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HARRY PIDGEON (1869-1954)

PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION, [1907-1915, 1932, and 1989]
(bulk 1907-1915)
3.75 linear feet
and 645 glass negatives

ACQUISITION: The collection was donated by the Yosemite Museum, Yosemite National Park in 1966.

ACCESS: The collection is open for research.

AUDIOVISUAL: Audiocassette in box 3.

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PROCESSED BY: Amber Place, 2000.

Biography

Harry Pidgeon was born in Henry County, Iowa. He lived and worked on a farm in Iowa until 1887, when, at the age of eighteen, he moved to Bakersfield, California, to work on a ranch. He then relocated to Alaska, where he lived until 1900. He returned to California to work on a ranch near Piru and Sespe. He then settled in the Sugar Pine-Madera-Wawona area where he worked for the Madera Sugar Pine Company and began his career as a photographer.

As a photographer, Pidgeon took shots illustrating everyday life in the early logging community at Sugar Pine. It is uncertain how long he lived and worked among the giant sequoia (known as the Big Trees), but most of his existing photographs are from 1913 to 1925. He became renowned for the high quality of his photographs in spite of the photographic equipment that was available.

After leaving the Big Trees area, he began a career as a sailor. In 1917 he began building his boat, the *Islander*, a 34-foot chine ketch. Then, in 1925, at the age of 56, Pidgeon became the second man to circumnavigate the earth alone. It took him four years to complete the journey and upon his return, he gave lectures and wrote a book entitled *Around the World Single-Handed*. In 1937 he completed another successful trip around the world alone. In 1944 he married Margaret Gardener, the daughter of a New London boat builder. When attempting a third trip in 1947, this time with his wife, he was broadsided by a hurricane. His boat was destroyed and they both narrowly escaped death. In 1954, Harry Pidgeon died at the age of 85 in San Pedro, California.

Scope and Content Note

The Harry Pidgeon collection measures 3.75 linear feet and dates from 1907 to 1915, 1932 and 1989. It consists of photographs, both original prints and reprints, of everyday life in the early logging community at Sugar Pine in the Sierra Big Trees area. These photographs were created from the original glass plate negatives that are also held in the Special Collections library (filing cabinet number 6). The glass plate negatives and the original prints were donated together. Reprints were made from the glass plate negatives, many of which duplicate the original prints. However, quite a few of the original prints were missing from the initial donation, a problem rectified by having reprints made from the glass plate negatives. The collection includes photographs depicting Harry Pidgeon and his equipment, people, houses, transportation vehicles, logging, Raymond Quarry, farming, Happy Camp, Fish Camp, scenery, and sequoia trees. The original prints are located in document cases 1 through 3 (in numerical order). Document case 3 contains an audiocassette with "Allen Harder's comments on the Harry Pidgeon photographs" that was created February 8, 1989. The reprints are found in binders 1 through 13 and are listed under volume headings in numerical order. There is also an index to the collection by photograph number and volume number. A copy of Pidgeon's book, *Around the World Single-Handed* is at the end of box 3.

Related Collection

The California Museum of Photography at the University of California, Riverside, has over 1,500 of Harry Pidgeon's glass plate negatives, some of which can be viewed on their web site (<http://photo.ucr.edu/california/projects/railroad/pidgeon/pidgeon.html>).

Box no. Description

Box 1

Original prints
Case 1
Photographs 1-184
Case 2
Photographs 185-340
Case 3
Photographs 359-742
Audiocassette, 1989
Photograph index

Box 2

Reprints
Volume 1
Harry Pidgeon and his equipment
Adults
Volume 2
Adults
Children
Volume 3
Children
Family Groups
Volume 4
Family Groups
School Groups
Masons
Volume 5
General Groups
Camping Scenes
Hunting
Rifle Camp
Army at Wawona
Volume 6
Houses - Exterior
Houses - Interior
Volume 7
Automobiles
Railroads
Wagons
Loggers

Box. Description

Box 3

Reprints (cont.)

Volume 8

Logging Camp

Logging Activities

Sugar Pine Mill and Store

Volume 9

Donkey Engine

Raymond Quarry

Farm Animals

Farm Machinery

Volume 10

Happy Camp

Forest

Volume 11

Forest Fires

Monterey

Volume 12

Trees - Miscellaneous

Faithful Couple

Virginia Tree

California Tree

Fallen Monarch

Grizzly Giant

Volume 13

Grizzly Giant

Wawona Tree

Around the World Single-Handed, 1950