

**REFERENCE CODE:** AkAMH

**REPOSITORY NAME:**

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Guide prepared by: Amy Valentine, Archivist

**TITLE:** Edward S. Curtis Photogravures

**COLLECTION NUMBER:** B1973.096

**OVERVIEW OF THE COLLECTION**

Dates: 1928

Extent: 2 boxes in oversize

Language and Scripts: The collection is in English.

Name of creator(s): Edward S. Curtis

**Administrative/Biographical History:**

The following biographical information comes from the Library of Congress:

Born near White Water, Wisconsin, on February 19, 1868, [Edward S. Curtis] became interested in the emerging art of photography when he was quite young, building his first camera when he was still an adolescent. In Seattle, where his family moved in 1887, he acquired part interest in a portrait photography studio and soon became sole owner of the successful business, renaming it Edward S. Curtis Photographer and Photoengraver.

In the early years of the 20th century, Curtis embarked on a thirty-year mission which he described as an effort "to form a comprehensive and permanent record of all the important tribes of the United States and Alaska that still retain to a considerable degree their...customs and traditions." Along with most scholars of this period, he believed that indigenous communities would inevitably be absorbed into white society, losing their unique cultural identities. He wanted to create a scholarly and artistic work that would document the ceremonies, beliefs, customs, daily life, and leaders of these groups before they "vanished."

The North American Indian project, Curtis decided, would be a set of 20 volumes of ethnographic text illustrated with high quality photoengravings taken from his glass plate negatives. Each of these volumes would be accompanied by a portfolio of large size photogravures, elegantly bound in leather and printed on the highest quality paper. To fund the enormous project, Curtis would sell subscriptions to five hundred sets of the publication.

Working alone or with various assistants, soliciting donations and support from diverse sources including President Theodore Roosevelt and the railroad tycoon John Pierpont Morgan, and also accumulating a heavy personal debt, Curtis visited more than eighty tribes across the country, and north into Alaska and parts of Canada. Eventually, he took more than 40,000 photographs; made over 10,000 recordings of Native speech and music; produced lectures, slide shows, and a multi-media *Curtis Indian Picture Opera* throughout the U.S.; and in 1914 directed *In the Land of the Headhunters*, an inventive, seminal film documentary on the Kwakiutl tribe.

Volume one of *The North American Indian* appeared in 1907. In 1930 the last two volumes were finally published, completing nearly thirty years of work. Only 272 complete sets had been printed. By this time, the modest popularity of Curtis's work had diminished and the North American Indian Corporation--the business enterprise overseeing Curtis's ethnographic ventures--soon liquidated its assets. The original glass plate negatives--most of which had been stored and nearly forgotten in a basement of New York's Morgan Library--were unwittingly dispersed during World War II. Many others were destroyed and some were sold as junk.

When Curtis died in 1952, his lifework with Native Americans had all but faded into obscurity. "Rediscovered" in the 1960s and 1970s, Curtis's photographic work is now recognized as one of the most significant records of Native culture ever produced. His photographs have been included in virtually every anthology of historical photographs of Native Americans and are now frequently used to illustrate books and documentaries.<sup>1</sup>

Scope and Content Description: The collection contains 35 15.5" x 11.5" (image size) matted, sepia tone photogravures taken by Edward S. Curtis, copyrighted in 1928. The images primarily depict Indigenous people, communities, and hunting activities in Inupiaq and Central Yup'ik communities. See detailed description below for more information.

Arrangement: Arranged by prior archivist.

#### **CONDITIONS GOVERNING ACCESS AND USE**

Restrictions on Access: The collection is open for research use.

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<sup>1</sup> "Edward Curtis and the Background of the Collection." *Library of Congress*, <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/ecur/background.html>. Accessed 3 June 2026.

Physical Access: See Processing Notes below.

Technical Access: No special equipment is needed to access the materials.

Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use:

The Anchorage Museum is the owner of the materials and makes available reproductions for research, publication, and other uses. Written permission must be obtained from the Anchorage Museum before any reproduction use. Per the Library of Congress, the copyrights for these images have expired and the images in this collection are considered to be in the public domain.

Preferred Citation: Edward S. Curtis Photogravures, Anchorage Museum, B1973.96

## ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

### Acquisition and Appraisal Information

Collection donated by Charles McAlpine in 1973.

### Processing Note

Master Accession notes that collection is awaiting conservation.

This collection has a complete card catalog that was used to draft this Finding Aid in 2026.

## RELATED MATERIALS

B1981.043 E.S. Curtis Prints

B1983.040 Edward S. Curtis Photogravures

TR140 .C82 C87 2021 *Edward S. Curtis: unpublished Alaska, photographs & personal journal*

E99 .E7 L73 1994 *Natives of the far North*

E77 .C98 v.20 *The North American Indian: being a series of volumes picturing and describing the Indians of the United States and Alaska*

E98 .A7 S95 2001 *Staging the Indian: the politics of representation*

Library of Congress – Curtis (Edward S.) Collection -

(<https://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/ecur/about.html>)

## SUBJECTS

Boats and boating

Inupiat (Indigenous people) – Alaska

Parkas

Skin boats

Yup'ik (Indigenous people) – Alaska

Whaling

Cape Prince of Wales (Alaska)

Diomedes Islands (Alaska)

Hooper Bay / Naparyarmiut (Alaska)  
King Island / Ugiuvak (Alaska)  
Kobuk / Laugviik (Alaska)  
Kotzebue / Qikiqtaġruk (Alaska)  
Noatak / Nuataam Kuuᅇa (Alaska)  
Nunivak Island / Nuniwar (Alaska)  
Selawik / Siiġivik, Akuliġaq (Alaska)

#### Detailed Description of the Collection

- .1 – Plate 693 Ugiaku – Nunivak. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: (Indigenous) girl in gut parka. Labrets (2) in lower lip. Beads through nose.] [Central Yup'ik territory, Nuniwar (Nunivak Island)]
- .2 – Plate 702 King Island Homes. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: King Island dwellings on cliffs (pole houses). Umiak in storage. Terracing.] [Inupiaq territory, Ugiuvak (King Island)]
- .3 – Plate 710 A Kotzebue Man. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: (Indigenous) man. Cloth parka over fur parka or with ruff showing.] [Inupiaq territory, Qikiqtaġruk (Kotzebue)]
- .4 – Plate 721 Charlie Wood – Kobuk. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: (Indigenous Elder). Fur parka (reindeer). Mitten strings (yarn).] [Older native man posing for the camera wearing furs and skins] [Inupiaq territory, Laugviik (Kobuk)]
- .5 – Plate 722 Kobuk Costume. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: (Indigenous Elder) Charlie Wood. Wearing reindeer parka. Beaded moose hide mittens. Ugruk soled mukluks, fur leggings. In Kobuk area (grass).] [Older native man posing for the camera wearing furs and skins standing amongst grasses] [Inupiaq territory, Laugviik (Kobuk)]
- .6 – Arriving home – Noatak. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: Skin covered umiak with cloth sail. Man at rudder, six dogs. Supplies. Summer – pulling up to shore.] [Inupiaq territory, Nuataam Kuuᅇa (Noatak)]
- .7 – The drummer – Nunivak. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: Seated (Indigenous) man in fur parka with decorative buttons and tassels, cloth pants, seal mukluks holding large drum.] [Central Yup'ik territory, Nuniwar (Nunivak Island)]
- .8 – Plate 706 Old stone house – Diomed Island. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: (Indigenous person). Stone house. Drying rack in front. Umiak on bench. Big Diomed Island in distance.] [Inupiaq territory]
- .9 – Plat 708 Cape Prince of Wales man. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: (Indigenous) man in cloth parka with ruff or over caribou parka.] [Inupiaq territory]

- .10 – Plate 716 Ola – Noatak. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [Native woman posing for the camera wearing fur parka with hooded ruff] [Inupiaq territory, Nuataam Kuunja (Noatak)]
- .11 – Plate 689 Reindeer – Nunivak. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: Small herd of motley reindeer near coast in spring.] [Central Yup'ik territory, Nuniwar (Nunivak Island)]
- .12 – Plate 700 King Island Village from the sea. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: "Jewel Guard" 2 masted sailboat in front of King Island village on rocky cliff. Good view of village.] [Inupiaq territory, Ugiuvak (King Island)]
- .13 – Plate 719 Nungoktok – Noatak. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: (Indigenous) hunter in kayak, holding paddle, wearing white fur parka. Information from Charles Lucier, who knows the man pictured: (Indigenous) name Nangigtuaq, father of Della Keats (Puyuk) of Kotzebue. Della practices (Indigenous) medicine in the Kotzebue area. The wife of Charles Lucier, Grace, is the granddaughter of the man that acted as interpreter for Curtis on his trip in the north.] [Inupiaq territory, Nuataam Kuunja (Noatak)]
- .14 – Plate 704 Launching the boat – Diomedes Island. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: Four (Indigenous) men, launching skin umiak. Wearing parkas.] [Inupiaq territory]
- .15 – Plate 709 Whaling crew – Cape Prince of Wales. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: Eight (Indigenous people) in umiak, whaling gear.] [Inupiaq territory]
- .16 – Plate 707 Landing the whale boat – Cape Prince of Wales. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: Nine (Indigenous) men in parkas pushing umiak into water.] [Inupiaq territory]
- .17 – Plate 703 Qunaninru – King Island. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: (Indigenous) men in parkas, hair side in, hood up; ruff. Labret holes in lower lip.] [Inupiaq territory, Ugiuvak (King Island)]
- .18 – Plate 701 King Island Village. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: King Island Village showing pole houses (stilts). Decorations on poles. Top of Kashim (men's house) positioned on steep cliff. See also B73.96.2] [Inupiaq territory, Ugiuvak (King Island)]
- .19 – Plate 713 Jackson, Interpreter at Kotzebue. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [Native man posing for the camera wearing fur parka with hooded ruff] [Inupiaq territory, Qikiqtagruk (Kotzebue)]
- .20 – Plate 705 Diomedes boat crew, Asiatic shore in distance. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: Six (Indigenous) men in parkas paddling umiak near beach.] [Inupiaq territory]
- .21 – Plate 699 The village – Hooper Bay. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: (Indigenous) village. Five sod houses, one frame house. Drying racks. Four people. Fish nets, ten kayaks on beach] [Central Yup'ik territory, Naparyaarmiut (Hooper Bay)]

- .22 – Plate 712 Starting up the Noatak River – Kotzebue. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: Skin boat with cloth sail. Three men with gear and dog. Umiaks.] [Inupiaq territory, Qikiqtaġruk (Kotzebue)]
- .23 – Plate 697 Ugiyaku – Nunivak. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: (Indigenous) woman with beaded hat, labrets, nose ring, and necklace. Cloth parka. See also B73.96.1] [Central Yup'ik territory, Nuniwar (Nunivak Island)]
- .24 – Plate 690 Boys in Kaiak – Nunivak. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: (Indigenous) boys in kayak on water. Skin hats, decorated with buttons.] [Central Yup'ik territory, Nuniwar (Nunivak Island)]
- .25 – Plate 696 Uyowutchu – Nunivak. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: (Indigenous) girl in feather parka. Skin hat with ruff, decorated with buttons.] [Central Yup'ik territory, Nuniwar (Nunivak Island)]
- .26 – Plate 691 Kenowun – Nunivak. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: (Indigenous) women, wearing labrets, nose beads, beaded necklace, fur ruff.] [Central Yup'ik territory, Nuniwar (Nunivak Island)]
- .27 – Plate 714 The muskrat hunter – Kotzebue. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [Native man posing for the camera sitting in a kayak amongst marsh grasses] [Inupiaq territory, Qikiqtaġruk (Kotzebue)]
- .28 – Plate 711 A foggy day – Kotzebue. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: Five men in skin umiak with cloth sail. Some are paddling, one steering.] [Inupiaq territory, Qikiqtaġruk (Kotzebue)]
- .29 – Plate 694 Woman and child – Nunivak. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: (Indigenous) woman in bird parka with child on back. Both in fur parkas with fur ruffs.] [Central Yup'ik territory, Nuniwar (Nunivak Island)]
- .30 – Plate 698 Hooper Bay Youth. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: (Indigenous) man in fur parka. Hat decorated with buttons. Shows his stained teeth.] [Central Yup'ik territory, Naparyaarmiut (Hooper Bay)]
- .31 – Plate 720 Jajuk – Selawik. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [Native man posing for the camera wearing fur parka with hooded ruff] [Inupiaq territory, Siiġivik / Akuliġaq (Selawik)]
- .32 – Plate 695 Ready for sealing – Nunivak. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: (Indigenous) man with kayak showing all sealing gear. Harpoon, float, etc. Wearing cloth parka.] [Central Yup'ik territory, Nuniwar (Nunivak Island)]
- .33 – Plate 717 A Family group – Noatak. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [Native family posing for the camera wearing fur parkas with hooded ruff] [Inupiaq territory, Nuataam Kuuġa (Noatak)]

.34 – Plate 718 Noatak Kaiaks. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [10 Native men paddling kayaks] [from card catalog: (Elder) man in middle... Wearing parkas.] [Inupiaq territory, Nuataam Kuuᅇa (Noatak)]

.35 – Plate 688 Nunivak children. From Copyright Photograph 1928 by E S Curtis Photogravure Suffolk Eng Co Cambridge, Mass [from card catalog: Six (Indigenous) children in bird parkas. Hats decorated with buttons.] [Inupiaq territory, Nuataam Kuuᅇa (Noatak)]

Guide written: June 3, 2026