—were relocated to Indian Territory in modern-day northeastern Oklahoma. Tens of thousands of Native men, women, and children perished on their 1,000-mile forced march. These tragic events are part of Cherokee history and identity, and are shared as an "inherited memory" (Hirsch 2012) by many non-Cherokee Native Americans today. Kiowa author N. Scott Momaday, in writings about his mother, states that "three generations before [she was born], her great-grandmother's people had passed on the Trail of Tears. Some of my mother's memories have become my own. This is the real burden of blood; this is immortality" (1976: 22).

After arriving in Oklahoma, Cherokees began to rebuild their society in their radically altered circumstances.[5] As per official tribal history, "the Cherokee soon re-established themselves in their new home with communities, churches, schools, newspapers and businesses. The new Cherokee capital of Tahlequah, along with nearby Park Hill, became the hub of

[5] The money used to rebuild largely came from treaties with the U.S. Government. For their ceded lands, the Cherokee Nation received thousands of dollars in annual annuity payments "in perpetuity." For more information, see McLoughlin 1992.

regional business activity and the center of cultural activity."[6] Principal Chief John Ross and his extended family settled in the suburb of Park Hill where they built large, plantation-style homes.[7] Due to its long, rosebush-lined private drive, the Ross estate was known as *Rose Cottage*. Only a few blocks away, Ross's niece and her husband, George M. Murrell, built a Greek-Revival mansion completed in 1845 that would be named *Hunter's Lodge* after Murrell's love for the English fox hunt. Almost immediately after building their homes, the community established an extensive educational system.

Ever since Sequoyah created the Cherokee syllabary in 1821, formal education became a source of pride for the Cherokee, and they built several schools to ensure equal access for their people. According to the Cherokee Nation Cultural Resource Center, "the tribe's educational system of 144 elementary schools and two higher education institutions—the Cherokee Male and Female Seminaries—rivaled, if not surpassed all other schools in the region.… Many white settlements bordering the Cherokee Nation took advantage of this superior school system, actually paying tuition to have their children attend Cherokee schools" (Cherokee.org). Lasting from 1849 to 1860, this period of rebuilding and prosperity is popularly known as the "Golden Age of the Cherokee" (Anderson 1992; Denson 2004; Norgren 2004; Conley 2011).

In 1861, the relative peace and quiet of Tahlequah was disrupted by the outbreak of the American Civil War. Due to the plantation culture that flourished in Indian Territory, many Cherokee supported the Confederacy—and slavery.[8] Cherokee elites derived some of their wealth from the institution of slavery and believed that "rights to their property which had been

[6] Per *Cherokee History* on the "Official Site of the Cherokee Nation" at www.cherokee.org .
[7] These few Park Hill "elite" had inherited money, land, slaves, and "parlayed their legacies into greater fortunes" with land speculation and mercantile business ventures (Anderson 1992: 63).
[8] According to Tiya Miles, "Cherokees adopted black slavery in part to demonstrate their level of 'civilization' in the hopes of forestalling further encroachment by white America. … [and] to maintain economic growth and independence and to demonstrate a social distance from the subjugated African race" (2005: 4).

spelled out in treaties with the United States included slave property" (Perdue 1979: 127). By participating in the institution, many Cherokee leaders "had come to view slavery as a core feature of their national character and a key sign of their sovereign rights" (Miles 2005: 4). However, they were in a difficult position because many staunch supporters of Native sovereign rights were located in the North. In addressing the Cherokee National Council, John Ross proclaimed, "our locality and situation ally us to the South, while to the North we are indebted for a defense of our rights in the past" (Perdue 1979: 127). Ross attempted to stay neutral in the war but, in order to keep the Cherokee Nation united, he signed a treaty of alliance with the Confederate government on October 7, 1861. George Murrell was a Virginian and a Confederate sympathizer, and the treaty was witnessed and signed at his home in Park Hill. The following year, Union forces marched into Indian Territory and arrested John Ross for allying himself with the Confederacy. In the meantime, the Murrell family fled to the safety of their other plantation, *Tally Ho*, in Louisiana. A group of Cherokee Confederates, led by the newly-elected Principal Chief Stand Watie—Ross's longtime enemy, conducted guerrilla warfare and destroyed almost all of the plantations in Park Hill, including *Rose Cottage*. Only the Murrell Home escaped their destruction.

After the war, the plantations of Park Hill were not rebuilt. John Ross, who was reaffirmed as Principal Chief, died in Washington D.C. while negotiating new treaties for his people. George Murrell and his family opted to stay in Louisiana, and the upkeep of their Park Hill home fell on any available Ross family members who were still living in area. When Oklahoma became a state in 1907, the Murrell Home and its property were allotted to a cousin, Lula V. Henderson (enrolled as Lula V. Ross), who sold it soon thereafter. The property changed hands several times until 1948, when the State of Oklahoma acquired the site with the

intent of operating it as a historic home. In 1949, Jennie Ross Cobb was hired as the first on-site manager and curator of the Murrell House Museum.

Jennie Ross Cobb Biography

Born in Tahlequah on December 26, 1881, Jennie Ross was the sixth of nine children—five girls and four boys. Her parents, Robert Bruce Ross Sr. and Fanny Thornton Ross, also took in and cared for several orphaned children. Ross Sr. supported his large, extended family by serving as clerk of the Cherokee Nation and by working as a postmaster in Tahlequah. The family took advantage of every room in the Murrell home, where they lived from 1894 to 1907.

Sometime between the ages of twelve and sixteen (1893-1897), Jennie Ross received a camera as a gift from her father.[9] It was a large, Kodak bellows unit with a double-plate holder and a view-finder located on the drop bed to help aim the camera (Fig. 5.2).



Fig. 5.2 Jennie Ross's original camera

Although amateur photography clubs were popping up across America, and especially in the larger cities, it must have been very unusual to see a Native teenager with such a large format camera taking personal photographs in Indian Territory.

[9] Hereafter, I will refer to her maiden name, Jennie Ross, when discussing the period before her marriage.

Despite living in a rural location, Jennie Ross did not have a problem acquiring photographic supplies and developing her film. Mary Elizabeth Good, a local historian who interviewed her in the 1950s, learned that "she used glass negative plates manufactured by two companies—Eastman Kodak Co. of Rochester, N.Y., and the Hammer Dry Plate Co. of St. Louis, Mo" (Good 1961: 6). Using a living-room closet as her darkroom, Ross taught herself to develop the plates. This arrangement "worked very well except during hot weather. Film emulsion then, if placed in solutions even a slight bit too warm, would slide right off the glass. This happened one summer to some pictures she made of Will Rogers" (ibid).

The total number of photographs that Jennie Ross Cobb produced is unknown because she moved frequently throughout her life, and often left her glass plate negatives in storage with various friends and relatives. Over the years, many were lost, damaged, or destroyed. Among the Oklahoma Historical Society, the Cherokee Nation Archives, and private collections, I have identified about one hundred images that can be attributed to her.

Jennie Ross's earliest photographs feature domestic life, including activities of her family and scenes at the Murrell Home. As she grew older, her photographs depicted life beyond Park Hill, such as community events in Tahlequah and her classmates at school. After graduating from the Cherokee Female Seminary in 1900, Ross taught primary school at a one-room schoolhouse about forty miles from Tahlequah, but by this time, her photographic output had already started to decline.

During one of her visits home, Jennie Ross met and fell in love with Jessie Clifton Cobb, a non-Native who worked as a land surveyor. According to her granddaughter, their marriage on September 27, 1905, was not approved by the Ross family.[10] Regardless, Jennie Ross followed

[10] Per a written interview in the Murrell Home archives dated 1995.

Jessie Cobb to various boom towns in Texas, and along the way, she created and sold photo-postcards—none of which have been discovered to date. An only child, Genevieve Chiouke Cobb, was born in Texas in 1906. Eventually, Genevieve would help her mother run a boarding house in Arlington and operate a small florist shop. After a long fight with tuberculosis, Jessie Cobb died in 1940, and barely five years later, Genevieve died as well, leaving Jennie Ross Cobb to take care of her two young grandchildren. When the opportunity arose to move back to her hometown of Tahlequah, she took it.

In 1949, Jennie Ross Cobb became the first curator of the George M. Murrell Historic Home. Using a combination of her photographs and memories, she started to restore the mansion to its former glories. She also convinced family members to return antiques that were once found at the home. Cobb remained the museum's curator until her death in 1959. The Murrell Home biography of Jennie Ross Cobb, compiled in conjunction with her granddaughter, states that "Jen was an inquisitive woman who kept herself very active. She realized that she lived in a time that should be recorded. She inspired her granddaughter to do the same by giving her a camera at the age of five."[11] After her passing, various Ross family members continued to serve as on-site curators of the George M. Murrell Home.

Unfortunately, Cobb did not date her images, therefore, they will be presented chronologically roughly following her biography. Photography theorist Graham King divides amateur photography into three categories: material goods (status symbols), personal achievements (milestones in life) and relaxation (memorable events) (King 1984: 19-29). Similarly, three themes are prevalent in Ross Cobb's photographs: the domestic sphere (material goods), school years (personal achievements), and new womanhood (memorable events). After

[11] Unpublished biography of Jennie Ross Cobb, Murrell Home archives, revised edition March 28, 1995.

examining the content of her photographs, I will investigate how the curators of the Murrell Home and the Cherokee Nation have put her photographs to work for their own purposes.

The Domestic Sphere

At the turn of the twentieth century, elite members of Cherokee society adhered to the Victorian value system that was so prevalent in middle-class Euro-American lives at the time. Women were expected to emulate an ideal style of femininity known as the *cult of domesticity,* and its characteristics of "true womanhood" that included piety, purity, submission, and domesticity. As it happens, the relatively new medium of photography fit well into these societal standards.

> Women were thought to be disposed toward the 'lesser' arts—needle work, embroidery, china and miniature painting—arts and crafts easily linked to women in domestic settings. In the late nineteenth century, the camera was similarly perceived as an example of minor technology … like the decorative arts, photography was described as 'painstaking' and as requiring 'abnegation and devotion,' singularly feminine traits. Writers on photography discussed the 'delicate touch' required by the demands of photography. These kinds of perceptions tended stereotypically to justify women's use of the camera while placing them in suitable subordinate roles. … Thus middle class women added photography to their home-based arts (Gover 1988: 4).

"Naturally," as such thinking ran, the subject matter of female photographers centered on the domestic sphere with images of mothers, babies, and home furnishings.

Jennie Ross's earliest photographs were in line with the predominant visual codes of late Victorian society. A recently found image attributed to her that has been located in a relative's basement during an estate sale, depicts an unknown woman and child bedecked in Victorian fashions and standing just outside the Murrell Home (Fig. 5.3). Despite the severely damaged negative, we can still see the woman smiling sweetly towards the tottering child. Another image

from this same collection depicts two women and children in a garden (Fig. 5.4). In an idyllic scene conveys a sense of peace and tranquility as important traits in the late Victorian concept of domestic life. "Domestic photography helped maintain the proper decorum in that it did not challenge women's accepted place—in the home and not out on the street. By concentrating on subjects that were considered suitable, domestic photography conformed with definitions of ideal womanhood" (Moeller 1992: 145).


Fig. 5.3 Woman and Child, c. 1895


Fig. 5.4 Family in the garden, c. 1895


Fig. 5.5 Child on side steps, c. 1895


Fig. 5.6 Child on front steps, c. 1895


Fig. 5.7 Child with bouquet, 1895

Other photographs created by Jennie Ross during the mid-1890s depict individual children seated on the steps of the Murrell home (Figs. 5.5-5.7). In each case, the child is dressed in white lace like a delicate porcelain doll exuding "sweetness and light." The photographs operate to freeze

the children in a state of innocent perfection, thereby preserving the memory of well-behaved, "civilized" children according to the majority values in the United States. The images are also a comment on the children's' "proper" upbringing according to Euro-American thinking, and are meant to reflect well on the parents.

In late nineteenth-century America or the "Gilded Age" as it is sometimes called, middle-class women were not only expected to cherish and nurture their children but to retain a history of their lives—a task in which photography played an ever greater role.

> The advent of affordable and accessible technology made photographic practice available to women; popular journalism urged women to learn the camera craft so that they could record the growth of their families and trace the inheritance of their physical characteristics. A common place of family photography, in fact, has always been the family group, posed with its possessions on the front steps of the family home (Tonkovich 2003: 59).

Jennie Ross "documented the close connection of family, possessions, and the inheritance of property" through images of her male relatives (ibid). For example, exhibiting an expression of cultivated detachment on his young face, her nephew Blake Ross is pictured (Fig. 5.8) standing with one foot on the front steps of the house. In another photograph, her brother Robert Bruce Ross is depicted on horseback (Fig. 5.9), framed between the back of the mansion and the smokehouse.



Fig. 5.8 Blake Ross as a young boy, c. 1901

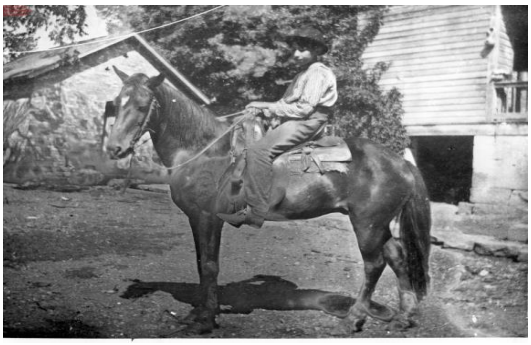


Fig. 5.9 Robert Bruce Ross Jr. on horseback, c. 1900

In Euro-American cultures as well as in many Indian communities, equestrian images have long suggested masculine power and prestige, and it is no different here. These young men—and the family members that helped dress and pose them—are acutely aware of their social standing, and of their roles within the family structure. After all, by the time Jennie Ross was taking photographs in the Gilded Age, "the Cherokees' traditional matriarchal system had faded in favor of the patriarchal family, which recognized males as leaders of the social order" (Mihesuah 1993:10).

It should be noted that highly-acculturated, "progressive" Cherokee such as the Ross family did not live the same lifestyle as less-opulent traditional or "conservative" Cherokee (Harmon 2010). Their views on economics, religion, education, leisure, and even food were closer to Euro-American culture than indigenous ways of life. As a journalist wrote in 1888, Cherokees were "a nation divided into two sharply opposed classes—the highly civilized class of the towns; and the peasant farmers of the open country, or 'native' as it is fashion to call them, in an amusing disregard of a common origin."[12] More commonly, these two social classes came to be known as either "mixed bloods" or "full bloods," reference terms that "identified economic orientation more than ancestry" (Harmon 2010: 144).

By the late nineteenth century, most full-blood Cherokee lived in simple one-or-two room log-cabin homes (Fig. 5.10). The Ross family, however, resided in the most opulent house in Indian Territory: the Murrell Home (Fig. 5.11).

[12] Anna Laurens Dawes of *Harper's Magazine*, as cited in Harmon 2010: 144.



Fig. 5.10 A Typical Cherokee home, c. 1870-1892
unknown photographer


Fig. 5.11 The Murrell Home in winter
by Jennie Ross, c. 1895

The home included more property than just the mansion, for in addition to the main residence, several outbuildings supported the estate and its occupants. Constructed in Greek-Revival style, the main structure is a two-story frame house with three bedrooms, a parlor, a sitting room, a library, a dining room, a kitchen, and an enclosed porch. The property also featured a barn with stables, a smokehouse, a springhouse, a blacksmith shop, a grist mill, corn cribs, and nine small cabins originally used for housing enslaved people.[13] Jennie Ross photographed each of these structures in turn (Figs. 5.12-5.15). In writing of nineteenth-century women's domestic photography, Madelyn Moeller considers that "these images of home usually appear … as a record of objects treasured by the photographer, just as she treasured friendships and family" (1995:145).


Fig. 5.12 The Barn, c. 1895


Fig. 5.13 The Smokehouse, c. 1895

[13] Not all of the structures are currently standing. This list was obtained at the Murrell Home.



Fig. 5.14 Murrell Home – West Porch, c. 1895



Fig. 5.15 Murrell Home from the east, c. 1895

Indeed, there is a sense of pride in Jennie Ross's photographs of the built environment, as she draws attention to her subjects by carefully centering each structure within the frame of her photograph. Quite literally, she maps out the domestic scene with her lens. The fact that her family did not own the Murrell home is a moot point—this is *her space*, and stakes claim to the entire estate through her photography.

Not only do Ross's pictures convey the pleasure of living in the most extravagant home in the area, they may also express her pride of living in the Cherokee Nation.[14] A similar sentiment was published in her school newspaper: "Instead of the rudely constructed wigwams of our forefathers which stood there [in the Park Hill area] not more than a half-century-ago, elegant white buildings are seen. … everything around denotes taste, refinement, and progress of civilization among our people" (as cited in Mihesuah 1993: 41). This opinion is generally indicative of the "progressive" (i.e. wealthy) Cherokee who viewed such improvements as a movement towards the betterment of their Nation (Anderson 1991:115).

[14] Whether or not contemporary Cherokee regarded the Murrell Home and its inhabitants as socio-economic paragons remains to be seen. Historian William Anderson notes that "economic opportunity was open to all, and the fruits thereof abounded in such measure that Cherokee wealth was not gained at the expense of other Cherokee" (1992: 115). However, "social divisions did exist among the Cherokees in terms of race, class, and political orientation, all of which intersected with one another in powerful ways, much as they do today" (Sturm: 2002: 57).

Jennie Ross did not limit her photography to the exterior of the property, for she also took photographs inside the lavish home. "It is not surprising," explains Moeller concerning the more general trends in bourgeois American photography, "to find a few pictures of interiors in most amateur collections. It was only natural that the Victorian home—the symbol of marriage and family revered by nineteenth-century moralists—to be the focal point for many women's introductions to photography" (1992: 145). Jennie Ross photographed two of the most important rooms within any Victorian home: the parlor and the dining room (Figs. 5.16-5.17).


Fig. 5.16 The Parlor, c. 1900


Fig. 5.17 The Dining Room, c. 1900

The parlor was a formal space for entertaining visitors, and "as one of the grandest houses in the Cherokee Nation, *Hunter's Home* was known for fine parties and entertainments."[15] Ross's photograph of the parlor (Fig. 5.16) shows a velvet setee situated in front of a fireplace upon which hangs a large portrait of her relative, George Murrell. Additional framed portraits are displayed on the mantle along with a few glass jars, which most likely contain family artifacts, such as lockets of hair or dried flowers.[16] In her analysis of Victorian parlors, historian Katherine Grier describes them as "sites for certain kinds of conventionalized cultural

[15] Per wall label, George M. Murrell Home.
[16] For more information on such vernacular artifacts see Batchen 2001.

information, which families could 'own' in the form of possessions" (1992: 53). The conversation pieces in this space were meant to be read, understood, and shared by family members, and Jennie Ross's photograph depicts a site of performance for these family histories and memories. The photograph itself, in containing these heirlooms, could conceivably serve as a "site" for performing these memories as well. As Walter Benjamin wrote about nineteenth-century interior design, "the interior is not only the universe but also the etui [a small ornamental case] of the private person" (Benjamin 1978: 155).

The display of family relics was not limited to the parlor. In Victorian dining rooms, the side board and buffet were often used for the presentation of family treasures. Porcelain and other decorative arts could evoke sentimental memories or reflect the interests of the household. Katherine Grier suggests that "the image of the 'memory place' is a suitable metaphor for what décor could mean to properly susceptible and sensitive Victorians" (1992: 58). Indeed, Ross's photograph of the dining room is focused on the sideboard and the numerous cherished objects on display (Fig. 5.17). Although two people can be seen retreating up the stairs, our attention is directed towards the décor and its extravagant furnishings.

Rooms dedicated exclusively to dining and spaces designed just for sitting (like parlors) were uncommon luxuries in the Cherokee Nation. According to Choctaw historian Devon Mihesuah,

> Although some Cherokees lived quite comfortably, not all could or even wanted to live in opulence. Most full-bloods and traditional Cherokees preferred to live in relatively isolated areas and had little interest in learning English. … In turn, many mixed bloods and nontraditional Cherokees looked upon the less acculturated tribes-people with disdain. Inevitably, friction developed between those who struggled to preserve the traditional Cherokee lifestyle and those who wished to emulate white society (1993:11-12).

Race and class tensions plagued the Cherokee Nation as they did in the rest of the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. As we will see, stratification between race and class is depicted in Jennie Ross's photographs.

Like their white neighbors, Cherokees practiced racial segregation. They had separate "colored" schools for black students, and full-blood Cherokee were often ostracized due to their dark skin. "Although blacks were given property and citizenship within the Cherokee Nation," states Mihesuah, "the separation of the Cherokee and black races remained in effect, as did the separation of white and blacks in other parts of the country" (1993: 83). A recently found photograph attributed to Jennie Ross conveys just such race and class differences within the Cherokee Nation at the turn of the century (Fig. 5.18).



Fig. 5.18 The meeting, c. 1896

Taken outdoors near a water source (possibly behind her house), three black children hold buckets while two women in Victorian dress appear to pause as they walk by. The outfits alone are a study in contrasts. Wearing hats and full-length, white-ruffled dresses, the women are paragons of Victorian summer fashion. The children, on the other hand, are shoeless and dressed

in simple, drab cotton shirts and shorts. One of the women seems to be addressing the tallest child as the two others glace back, presumably in the direction from which they came. No one in the image is looking at the photographer. This lack of interest in the camerawoman makes us wonder: Why did she take this photograph? Presumably, Ross was walking with the two women when they crossed paths with the children. However, something about the situation made her step back, ensure a glass plate was loaded into the camera, and shoot the scene. Although we may never know why she felt it important to record this moment, it reflects the prevailing, divisive cultural attitudes of her time.

School Years

The previous photograph was created around 1896, the same year that Jennie Ross's school, the Cherokee Female Seminary, produced a skit titled, "Da Dabatin' Club" which featured her teachers and classmates performing in blackface (Fig. 5.19). Jennie Ross was a "Rosebud"—as the Seminarians called themselves—from 1894 until her graduation on May 25, 1900, and during that time, there were many such "productions that poked fun at blacks" (Mihesuah 1993: 83).



Fig. 5.19 "Da Dabatin' Club" skit, Cherokee Female Seminary, school photographer, 1896

Although there is no indication that Jennie herself acted in any of these plays, we do know that it was not just the popular, mixed-blood students who appeared onstage; some of full-blood and darker-skinned Cherokee students participated in the blackface productions as well. In her seminal text on the Cherokee Female Seminary entitled, *Cultivating the Rosebuds*, Devon Mihesuah writes that "the subjugation of the blacks within the Cherokee society gave even some of the poor, darker-skinned students (whose parents often were anti-slavery and frequently were themselves subjected by other Cherokees) an opportunity to feel superior to another race, to feel equal to the dominant white race, and to identify with the progressive culture within their own tribe" (1993: 84). What Mihesuah describes, in effect, is a complex performance of identities—that is, of acting black in order to assume whiteness.[17] In other words, students used performance as a tool to emulate the dominant white culture. As Cherokee writer and activist Qwo-Li Driskill reasons, "performance has been used by some Cherokees as a strategy of reinforcing colonial power relationships … [and] in this instance, performance was used as a *strategy* to construct racial differences and dichotomies in the Cherokee Nation, even while 'blacks' and 'Cherokees' often shared—and share—both Cherokee and African ancestors in common" (2008: 37). This strategy for social mobility was not limited to performing in blackface—students also performed in "redface" as well (Raheja 2010).

At a town carnival, Jennie Ross also photographed some boys from the Cherokee Male Seminary school "playing Indian" (Deloria 1998). In the image (Fig. 5.20), three boys in partial Indian dress act in surprise as a fourth boy in full headdress and fringed buckskin mockingly raises a tomahawk towards them. All three boys wear "war paint" and appear to be posing for

[17] Performing in blackface and acting in minstrel shows can also be seen in Africa, where the Ghana people used it strategically to "imagine themselves as members of an expanded transnational and transcultural black community." Therefore, these performances are not about *racism* per se as much as they are about "racial affinity" (Cole 2001 :37)

the sake of Ross's camera. However, they were not performing "Indianness" for the sake of reinforcing stereotypes, given that they were being groomed as future leaders of the tribe. Therefore, appearing publically in regalia and self-fashioning themselves as warriors may have been part of their hybrid social identities as both forward-thinking students and as traditional-minded men.



Fig. 5.20 Carnival Day, Jennie Ross, 1896-1902



Fig. 5.21 Cherokee Female Seminary Students, school photographer, 1894

As wives to these future leaders, the female seminary students also "dressed in feathers" (Bird 1996). In an image taken by a school photographer (Fig. 5.21), the girls wear dark uniforms with feathered Indian bonnets while pretending to shoot a bow and arrow. Despite being taken on school grounds, the photograph is not meant to imply that an indigenous curriculum was offered.

In fact, "no courses focusing on tribal history, religion, or any other aspect of Cherokee culture" were taught (Mihesuah 1993: 56). Yet, "even though Cherokee culture typically was not taught in the English-only schools, pride in Cherokee identity was assumed and fostered, and bilingualism was encouraged" (Spack 2002: 39).

Modeled after Mount Holyoke College, the elite "Seven Sisters" school in Massachusetts, the Cherokee Female Seminary sought to provide a "classical" Euro-American education for primary through secondary students.[18] Latin, mathematics, English literature, and geography were just some of the courses required of the Seminarians. Yet, Cherokee women were not expected to pursue a *career* in any of these fields. Mihesuah contends that "one of the Cherokee National Council's rationales for establishing the school was to train the young women of the tribe in order to make them educated, dutiful and 'useful' wives for prominent Cherokee husbands" (1993: 3). The official school imagery seems to back up this statement. In her class photograph of 1897-1898, Jennie Ross and her fellow "Cherokee Rosebuds" are pictured in their Victorian finery on the main steps of the school (Fig. 5.22).



Fig. 5.22 Cherokee Female Seminary School, Class Picture, 1897-1898.
Jennie Ross - second row from the bottom, first person on the left

[18] Cherokee tribal leaders sought a model in Mount Holyoke, and the college welcomed the connection. Alumni of Mount Holyoke became the first instructors and administrators at the Cherokee Female Seminary School, and Cherokee graduates often reciprocated by continuing their studies at the college (Per Mount Holyoke website: https://www.mtholyoke.edu/courses/rschwart/hatlas/mhc_widerworld/cherokee/index.html.

With hair tucked into buns and their leg o'mutton-sleeved dresses, the girls indicate that they have learned, adopted, and internalized all of the rules for proper Victorian feminine appearance. "'Women's values' and the ideal of the 'true woman' are often assumed to be part of the white woman's world exclusively," argues Mihesuah, "but a number of Cherokee females were economically, socially, and physiologically nearly identical to Victorian society's white women, and many seminary students subscribed to the same value system as whites even before they enrolled" (ibid).

Scholars (including myself) have focused on the race and class-based biases at the school and have thereby portrayed the Cherokee Female Seminary as a relatively elitist institution.[19] However, members of the Cherokee Nation who built their cultural center and archives on the ruins of the old Seminary, seem to feel quite differently. On their website, just one item appears in the "History" section of the Cherokee Female Seminary—a quote from *Na-Li*, one of only two full-blood students enrolled in the Seminary during the 1850s who wrote the following open letter to the citizens of the Cherokee Nation

> Long, long ago, mixed bloods and rich people were the only ones that used these schools. This is what we heard. These people were wrong. … My parents were Indians. Not rich, not poor, just everyday Cherokee. But, they loved their children in a way these other people can't feel. They have not learned from books. They don't know how to use the right wording. I am alone; my parents are already gone. When I was a child, my mother had a hard cough for a long time and she passed away. A kind teacher took me and cared for me. Children do not think like adults, but she taught me. Because of her, I was able to get into this big school. But, in my opinion, anybody could make it into this school if they set their minds to it.

[19] In her notes, Mihesuah states that at least one Cherokee consultant objected to her characterizing the school as elitist (1998: 168n42).

A simple statement follows: "The letter was written in Cherokee and sends a wonderful message to youth regarding the availability of an education."[20] In other words, they proudly claim the identity of this school. After all, it was independently owned and operated by the Cherokee Nation.

Unlike Federal boarding schools, Cherokee students were not forced to attend the Seminary. Girls could enroll and take a leave of absence, as Jennie Ross did on several occasions. Even though the campus was relatively open, administrators maintained the rules of Victorian propriety. Every couple of weeks, the teachers escorted the girls to Tahlequah to go shopping. On these outings, Jennie Ross brought her camera to photograph her classmates. One such picture depicts her fellow students walking down a recently constructed sidewalk that led from the seminary into town (Fig. 5.23). Shopping trips must have been rather momentous occasions for the girls. Since roads were not paved, mud would inevitably collect on the hem of their long dresses, and wooden walkways made it easier for them to stroll into town.



Fig. 5.23 Going into town on the boardwalk, c. 1894-1900



Fig. 5.24 Returning to school, 1894-1900

[20] As featured on the Cherokee Nation website, and translated by Anna Huckaby, Language Training Coordinator of the Cherokee Nation's Cultural Resource Center.
http://www.cherokee.org/AboutTheNation/History/Facts/TheCherokeeRosebuds.aspx (Accessed January 20, 2013).

Jennie Ross's picture is one of several photographs depicting her classmates in transit (see Figs. 5.18, 5.23-24, 5.26). Rarely does she have her friends pose. In most instances, subjects are walking away from the camera, so that the viewer is left looking at their backs. This is not to say that her classmates did not acknowledge Ross's presence; in each image it seems as though at least one person is turning to look towards the camera—as in a photograph of students returning to campus on a hot summer day (Fig. 5.24). Shading herself from the heat, a solitary student appears to be questioning Ross's pause as they all move forward.

The bodies in motion that Jennie Ross pictured are not restrained by the confines of the educational institution. In fact, the Cherokee Seminaries have been considered sites for intellectual and social *movement*. "The Female Seminary was particularly revolutionary. … [for] most Anglo-Americans at the time believed that women were intellectually inferior to men, and so women had few opportunities to acquire any education beyond basic skills" (Perdue 2005: 63). After graduating from the seminary, some Cherokee women were not content to be submissive wives and "Angels in the House." Many alumnae found careers as teachers or social workers, some never married at all, and others left Indian Territory to attend college in the East (Mihesuah 1993: 100). In other words, the Cherokee Female Seminary School gave these women a choice.

With her photograph of the 1902 Seminary graduation in which her relative, Elizabeth Van Ross took part, Jennie Ross pictured the women standing in a liminal space at the perimeter of the school, between the school grounds and the outside world (Fig. 5.25). They are ready to leave campus and embark on a new stage in their lives. Jennie Ross steps aside to let them pass, and in doing so, she snaps another picture (Fig. 5.26).



Fig. 5.25 Graduating Class, 1902



Fig. 5.26 Graduating Class (rear), 1902

In this second photograph, the last few girls glance at the photographer as their long shadows trail behind them. Walking forward thus signifies their transition into the world and the various opportunities available to them. As philosopher Michel de Certeau points out, walking can "link acts and footsteps, opening meanings and directions … [to] liberated spaces that can be occupied" (1984: 105).

The New Woman

By the turn of the twentieth century, a feisty counterpart to the feminine ideal of "True Womanhood" was proposed. Coined in England in 1894 by Sarah Grand, the "New Woman" identified a proto-feminist figure that "proclaimed for herself what was wrong with Home-is-the-Women's-Sphere, and prescribed the remedy" (1894: 29-30). This archetype was independent, opinionated, educated, witty, well-dressed, and unmistakably modern. In books and in plays, the New Woman, "challenged assumptions of women's innate frailty" (West 2000: 117), and in the visual arts, this figure was epitomized by the fashionable and clever "Gibson Girls" (Fig. 5.27)

created by magazine illustrator Charles Dana Gibson. It was not long until corporate America cashed in on the popularity of the New Woman.

One of the first companies to start marketing the New Woman lifestyle was Kodak. "The Kodak Girl *is* the New Woman," argues historian Nancy Martha West (2000: 54). In 1893, Kodak launched an advertising campaign featuring an adventurous young woman who traveled the world "kodaking" to use their term.



Fig. 5.27 Gibson Girls, 1900



Fig. 5.28 Kitty Kramer, The First Kodak Girl, 1893

The company employed many different models for the Kodak Girl (Fig. 5.28), but overall, they "generally picture her outdoors, frequently on her own, … never in the company of a man" (West 2000: 54). Despite her disregard for social conventions, the Kodak Girl was not a threat to society. "Pretty, wholesome, and sweet, the woman in the camera ads fit the expected image of turn of the century women," writes C. Jane Gover, "but, in part, she portrayed as well a new kind of freedom … not passive button-pressers, but participants in their surroundings. With camera in hand, this woman photographer is active and curious, yet accepted and welcomed everywhere" (1988: 15).

Jennie Ross embodied this New Woman aesthetic. Sometimes unchaperoned and always curious, she walked around Tahlequah photographing the major sites and events in the city. For

instance, she took pictures of the Cherokee Nation Supreme Court Building (Fig. 5.29) and the Dawes Commission tents (Fig. 5.30). Built in 1844, the Supreme Court is the oldest public building in Oklahoma, while the Murrell Home is the oldest private residence in the state. At the time of Ross's photograph in 1900 (Fig. 5.29), the Court had already moved to its new offices across the street and the building was occupied by the printing press of the *Cherokee Advocate* the "Official Newspaper for the Cherokee Nation." In order to capture the entire structure in the shot, Ross had to position herself in the middle of the town square. The resulting image dwarfs the two figures who appear in the doorway of the massive brick building—Sheriff Cate Starr on the right, and an unknown figure (possibly the editor) on the left. Due to her framing of the scene, Ross seems less interested in capturing the men's portraits and more concerned with recording one of the most prominent buildings in the Tahlequah.


Fig. 5.29 Cherokee Supreme Court Building, 1900


Fig. 5.30 Dawes Commission Tents, Tahlequah, late 1900

That same year, Ross was witness to history as the Dawes Commission arrived in Tahlequah to set up their tents. Part of the General Allotment Act of 1887, the Dawes Commission was tasked with creating a correct roll of the Five Civilized Tribes which would be used by the U.S. Government to divide community-held tribal land into allotments for individual

Indians.[21] Between November 27th and December 20th 1900, the Dawes Commission enrolled Cherokee tribal members in the official register.[22] Sometime within this three-week period, Jennie Ross photographed the commission's tents (Fig. 5.30). It is tempting to read her image as an indictment against the U.S. Government for abolishing communal ownership of land and for destabilizing Indian families by recognizing men, instead of women, as head of household. However, as historian Carolyn Johnston states, "a surprising number of women, especially elite Cherokee women, supported allotment and statehood because they thought that the Cherokee Nation could not effectively deal with the problems of violence and alcohol" (2003: 129). Like the survey photographers described by cultural anthropologist Elizabeth Edwards, Jennie Ross "emerged from an emotionally engaged sense of place that, while inflected with ideas of the national and contributing to a coherent national vision, was also understood as being compellingly local" (2012: 124).

Jennie Ross was indeed interested in recording the civic life and lives of the Cherokee Nation. For example, one of her photos (Fig. 5.31) shows her friends walking along the Ozark and Cherokee Central train tracks that were under construction in Tahlequah during the summer of 1902. Like some of the previously discussed images (Figs. 5.18, 5.23-24), the women in this photograph are not posing. Instead, they look down to ensure that they do not trip as they carefully make their way along the railroad ties. Rather than documenting a close-up of her friend's faces, Ross's image records their gazes. Like her subjects, she takes part in the spectacle of modernity. The women witness, first-hand, the mode of transportation that is quickly changing the social landscape of their region. In effect, these "new" Cherokee women do not intend to stay

[21] The Cherokee had already supplied a roll of their members in 1880, but the Curtis Act (1898) amended the law and required that the federal government create a "correct" and "final roll" of the Cherokee. Hence, the commission had to go out into the field and to create the rolls.

[22] The dates and schedule of Dawes Commission Field Appointments can be found at the Oklahoma Historical Society website http://www.okhistory.org/research/dawhistory (accessed April 8, 2013).

cloistered in the domestic sphere. They want to experience the city and its new developments as they are happening, and Ross, as the resident Kodak Girl of Tahlequah, is there to document the excitement. As a popular magazine reported, "the Kodak girl will be found around, adjusting her lens to a proper focus and 'taking in' the sights."[23]

Many photographs by Jennie Ross involve women experiencing the city. For instance, two classmates, Bunt Schrimscher and Pixie Mayes, are frequently photographed walking about town (Fig. 5.32).



Fig. 5.31 When the Train Came to Tahlequah, 1902



Fig. 5.32 Carnival Day, c. 1900

Jennie Ross and her friends appear to be partaking in a form of social behavior specific to America and described by Mark Twain and Edith Wharton—that is, *to promenade* (Twain 1867; Wharton 1905, 1920). Not simply walking to get somewhere, to "promenade" means to use the streets and walkways as places for socializing. During the Gilded Age (1870-1905), it was not uncommon for Cherokee elites to put on their best clothing, promenade pleasantly with their friends, and to see and be seen.

Before they were married and drifted their separate ways, Jennie Ross and her friends were intrepid young ladies who investigated the town and all it had to offer. They went to the

[23] From *The Photographic Times* (1891) as cited in Davidov 1998: 81.

carnival (Fig. 5.32) or met friends for a picnic (Figs. 5.33-35), and flaunted their independence for Ross's camera. As historian Joan M. Jensen has remarked, "Cobb's Cherokee women defied the stereotypical photographic views of Native women at the time. They were poised, self-assured, fashionable, confident carriers of two cultures" (Jensen 1998).


Fig. 5.33 Eating Watermelons in Park Hill, c. 1900


Fig. 5.34 Picnic, c. 1900


Fig. 5.35 Fishing, c. 1900

Free and unencumbered, Jennie Ross's subjects are in line with Kodak's early marketing schemes which emphasize leisure. At the end of the nineteenth century, Kodak's advertising "starts to shift toward the importance of home and the preservation of domestic memories, but these subjects still remain subordinate to the promotion of snapshot photography as leisure

activity" (West 2000: 13). In other words, photography was not marketed to women as an obligation, or as a duty to record and memorialize loved ones. "Between 1888 and 1900, Kodak paid very little attention to promoting photography's mnemonic capabilities," writes Nancy Martha West, for "during those twelve years, the sheer pleasure and adventure of taking photographs are the main subject" and equally important was "capturing subjects in candid moments" (2000: 13). Jennie Ross was undoubtedly familiar with Kodak's marketing campaign through the popular magazines and mail-order catalogues that circulated among her friends in Park Hill. As a result, her photographs of leisure activities were quite likely an effort to live up to the image of a Kodak Girl as defined across the United States, whatever a woman's ethnic heritage.

Jennie Ross's photographs can also be read as a type of commentary on the status of the Cherokee Nation. The people in her images can be seen relaxing and enjoying each other's company, so that, less than a century after removal through the Trail of Tears, Cherokees were able to take leisure time and partake in hobbies such as photography. Proud of their ability to acculturate and survive, "Cherokee people have been consistently identified as one of the most socially and culturally advanced of the Native American tribes," the Nation trumpets, "Cherokee society and culture continued to develop, progressing and embracing cultural elements from European settlers. The Cherokee shaped a government and a society matching the most civilized cultures of the day" (Cherokee.org: 2013).

As the carefree days of her teens and twenties gave way to her adult responsibilities, Jennie Ross's photographs reflected more serious concerns. For example, she became involved in the *Cherokee Temperance Society*—an organization founded in 1836 as part of a larger social movement which sought to enact community legislation safeguarding against the abuse of

alcohol. "Cherokee temperance societies and laws governing the sale and consumption of alcohol presented an opportunity for Cherokees to demonstrate how 'civilized' they were and to exercise their own sovereign right to govern themselves. Ultimately temperance became the avenue by which Cherokee women, disenfranchised early in the nineteenth century, reentered the political arena" (Perdue and Green 2008: ix). Jennie Ross was an active member of the society and took at least one photograph of a temperance meeting (Fig. 5.36). In the picture, a group of women and children are gathered in the shade of woods just beyond a pair of flagpoles. Perhaps it is an image of the children's auxiliary unit, the Cold Water Army, which was created to involve the youth of the nation in the temperance effort. If so, then this photograph may have been taken be during Fourth of July festivities when the Cold Water Army participated in the annual holiday parade.[24] Thus, working along the youth of the Cherokee Nation, this photo prefigured Ross's career as a schoolteacher.



Fig. 5.36 Cherokee Temperance Society Meeting, c. 1900-1905

[24] Although the last documented Cold Water Army parade was in 1860, historian Grant Foreman claims that after the Civil War, "temperance again became a vital subject with the Indians." So perhaps the Cold Water Army parade was reinstituted. *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 12.2 (June 1934):139.

From 1902 until she married in 1905, Jennie Ross worked as a schoolteacher in Christie, a rural village twenty miles east of Tahlequah. She boarded with a Cherokee family and taught at Owen School, a one-room schoolhouse named for Cherokee politician Robert L. Owen. Her excitement at this first assignment is reflected in a picture she took of her students lined up outside the schoolhouse (Fig. 5.37). Unlike contemporary photographs taken at Federal Indian schools that "emphasized discipline, labour, and group cohesion" through military dress and rigid postures (Margolis 2004: 94), Ross's photograph depicts a group of Cherokee children who are not wearing uniforms and standing somewhat casually in front of their school. It is *their* school, operated by the Cherokee Nation, led by a Cherokee teacher, and with classes taught in Cherokee and English.



Fig. 5.37 One-room schoolhouse near Christy, c. 1902-1905

"It was the first bilingual and bicultural school system in the nation," states Delores Huff (Cherokee), and "judging by today's standards, the system was amazing, with evidence that it produced a 90 percent literate population within a decade. Even today, that record cannot be matched by most states" (1997: 3). Consequently, we can understand Ross's photograph as more

than just documenting a new job, for she is expressing pride in her "family" of grade-school children as she served larger efforts to improve the lives of her fellow Cherokee.

After her marriage to Jessie Cobb, Jennie Ross Cobb left the Cherokee Nation and lived in Texas for almost fifty years. During that time, her photographs and glass plate negatives remained in storage in Park Hill where she would find them when she returned to Tahlequah in 1949 as site manager for the George M. Murrell House. Unlike George Johnston, who did not live to see his namesake museum open, Jennie Ross Cobb served as a curator for almost ten years. Two photographs (Figs. 5.38-39), taken by historian Mary Elizabeth Good, depict her living and working within the Murrell House, practically becoming what Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett calls a "living ethnographic specimen" (1991: 410). Nevertheless, Ross Cobb's pioneering efforts to restore the home would contribute to the property being listed as a National Historic Landmark and as a Certified Trail of Tears site.


Fig. 5.38 Jennie Ross Cobb at the Murrell Home, 1958


Fig. 5.39 Jennie Ross Cobb with her camera, 1958

The Murrell Home

According to Ross Cobb's nephew Bruce Ross Jr., "My Aunt Jen and a her younger sister, my Aunt Anne (Ross) Piburn lived on the property from 1949-1959, renovating and

conducting tours, [and] they were instrumental in establishing the home as a destination for tourists to Cherokee country."[25] After years of neglect, the historic home was in need of major renovations. Jennie Ross Cobb used her photographs and her memory to reclaim furnishings from family members, renovate the building, and restore the landscaping. Her extensive notes and correspondence often refers to her photographs as evidence of the original features of the home such as the location of patios, paths, furniture, and heirlooms.

In my conversations with Bruce Ross Jr., he stated that "for nearly forty-five years the State of Oklahoma saw fit to employ the services of members of the Ross family as caretakers of that beautiful home and property." He recalled:

> After Aunt Jen passed away, my mother, Marguerite (nee Clay) Knight Ross became the curator. Mother, dad and I moved there in May 1959. For dad, it was like coming home as he had essentially grown up in the home living there from 1894-1907. Mother was curator from 1959-1966, when she reached the mandatory state retirement age of 65. Upon mother's retirement another cousin, Macie Osburn, was there from 1966-1984. It was during her tenure that the home was transferred to the newly formed Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department, Division of State Parks. Upon the retirement of Macie Osburn, I was fortunate enough to become Curator/Manager, and got to return to my childhood home (ibid).

At some point during their careers, each subsequent curator of the Murrell Home called upon the photographs by Jennie Ross Cobb to help in restoration. As Ross Jr. remarked, "being an accomplished photographer, noted for many of her early photographs and personal accounts aided greatly during the restoration of the home" (ibid). However, the home was not restored to

[25] Per my phone conversations with Bruce Ross Jr. and his biography posted on his personal website at www.kuwiskuwi.net (accessed Feb 2, 2013).

the time period as shown in the images (1890-1905), but to some fifty years *before* the photographs was taken.

In restoring the property to its antebellum glory, Murrell Home curators have relied on the indexical qualities of Ross Cobb's photographs. Indexicality refers to the physical relationship between the photographed object and the picture itself.[26] However, Geoffrey Batchen argues that photos are "inscribed by the very objects to which they refer," and therefore, "transcend mere resemblance and conjure a 'subject,' a presence that lingers" (1997: 215, 74). In a similar fashion, Louis Owens (Choctaw/Cherokee) finds a familial association through photography, and cites Roland Barthes in that "those ghostly traces, photographs, supply the token presence of dispersed relatives" (2001: 91). For the curators of the Murrell Home, Ross Cobb's photographs represent a period *close enough* to the past that they are trying to conjure as to serve their purposes. The images then, represent an approximation of historical authenticity, and although "the image is not the reality, but at least it is its perfect analogon and it is exactly this analogical perfection which, to common sense, defines the photograph" (Barthes 1961: 17).

In terms of display, Jennie Ross Cobb's photographs are exhibited within the Murrell Home in two different ways: clustered on a single panel on the top floor (Fig. 5.40), and scattered throughout the home on easels (Fig. 5.41).

[26] Here I refer to indexicality in the strict Peircean sense. However, what constitutes "indexicality" and how it is culturally determined is a highly contested topic that has been examined extensively by a variety of scholars including Edwards 2001; Geary 2002; Pinney and Peterson 2006; Morris 2009; and Strassler 2010.



Fig. 5.40 Jennie Ross Cobb exhibit, Murrell Home



Fig. 5.41 Easel with photographs, Murrell Home

The top floor exhibit (Fig. 5.40) has twenty images grouped according to locations within the house such as the front steps, west porch, or east side. Individually, the photographs represent fragments of the home, like an image of a walkway or a side elevation, that have been "rescued from triviality" by virtue of schematic arrangement (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1991: 390). This technique of display not only allows for the photographs to serve as historic documents of the site, but also testifies to the efforts of the staff to restore the home to its original condition. Using the images to "set the standard for experience" is even more evident in the different rooms of the house where the photographs are placed on easels (Fig. 5.41) in an effort to show the placement of objects vis-à-vis the original interior décor (ibid 1991: 410).

Jennie Ross Cobb's photographs aid in the performance of an imagined past—one that has been enacted as a "living history." Within the (re)constructed space of the Murrell Home, the community re-enacts historic occasions such as the Cherokee Temperance Rally and annual Lawn Socials. Inspired by the events in her photograph (Fig. 5.35), the recent Temperance Rally that took place in 2011, included a group of "reenactors portraying members of the Temperance Society" as well as a "temperance March of Allegiance, a historic 1860 practice" (per the *Lawton Constitution* newspaper, June 6, 2011). A photograph of this event (Fig. 5.42) depicts

participants gathered behind a Cold Water Army banner and readying themselves for the march. As in the description of an earlier Cherokee Temperance Rally in 1907, "the Cold Water Army formed in grand parade, from little tots who had to be led, to larger children, and young men and women. They marched around the public square, with banners flying, singing temperance hymns, and then halted at a table filled with good things to eat" (Furgeson 1907: 88). This practice was "restored," to use Richard Schechner's term (1985: 36), over one hundred years later by the guests and staff of the Murrell Home.



Fig. 5.42 Cherokee Temperance Rally, 2011


Fig. 5.43 Murrell Home Lawn Social, 2011

Modern performances such as this rally not only relay the intended content concerning temperance with alcohol in our own times, but also allow for a higher level of engagement with collective memories. In other words, Jennie Ross Cobb's photograph of a Temperance Meeting on display in the Murrell Home is not alone in instigating performed memories of the past, for audience members can "embody" the experience through engagement with the material. As Richard Candida Smith argues, "the enactive knowledge that performance sparks connects memory to the present in a way that contrasts the congealed understandings of words [and images] with the fuller experience that embodied memory allows" (2002: 7).

This Cherokee Temperance Rally took place during the annual Lawn Social at the Murrell Home (Fig. 5.40). At Lawn Socials, guests can "learn traditional dances such as the

Victoria Reel and Quadrille"[27] By describing these dances as "traditional," the Friends of the Murrell Home organizing the event are referring to *Cherokee* traditions. According to the *Cherokee Phoenix - the official newspaper of the Cherokee Nation*, the annual Lawn Social at the Murrell Home, "evokes the beauty, color, music and dancing of the 19th century Cherokee Nation" (ibid). The Cherokee Nation supports this event both financially and conceptually because it represents a segment of their post-contact culture. [28] Nonetheless, it is quite extraordinary that the Virginia Reel would be understood as "Cherokee" particularly since most of the displays and performances at the Cherokee Heritage Center and its adjacent "Ancient Village" have pre-contact origins. This is not to say that the Cherokee do not have post-contact material in their heritage center and other cultural sites, for they use Jennie Ross Cobb's images to help tell their history.

In the Cherokee Nation

The permanent exhibition at the Cherokee Heritage Center is staged in six galleries, the last of which is titled, "Starting Over" (after the Trail of Tears), and focuses on "rebuilding our Nation from scratch: our ability to adapt, thrive and excel." Within this gallery, two of Jennie Ross Cobb's photographs are featured, one of the Murrell Home and one of the Cherokee Supreme Court Building. For both, the captions do not identify Cobb as the photographer, and instead credit the images to the Oklahoma Historical Society. As in conventional ethnographic displays, the photographs are "used as establishing mechanisms, to create the total environment in the representation of a people or place, establishing social reality, denoting the environment,

[27] Emphasis mine. Staff reporter, *Cherokee Phoenix*, "Murrell Home to host annual Lawn Social," April 11, 2013, (online edition: http://www.cherokeephoenix.org/Article/Index/7169)
[28] In 2009, the Cherokee Nation donated $10,000 to the Friends of the Murrell Home for the educational projects at the historic site. Per Cherokee Phoenix online archives. http://www.cherokeephoenix.org/Article/Index/3400

and the 'look' of a place" (Edwards 2001: 186). Ross Cobb's pictures, along with other anonymously-authored images, illustrate a didactic panel which states that "the Cherokee set about the task of rebuilding their lives. It was a Golden Age for the tribe, once again filled with hope and promise." Jennie Ross Cobb's image of "the Murrell Mansion," as they caption it, is juxtaposed against a photograph of a humble log cabin that "was probably home to a farming family."[29] This pairing of text and image helps signify the Murrell Home as the epitome of the Golden Age.

In another instance, curators have employed Jennie Ross Cobb's photograph of the Murrell Home to illustrate the Golden Age of the Cherokee. This time at the recently opened John Ross Museum (established October 2011 by the Cherokee Nation). At the top of a freestanding panel, her picture of the home in winter is reproduced directly above the phrase, "Park Hill: The Cherokee Athens" written in both Cherokee script and in English (Fig. 5.44).

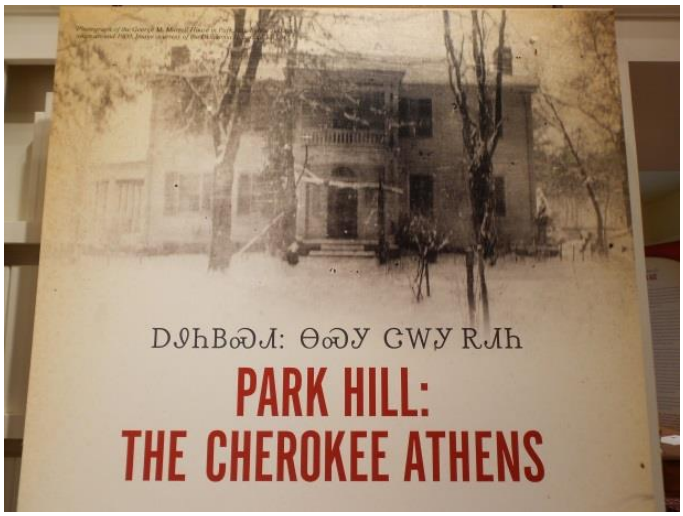


Fig. 5.44 Panel at the John Ross Museum, 2012

As the Cherokee identify with the "Golden Age" of ancient Greece, a complex dialectical is posited between text and image. By equating Park Hill with a romanticized Athens, they

[29] The Cherokee Heritage Center does not permit photographs to be taken in their museum. I respected this prohibition, and therefore, I do not have images inside the exhibition.

effectively idealize both eras to express the grand narrative of their tribe.[30] For the Cherokee, this narrative holds that the Golden Age "was, in spite of the removal, a time of prosperity, marked by the development of business, schools, and a flourishing culture" (Mankiller and Wallis 1993: xxi). In equating this historical moment with that of ancient Greece, they evoke the learning, freedom, and virtues associated with classical antiquity. The symbol of this "greatness" thus becomes the largest home in their capital city. As art historian Johann Winckelmann reminds us, "the only way to achieve greatness and, if possible, to be inimitable, is to emulate the ancients" (1969: 2). And the object of Cherokee veneration, the Murrell Home, does just that.

The architectural style of the Murrell Home provides further visual support for the Cherokees' self-association with Athens. It is, after all, a *Greek-Revival* mansion. A few of the neoclassical elements that typify this particular style are the pedimented gable, symmetrical façade, and Doric columns that surround the fireplaces inside. Surrounded by these structural features, Cherokee elites were symbolically enshrined within a "Greek temple." This association with Greek temples was even more pronounced at the nearby site of the first Cherokee Female Seminary whose building was surrounded on three sides by "Greek" columns.[31] The text appended to Jennie Ross Cobb's photograph of the Murrell Home, entangling as it does the building's *Greek-Revival* style with the tribe's self-conscious association with Athens, takes on normative as well performative value as the memory reflected in the image is used to reinforce a symbolic Golden Age. As W. J. T. Mitchell maintains, "the dialectic of word and image seems to be a constant in the fabric of signs which a culture weaves around itself" (1986: 43).

[30] The association between Park Hill and Athens can also be seen in local newspapers. For example, one article on Park Hill was titled: "Athens of the Western Wilderness Where Culture Thrived in Early Days." Undated, unidentified newspaper clipping from the Witcher Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society.

[31] The first Cherokee Female Seminary was destroyed by fire in 1887 and rebuilt in Tahlequah in 1889. Its Greek columns were the only architectural features to survive, and they now sit at the entrance to the Cherokee Heritage Center.

The cultural matrix within which Jennie Ross Cobb's photographs operate dictates how and which images will be used. Because the Murrell Home is so strongly associated with the Cherokee Golden Age, the curators place more emphasis on her photographs depicting the architecture and its grounds and less on images featuring people. As Murrell Home curator David Fowler (Cherokee) holds, "I'm only interested in the pictures that show the house, I don't care about the ones of her hanging out with friends."[32] Yet, the photographs featuring her friends have not been entirely ignored or forgotten. Representing almost ninety percent of her output, these images have been turned into commodities and art objects by people outside the Cherokee Nation.

Beyond the Cherokee Nation

In 2012, Karen Harrington, an antiques dealer who operates the Black Valley Trading Post on the outskirts of Tahlequah, purchased a large number of Jennie Ross Cobb's glass-plate negatives at an estate sale. Harrington told me that she is "not interested in selling them [the plates] because they are an interesting part of local history."[33] However, she does sell "antiques, collectibles, primitives" (according to her business card), and has created large posters from three of the photographs, selling them for $25 each. We cannot fault her for that—after all, she does trade in nostalgia. As art historian Geoffrey Batchen reminds us, "the stimulation of nostalgia is a major industry [and] the past has become a profitable commodity" (2006: 14). Indeed, Karen Harrington's antique store does a bustling business, and the photographic objects operate there in a particularly commodified "regime of value" (Appadurai 1988).

[32] Per conversation with the author in June 2012.
[33] Per author's conversation with Karen Harrington in July 2011.

As the photographs enter the wider visual economy outside the Cherokee community, the opportunity for Jennie Ross Cobb's photographs to perform in different "sites of memory" grows exponentially (Nora 1989). Recently, Ross Cobb's work was included as one of the only amateur photographers in the traveling art exhibition, *Our People/Our Land/Our Images: International Indigenous Photographers* originating at the University of California/Davis's C.N. Gorman Museum (2008). For this exhibition, the curators chose Ross Cobb's pictures of friends and family because of the compassion as expressed through the imagery. As Gorman director Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie (Seminole/Muscogee/Diné) states,

> The nineteenth-century photographer who, I believe, truly imaged Native women with love and a humanizing eye is Jennie Ross Cobb (Aniyunwiya). Photographs of Native women at the Aniyunwiya (Cherokee) women's seminary, images of Native women living in the contemporary, relaxed poses, smiling to a friend. Photographs by a Native woman photographing Native women at the end of the nineteenth century: images Curtis, Vroman, Hillers and the many others could not even begin to emulate, when the eye of the beholder possesses love for the beheld (2003: 49).

For Tsinhnahjinne, Ross Cobb memorializes her subjects with a candid humanity rather than staged Indianness. The implication is that, because of her gender and identity as a Cherokee, Ross Cobb is capable of representing her people with tenderness and affection. Although Tsinhnahjinne may be essentializing somewhat, I am guilty of the same conceit.

In closing, Jennie Ross Cobb's photography exemplifies the popular ideals of womanhood so prevalent during the late nineteenth century in upper-class American society and to which the few wealthy Cherokee of Tahlequah aspired. Her images of domestic life, schooling, and leisure time are not only marked by a performative femininity of the age, but by her elite status within the Cherokee Nation. As a member of the Ross family, she was expected

to carry on the family name and she did so by becoming a leader in the preservation of her family and tribe's heritage. By serving as the first curator of the Murrell home, she set the tone for subsequent family curators. Collectively, these cultural actors have used her photographs to perform the memories of a Cherokee Golden Age.

Chapter 6

Conclusion:
Indigenous Photographic Developments

> *We have been using photography for our own ends as long as we've been flying, which is to say as long as there have been cameras and airplanes. The question isn't whether we love photography, but instead why we love it so much…it's obvious we are a people who adore taking pictures and having pictures taken of us. So it should hardly be a surprise that everything about being Indian has been shaped by the camera*.
>
> - Paul Chaat Smith (Comanche), *Everything You Know about Indians is Wrong*

Photographies and Agendas

In this dissertation, I have offered a critical overview of how Native North Americans appropriated photography and integrated it into their ways of life during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In exploring how American Indians have performed on all sides of the camera as subjects, photographers, and curators, I have demonstrated that there is no single Native American way of practicing photography, but instead, multiple *photographies*. These photographies present the daily existences and "unseen lives" of Native peoples and provide "a space for indigenous realities" (Harlan 1998: 23). Although Native-produced photographies may afford candid glimpses of the everyday lives of American Indians, we must remember that such pictures often become entangled in personal and tribal agendas.

As we have seen, indigenous patrons like Red Cloud and Zitkala-Sa have commissioned photographic portraits to forward their own professional goals and aspirations, while Native photographers like Richard Throssel and Harry Sampson have acted like photojournalists to record their people on behalf of institutions and for their own edification. Yet the patrons and practitioners of indigenous photographies are not the only ones with visual agendas. Tribal communities, including the Inland Tlingit and Cherokee Nation, have displayed photographic products of their people in an effort to further their own objectives and historical narratives. As

photography critic Allan Sekula asserts, "the meaning of a photograph, like that of any other entity, is inevitably subject to cultural definition."[1] Indeed, photographs are re-interpreted throughout their social lives and are employed for various agendas. In the examples provided in this study, the motivations behind each agenda have categorically dealt with issues of identity including race, class, and gender. "Photography is, in this way, far more than a documentary reproduction of its subject; it is a *performative practice* that enacts complicated forms of social and cultural relationships" (Campt 2012: 49, emphasis in original).

Indigenous Identities

Native subjects have represented themselves in different guises—as Indian princesses and brave warriors, European-style statesmen, and Victorian women. They have also used objects of esteem like cars and large homes as backdrops for their ways of life. These images convey a sense of pride and distinction. The people were not depicted as victims of Western image-making who were being forced into "noble savage" stereotypes; nor were they trying to salvage or reclaim their own "vanishing" past. Moreover, American Indian photographies should not be read as by-products of assimilation into Western culture since "the extent to which they adopted aspects of the foreign culture is not a reliable measure of the degree to which they abandoned their own" (Wyatt 1989: 49). By practicing and participating in photography, American Indians were not committing cultural treason or abandoning any aspect of their indigeneity. In point of fact, Native subjects actively participated in the formation of their own constantly developing

[1] Sekula 1984: 3. The scholarship on non-Western photographic meanings and cultural practices is growing, particularly in reference to African photographies. See, for example, Bigham 1999, Geary 2004, and Strother 2013.

identities. “These are the people who would not die,” proclaims Native author Leslie Marmon Silko, “because they are always changing” (1996:178).

Perhaps the most pronounced example of self-fashioning that served “to express the aspirations of their sitters to be or become particular kinds of subjects” is the photography of Jennie Ross Cobb (Campt 2012: 17). Her images allow us to chart her shifting identities from the Victorian ideal of the “True Woman” to the independent “New Woman” that characterized her elite way life in Indian Territory. In addition, she vividly captured her experiences at the Cherokee Female Seminary School where “students were attempting to define their roles as women and as Cherokees” (Mihesuah 1993: 37). Documenting such articulations of gender, race, and class within the Cherokee Nation during the latter half of the nineteenth century, Jennie Ross Cobb’s vernacular imagery can be understood as a visual voyage of self-discovery entangled within indigenous identity politics.

That said, can photography really perform the cultural work of creating a sense of self, community, and belonging for those deploying its practices? In the words of sociologist Richard Chalfen, “few people have been conditioned to think of amateur photographs as claims about life, as attempts to make sense of human existence, as interpretations, or as constructions of reality” (1987:6-7). By exploring how American Indians have represented themselves through photography, I have sought to “understand the meanings people build into their photographic renditions of their own lives” (ibid).

Visual Sovereignty

In practicing photography, Native peoples have been able to harness the “power of images” to assert their own visual voices and to tell their own stories (c.f. Freedberg 1989). Yet

as Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie points out, "the power of the image is not a new concept to the Native photographer—look at petroglyphs and ledger drawings. What has changed is the process" (1996: 21). But despite being involved in the medium since almost its inception, American Indians have largely been considered passive subjects and victims of Western image-making. "Merely for Native Americans to stand behind the camera is an act of resistance. … [for] it signals a desire to deconstruct the idea of an essential culture fixed at the turn of the century" (Rushing 1990:63). Indeed, indigenous peoples have been frequently cast in the ethnographic present, so that the very concept of American Indians practicing photography seems antithetical to their "traditional" existence. As Silko states, "Euro-Americans distract themselves with whether a real, or traditional, or authentic Indian would, should or could work with a camera. (Get those Indians back to their basket making!)," (1996: 178). In reference to Indian arts, Tsinshinjinnie would add that "photography is not the instilled idea of traditional marketable "Indian Art" ("I see the silver but where is the turquoise?")" (1993:30). In the face of this technological and cultural primitivism, American Indians have used photography to assert their rights of self-representation.

By choosing what they wanted to represent and how they wanted to be represented, Native participants and practitioners of photography exhibited a large degree of agency and awareness of what was being portrayed. "Photographs bear witness to a human choice being exercised in a given situation … [for] a photograph is a result of photographer's decision that it is worth recording that this particular event or this particular object has been seen" (Berger 1980: 292). Indeed, photography is "an expression of its subject's conscious will to be seen, reconstituted, and remembered as such by present and future generations" (Poole 1997: 203). For many indigenous communities, photographs record moments and stories that ancestors

sought to preserve for their descendants. As members of the Kainai Nation remind us, *Sinaakssiiksi aohtsimaahpihkookiyaawa* which means, "Pictures Bring Us Messages" (Brown and Peers 2006).

This study offered the premise that practicing photography is fundamentally different for American Indians from what the same expressive medium may mean to people of other cultures. As Teresa Harlan puts it, "the voices and images of Native photographers must be understood as rooted in and informed by Native experiences and knowledge" (Harlan 1995: 21). This practice is inherently connected to veracity and the insider status of the photographer. "Truthfulness derives from a sense of social responsibility that is different from that felt by outsiders," states art historian Steven Leuthold, for "visual truth-telling depends upon the special access and responsibility that Native American photographers have to their families and communities" (1999: 2). It would seem that there is an unspoken duty imposed on an indigenous photographer to faithfully represent his or her own community, thus testifying to their social consciousness and knowledge of community etiquette. However, there is a direct correlation to photographic agendas because, as we have seen, Native photographers like Louis Shotridge and George Hunt sometimes photographed against the will of community members in order to further their own professional, non-Indian ambitions. But overall, indigenous photographic practices seem to reflect the sensitivity as seen in the work of Harry Sampson and George Johnston whose pictures appear to be compassionate records that reflect the social realities of their communities. "Native photographers' work deals more with interpersonal relationships," Richard W. Hill, Sr. (Tuscarora/Beaver Clan) tells us, "their culture exists in such relationships and for their photography to be effective, it must show that the Indian behind the camera is connected to the Indian in front of the camera. They must be equals, they must be collaborators. They most surely

must trust each other" (1990: 25). In other words, the subjects and photographers share a common bond—they are genuinely connected to their people; not just casual visitors or tribal members who have lost touch with their communities. As Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie affirms,

> Native photographers have strong memories given to them by their ancestors, and personal memories of community and family. I believe that this is the difference between a connected Indigenous photographer and a non-Indigenous Western photographer (and a non-connected Indigenous photographer). Connection to the sacred, connection to the community, connection to the land, connection to visions of strength, and a steadfast vision of continuance (2006: x).

Tsinhnahjinnie speaks of photographers who work within a "connected" space of kin associations and tribal ties. To reinforce these connections, I have argued that this space is a site of performative engagements with collective memories that are enacted (and re-enacted) through the medium of photography.

Performances of Memories

With the case studies, I have examined how photographs perform for, and elicit performances from, tribal communities. For instance, photographs by Jennie Ross Cobb and George Johnston have been used by their respective communities to help define an idealized "Golden Age" for their people. Ross Cobb's images were created *after* the Cherokee Golden Age and represent a subject, the antebellum Murrell Home, which has become a prominent symbol of renewal and "survivance" for Cherokees (Vizenor 1999). Ross Cobb's photographs continue to play a key role in the restoration of the property, and the images have become imbricated in the site where the past can be performed in the form of historic re-enactments. This space is, as Diana Taylor states, "between the archive of supposedly enduring materials and the so-called ephemeral repertoire of embodied practice/knowledge" (2007:19).

Whereas Ross Cobb was active *after* the Cherokee Golden Age (which, in itself, was a post-contact period), Johnston photographed *during* the Teslin Tlingit Golden Age—a time before substantial contact with non-Natives. Johnston's cessation of practicing photography corresponded with end of that era. Therefore, his photographs perform as a marker of the period and as material reminders (or artifacts) of the age. To paraphrase historian Marianne Hirsh, photography is one of the "primary instruments of self-knowledge and representation" and the means by which collective memories may be continued and perpetuated (1997: 6).

Like Ross Cobb's pictures, Johnston's images were enshrined in a museum or "site of memory," to use Pierre Nora's phrase (Nora 1989). As discussed in chapter four, within the George Johnston Museum is a documentary film in which actors re-create Johnston's pictures and literally perform the collective memories of the Teslin Tlingit. When the tribal council purchased the car from the filmmaker, and used it in parades and for photo opportunities, it became a case of "performative indexicality" with art-imitating life-imitating art (Campt 2006: 48). This dynamic and enactive engagement with photography is a social practice that the Teslin Tlingit, like the rest of the Native peoples discussed in this dissertation, have used in their performances of memories.

In the end, my study of indigenous photographers has helped to destabilize the Western hegemony of the medium. By expanding the discourse with numerous examples of indigenous peoples actively engaged in photography, I have refocused the lens on previously excluded and undervalued Native visual cultures. As Plains Cree/Blackfoot curator Gerald McMaster so eloquently stated, "dominant intellectual space is now coming into contact with, and being perforated by, other histories, especially by those which do not count Europe as part of their lineage" (2006: 51).

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