

REFERENCE CODE: AkAMH

REPOSITORY NAME:

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TITLE: Roy Barron Collection

COLLECTION NUMBER: B1980.050

OVERVIEW OF THE COLLECTION

Dates: circa 1894-1924

Extent: 45 items

Language and Scripts: The collection is in English.

Name of creator(s): Elbridge W. Merrill

Administrative/Biographical History:

Elbridge Warren Merrill was born in Massachusetts in 1868. He worked as a newspaper photographer there before coming to Alaska in 1897. He settled in Sitka and operated Merrill Studio. He also worked on the restoration of totem poles shown at the St. Louis World's Fair, and was later in charge of erecting them in the Sitka Totem Park (later the Sitka National Historical Park under the U.S. National Park Service). Merrill died in Sitka on October 27, 1929, of pneumonia.¹

Scope and Content Description:

The collection consists of 45 black-and-white photographs, primarily of Sitka and Tlingit Indians in the period 1904 to 1924. The subjects include portraits of Tlingit people, including Rudolph Walton, Chief Tom and others. Other photographs depict Tlingit activities such as tanning, totem carving, and ceremonies. The Sitka potlatch in 1904 for the Gaanaxteidi clan is

¹ "Guide to Collection, Elbridge W. Merrill Photograph Collection, ca. 1897-1929, PCA 57." Alaska State Library Historical Collections.

also featured, along with locations in Sitka such as St. Michael's Cathedral and the Russian blockhouse. There is one image of President Warren G. Harding with his wife and others taken at the Sheldon Jackson School in 1923. Most of the photos in the collection were taken by Elbridge Merrill at the Merrill Studio. For more information, see Detailed Description of Collection.

Arrangement: Arranged by photographer's number.

CONDITIONS GOVERNING ACCESS AND USE

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

Physical Access: Original items in good condition.

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

Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use:

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Preferred Citation:

Roy Barron Collection, Anchorage Museum, B1980.050

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Acquisition and Appraisal Information

Purchased from Roy Barron in 1980.

Processing Note

Original album disassembled upon purchase.

Images .14 and .27 restricted due to sensitive content.

SUBJECTS

Harding, Warren G. (Warren Gamaliel), 1865-1923

St. Michael the Archangel Cathedral (Sitka, Alaska)

Tlingit (Indigenous people) – Alaska

Shamans—Alaska

Potlatch—Alaska

Sitka / Sheet'ká (Alaska)

Mount Edgecumbe (Alaska)

Detailed Description of the Collection

- .1 - Harbour of New Archangel in Sitka or Norfolk Sound, drawn by Capt. Lisiansky, engraved by I. Clark [copy of engraving, 1805] [6.5 x 9]
- .2 – [exterior of St. Michael’s Cathedral in Sitka, winter. With Merrill Studio stamp] [9 x 7] [Tlingit territory, Sheet’ká (Sitka)]
- .3 – [street scene with St. Michael’s Cathedral, Sitka Trading Co., Baranof Restaurant, and hotel, Sitka] [7.5 x 9.5] [Tlingit territory, Sheet’ká (Sitka)]
- .4 – [view down Lover’s Lane, Sitka. With Merrill Studio stamp] [7 x 9] [Tlingit territory, Sheet’ká (Sitka)]
- .5 – [street scene with Alaskan Herald Office at left, rear of St. Michael’s Cathedral in center, tower at right, Sitka] [7.5 x 9.5] [Tlingit territory, Sheet’ká (Sitka)]
- .6 – [Winter scene in Sitka. With Merrill Studio stamp] [7 x 9.5] [Tlingit territory, Sheet’ká (Sitka)]
- .7 – [small boat harbor, houses, buildings, St. Michael’s Cathedral at right, Sitka] [7 x 9.5] [Tlingit territory, Sheet’ká (Sitka)]
- .8 – [Russian church bell, 1816, St. Michael’s Cathedral, Sitka] [9 x 7] [Tlingit territory, Sheet’ká (Sitka)]
- .9 – [Tlingit person scraping seal skin on stretching frame] [9 x 8]
- .10 – [Tlingit men carving a large totem pole outdoors] [Rudolph Walton with adze at center, Civilian Conservation Corps group during 1930s at Sitka] [At AFN 2013, man third from right identified as Ray James of Kiks.adi Raven clan; at AFN 2015, man at right identified as surname Eleshansky] [7 x 9] [Tlingit territory, Sheet’ká (Sitka)]
- .11 – [Tlingit women selling berries in front of Sitka Trading Company, two women turning faces away from camera. With Merrill Studio stamp] [7.5 x 9] [Tlingit territory, Sheet’ká (Sitka)]
- .12 – [Warren G. Harding and company on Sheldon Jackson Campus 1923 en route to open Nenana Railroad. Identified on verso as left to right: unknown (possibly nurse), Dr. Condit, Harding, Ted Kettleeson, Mrs. Harding, unknown] [7 x 9] [Tlingit territory, Sheet’ká (Sitka)]
- .13 – [Tlingit women in Sitka making baskets. Identified on verso as right to left Mrs. Morris White, Jenny (Jennie) Anderson (Eedee AA Nax), Mrs. George Davis] [7 x 9] [Tlingit territory, Sheet’ká (Sitka)]
- .14 – **[Restricted due to sensitive content]**
- .15 – Copyright by Merrill [portrait of Tlingit carver, Rudolph Walton (of the Walton-Bean bowls), wearing ceremonial dress and holding a raven, dance staff propped against wall.] [Dance staff in photo on loan from Sitka National Historic Park] [9 x 7] [Tlingit territory, Sheet’ká (Sitka)]
- .16 – [portrait of Tlingit man wearing ceremonial dress, holding dance staff. With Merrill Studio stamp] [9 x 7] [Tlingit territory, Sheet’ká (Sitka). At AFN 2024, identified as Bremmner Family, Coho clan, of Yakutat – Dry Bay]
- .17 – [portrait of Tlingit man wearing ceremonial dress and carrying two octopus bags holding shaman’s wand and feather fan] [possibly holding a throwing spear called an Atlatl] [9 x 7] [Likely 1904 Potlatch at Sheet’ká (Sitka). At AFN 2024, tentatively identified as grandfather to George Ramos of Yakutat]

- .18 – Copyright by Merrill [portrait of two Tlingit men wearing blankets and hats] [hat in University of Pennsylvania Museum] [9 x 7] [Tlingit territory, Sheet'ká (Sitka)] [At AFN 2024, tentatively identified as people from Killisnoo or Angoon. The border on right button blanket may be from someone's memorial potlatch where their naaxein (Chilkat robe) would have been cut up and given away.]
- .19 – Copyright by Merrill [portrait of Tlingit man with nose ring in ceremonial dress holding staff and raven rattle and standing on boardwalk. With Merrill Studio stamp] [9.5 x 7.5] [At AFN 2023, identified as surname White of Kaagwaantaan clan, wearing a tunic and bib with bear design. In 2025, person identified as Martin White of the Kaagwaantaan clan, Box House of Sheet'ká (Sitka).]
- .20 – [display including Tlingit dolls, baskets, drum, Chilkat blanket, and carved goods. Merrill, photographer. Sitka.] [7.5 x 9.5] [Tlingit territory, Sheet'ká (Sitka)]
- .21 – [group portrait of six Tlingit men posed on beach at Sitka Potlatch, 1904, one man wearing Western style clothes, five men in ceremonial dress, buildings in background. With Merrill Studio stamp] [7.5 x 9.5] [Tlingit territory, Sheet'ká (Sitka)]
- .22 – Copyright by Merrill [group portrait of men and women, most in ceremonial dress, posed outside building, four people holding rifles, man at upper left draped in American flag. Tlingit people from Klukwan, Chilkat group, Gaanaxteidi clan, at Sitka Potlatch, 1904.] [Sun Dog Helmet, Whale House Hat. Demenil Collection at Rice University of Houston, from Holm and Reid book] [7.5 x 9.5] [Tlingit territory, Sheet'ká (Sitka)]
- .23 – Copyright by Merrill [portrait of three chiefs of the Kaagwaantaan clan in ceremonial regalia standing around the Panting Wolf carving, Sitka Potlatch, 1904. Identified by Alaska State Library as: right, Wush-kin-aw; center, Yah-Kwan. With Merrill Studio stamp] [Wolf totem on loan to Sitka National Historical] [7.5 x 9.5] [Tlingit territory, Sheet'ká (Sitka)]
- .24 – [portrait of Chief Thom with regalia, including Chilkat robes, crest hat (lower right), staff and rattle. Sitka, circa 1894. Note on verso: "He is dressed and equipped for the dance called "Yake-oo-Tĩ or the Spirit Dance." [Hat is in the Alaska State Museum Collection; Blanket in the Sheldon Jackson Museum Collection] [9.5 x 7.5] [Tlingit territory, Sheet'ká (Sitka)]
- .25 – [Haida Killer Whale canoe in clearing near two small cannon, church and other buildings in background. Canoe was gift to Governor Brady & Alaska from Chief Saanaheit of Kasaan, 1904. Merrill, photographer, Sitka] [7.5 x 9.5] [Tlingit territory, Sheet'ká (Sitka)]
- .26 – [group portrait of Tlingit hosts and guests from Yakutat, Sitka Potlatch, 1904. Cf. plate 212 in Frederica de Laguna's *Under Mount Saint Elias* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1972), which includes individual identifications] [9.5 x 7.5] [Tlingit territory, Sheet'ká (Sitka)]
- .27 – [Restricted due to sensitive content]
- .28 – [still life with two Tlingit spruce root hats] [7.5 x 9.5]
- .29 – The Merrill Studio, Sitka, Alaska [Sitka Potlatch 1904 (December). Tlingit men in regalia, including Raven crest hats, speaker's staff, and beaded moccasin-pants.] [group portrait of ten Tlingit men in ceremonial dress outside building, some holding staffs, wearing face paint or with nose rings, young man seated at left holding rifle and dead raven] [7.5 x 9.5] [Tlingit territory, Sheet'ká (Sitka)]
- .30 – [totem poles in Sitka National Monument] [6 x 4] [Tlingit territory, Sheet'ká (Sitka)]

- .31 – [Tlingit people dancing at Sitka circa 1880-1899, snow on pine trees in background] [photographic postcard 3.5 x 5.5] [Tlingit territory, Sheet'ká (Sitka)]
- .32 – [bird's eye view of St. Michael's Cathedral, mountains in background, Sitka] [modern copy print 10 x 8] [Tlingit territory, Sheet'ká (Sitka)]
- .33 – [Mount Edgecumbe. Same as .45] [modern copy print 8 x 10] [Tlingit territory, Sheet'ká (Sitka)]
- .34 – [still life of Tlingit carved wooden headdress with furs, 1924] [6.5 x 4.5]
- .35 – [Douglas World Cruisers in Sitka harbor, April 1924 "Around the World Flight," waterfront in background with Castle Hill, buildings and docks] [copy print 8 x 10] [Tlingit territory, Sheet'ká (Sitka)]
- .36 – [interior of St. Michael's Cathedral, Sitka] [7.5 x 9] [Tlingit territory, Sheet'ká (Sitka)]
- .37 – [interior of St. Michael's Cathedral, Sitka] [7.5 x 9] [Tlingit territory, Sheet'ká (Sitka)]
- .38 – [interior of St. Michael's Cathedral, Sitka] [7.5 x 9.5] [Tlingit territory, Sheet'ká (Sitka)]
- .39 – [Madonna icon, St. Michael's Cathedral, Sitka] [10.5 x 6] [Tlingit territory, Sheet'ká (Sitka)]
- .40 – [still life, flower arrangement in glass vase] [9 x 7]
- .41 – [Still life with hunting tools, Indigenous people of North America] [7 x 9]
- .42 – [scenic river in Sitka] [modern copy print 8 x 10] [Tlingit territory, Sheet'ká (Sitka)]
- .43 – [Sitka small boat harbor with boardwalk and small cannons, St. Michael's Cathedral at end of Lincoln Street, right] [modern copy print 10 x 8] [Tlingit territory, Sheet'ká (Sitka)]
- .44 – [Russian blockhouse, Sitka] [modern copy print 10 x 8] [Tlingit territory, Sheet'ká (Sitka)]
- .45 – [Mount Edgecumbe. Same as .33] [modern copy print 8 x 10] [Tlingit territory, Sheet'ká (Sitka)]

Guide updated: November 2, 2015; October 2, 2025