

# Asahel Curtis lantern slides, early 1900s

## Overview of the Collection

<b>Photographer</b>	Curtis, Asahel, 1874-1941
<b>Title</b>	Asahel Curtis lantern slides
<b>Dates</b>	early 1900s (inclusive) 1900 1930
<b>Quantity</b>	158 lantern slides
<b>Collection Number</b>	PH0407
<b>Summary</b>	Lantern slides of Washington State scenes
<b>Repository</b>	<a href="#">University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections</a> Special Collections University of Washington Libraries Box 352900 Seattle, WA 98195-2900 Telephone: 206-543-1929 Fax: 206-543-1931 <a href="mailto:speccoll@uw.edu">speccoll@uw.edu</a>
<b>Access Restrictions</b>	The collection is open to the public.
<b>Additional Reference</b>	
<b>Guides</b>	
<b>Languages</b>	English

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## Biographical Note

Asahel Curtis was the best-known Seattle photographer in the early twentieth century, as well as a noted outdoorsman and regional booster. Born in Minnesota in 1874, he moved to the Puget Sound area in 1888. Asahel's brother, Edward, supported the family by opening a photo studio in Seattle, and Asahel went to work for him in 1894. In 1897 the brothers agreed that Asahel should go to the Yukon and photograph the gold rush. Asahel stayed there for two years, alternately taking pictures and working a small claim that never produced much gold. When Asahel returned in 1899, he learned that Edward had published several Yukon photos without giving acknowledgment that they had been taken by Asahel. The brothers had a massive fight and rarely spoke to each other for the rest of their lives. Edward later became nationally famous for his twenty-volume series of photos of Native Americans. Asahel never achieved this measure of success, but had a notable career nonetheless. He married Florence Carney in 1902 and opened his own studio in 1911. He was hired by a number of companies, organizations, and wealthy individuals to take portraits and promotional photos. But Asahel was probably better known for his high-quality photos of the Washington landscape published in national magazines.

Asahel Curtis loved Mount Rainier; some people thought that he almost worshipped it. He photographed it thousands of times and climbed it dozens of times. Curtis was a founding member of the Mountaineers, a mountain-climbing group which also promoted the preservation of wilderness areas. Curtis was active in the affairs of the club for the first several years after its founding in 1906, but his activities as chair of the Mount Rainier National Park advisory committee from 1911 to 1936

strained his relations with the group. Curtis sought to promote accessibility to the park and to boost tourism by building roads. He also ran afoul of the Mountaineers when he vigorously opposed the expansion of Olympic National Park in the late 1930s.

Indeed, Curtis was almost as much of a regional booster as he was a photographer. For example, Curtis not only worked as the official photographer of the Seattle Chamber of Commerce, he also chaired its Development Committee and its Highway Committee for many years. Curtis did not confine his work as a booster to Seattle. He owned a small orchard near Ellensburg, and always thought that the interesting landscape of Central Washington could be improved by building irrigation projects to turn the semi-desert into cropland. The Washington Irrigation Association thus chose Curtis to be its president in the 1920s. He also participated in the affairs of the Washington State Good Roads Association, serving as its president in 1932 and 1933. Asahel Curtis died in 1941.

## Content Description

Glass lantern slides from the studio of Asahel Curtis (many hand colored). Images include the lumber industry, Mount Rainier National Park, ice caves, crevasses, Paradise Lodge, hiking, mountaineering, skiing (including women in summer outfits/bathing suits on skis), daffodil fields, wildflowers, Olympic Mountains, Cascade Mountains, and unidentified residences.

## Use of the Collection

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Source: Heath Colvin, 1994

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## Names and Subjects

### Form or Genre Terms :

Lantern slides

# Names and Subjects

## **Subject Terms :**

Visual Materials Collections (University of Washington)

2008 (Last modified: 4/12/2018)



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