

North Cascades Resource Brief

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

North Cascades
National Park Complex



TOP: Lawrence Denny Lindsley documenting the Mary Roberts Rinehart expedition over Cascade Pass, 1916 (13809t8)

BOTTOM: Skagit Pioneers. Clockwise from upper left: George DeLapp, W.H. Buller, Fred Berry, John McMillan. Taken in Hamilton, Washington, 1894 (NOCA 16744.)

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Historic Photograph Collection

The Marblemount Curation Facility protects and preserves almost 11,000 historic images. These images document the people and natural and cultural environments of the lands of North Cascades National Park. Cultural activities surrounding the settlement, commercial development, recreation, and administration of park lands from the 1890s to the present are captured in the images.

Environmental photography provides a time lapse view of many of the glaciers and snowfields of the park. Images show both recent and historic fire scars as well as forest stands. Panoramic images taken in the 1930s, prior to the establishment of many of the forest fire lookouts in the area, provide continuous 360 degree views of the ridges and mountains of the park lands. Early aerial photography depict rivers and streams of many valleys now flooded by hydroelectric reservoirs.

Over a thousand images document the botanical voucher collections of plants, mosses, lichen, and fungi collected from park lands.

Images of museum artifact collections capture the current status of the artifacts and allow efficient inventory and monitoring of the artifacts and their condition.

Current Status

The extensive historic photograph collection has been stored and preserved in secure and environmentally controlled purpose-built environments since 1995.

Under the guidance of the Park Curator, images have been receiving professional curatorial and archival treatment from park staff and partners including Harpers Ferry. Preservation activities include, but are not limited to:

- Active rehousing of all images using approved conservation spatial organization and materials.

- Purchase and storage of conservation freezers for nitrate negatives.
- Active development of image databases and finding aids that will allow more efficient research use of the collections.
- Systematic digitization of images and storage on conservation state media.

Discussion

Actively pursuing professional conservation methods, materials, and partner assistance has significantly stabilized the condition of this invaluable collection of historic images that document the human psyche and experience of those living and working in the remote areas of these lands.

Having concentrated on protection and preservation, the direction of collection management is changing to increase the accessibility of these publicly owned collections to researchers and the public.

Currently we have 3,884 images digitized at appropriate levels of resolution and stored on archivally approved digital media.

Future tasks involve not only continuing the improving trend of protection and preservation, but also digital preparation of the images. Maintenance of the existing databases and finding aids will complement the web-based access to these collections.