

Alaska State Library  
Historical Collections

**Guide to Collection**

**Curtis, Edward Sheriff, 1868-1952**

**Edward Sheriff Curtis Photograph Collection, ca. 1907-1930**

**PCA 49**

20 b&w prints

Revised: March 2004

Revised by: Jacki Swearingen, July 2014

**ACQUISITION:** The Alaska Historical Collections Library holds negatives for 20 Edward S. Curtis prints. The negatives were made from original photogravure prints acquired by the Alaska State Museum. Acc. #1977-073.

**ACCESS:** The collection is available for viewing, however, the photographs may not be photocopied.

**COPYRIGHT:** Request for permission to publish or reproduce material from the collection should be discussed with the Librarian.

**PROCESSING:** The negatives are being scanned and prints will be made. (7/21/14 jas)

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Edward Sheriff Curtis was born near Whitewater, WI, in 1868 and grew up in Seattle, WA. Fascinated with the Indians and their way of life he embarked on a lifelong career dedicated to presenting “the very spirit of the Indian peoples” in photographs, film, recordings and print. George Bird Grinnell, an authority on Indians, appointed him Official Photographer to the Harriman Alaska Expedition in 1899.

Curtis’ dream of a comprehensive written and photographic record of the Indians resulted in a twenty volume, illustrated text and twenty portfolios of large-sized photographs. Before he received financial backing by J. P. Morgan, and the endorsement of Theodore Roosevelt, he held lecture tours and sold subscriptions to the limited edition of his work to raise funding. By the time the work was finished, both his health and marriage were broken. In his later years, he moved to Los Angeles and opened a studio with his daughter, Bess Magnuson. He died Oct. 20, 1952, of a heart attack at age 84.

In his lifetime Curtis produced 10,000 recordings, 40,000 photographs, twenty volumes of text, a full-length motion picture with Kwakiutl people in 1914, and several books of Indian stories. The New York Times obituary described him as an authority on the North American Indian.

[Source: *Historical Collections master file; article w/o citation; PBS American Masters series web site: <http://www.thirteen.org/americanmasters/curtis/>, accessed 3 March 2004. The previous web page can no longer be found, please see: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/episodes/edward-curtis/shadow-catcher/568/>, accessed 21 July 2014]*

## SCOPE AND CONTENTS NOTE

This collection includes 20 images of Eskimo portraits, activities and villages. The original images were published in *The North American Indian, being a series of volumes picturing and describing the Indians of the United States and Alaska*. Vols. 10, 11, 20 and two supplemental volumes of plates may be viewed in the Historical Collections, E77.C97.

## INVENTORY

1. Eskimo sitting in kayak [kayak], holding paddle.
2. Six children sitting on grass. [Nunivak Children.]
3. Men and dogs in Umiak. [Starting up the Noatak River-Kotzebue.]
4. Portrait of woman carrying child on back. Both wearing parkas.
5. Village with overturned kayak [kayak]s on shore.

6. [Reindeer-Nunivak.]
7. Portrait of Eskimo man.
8. Portrait of man, woman and child wearing fur hooded parkas [A family group, Noatak.]
9. Man holding harpoon and standing on top of kyak [kayak]. [Ready for sealing-Nunivak.]
10. Ten Eskimos paddling kyak [kayak]s.
11. Village.
12. Five men. [Launching the boat - Diomedes Island.]
13. Man and child in kyak [kayak].
14. Portrait of man.
15. Portrait of child.
16. Portrait of man.
17. Portrait of woman. Ola - Noatak
18. Man paddling kyak [kayak] in weeds along shore.
19. Portrait of man.
20. Eskimo beating large drum with stick. [The Drummer- Nunivak.]