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Spanning the archive and the museum : Timothy O'Sullivan's King Survey photographs

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SPANNING THE ARCHIVE AND THE MUSEUM:
TIMOTHY O'SULLIVAN'S KING SURVEY PHOTOGRAPHS

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by

Emily M. Shutt

A thesis

presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in the Program of

Photographic Preservation and Collections Management

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2007

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Spanning the Archive and the Museum: Timothy O'Sullivan's King Survey Photographs
Master of Arts
2007
Emily M. Shutt
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ABSTRACT

Originally created as documents of the government surveys in the 1860s-1870s, Timothy O'Sullivan's photographs were rediscovered in the mid-twentieth century by museum curators, artists and scholars, many of whom argued for O'Sullivan's artistic genius, uniqueness and his proto-modernist compositions. His early champions were the artist Ansel Adams and curator Beaumont Newhall, but others argued for the aesthetic importance of his work at the end of the century, including scholars Joel Snyder, Robin Kelsey and Museum of Modern Art curator Peter Galassi. In the early 1980s, Rosalind Krauss argued against the notion that O'Sullivan should be included in the photographic art canon in her 1982 article, "Photography's Discursive Spaces: Landscape/View" in *Art Journal*.

This thesis focuses on the changing reception and the functions of O'Sullivan's photographs by an examination of different examples of one photograph, O'Sullivan's "Sioux Hot Springs," held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, New York), the National Archives Still Picture Unit (College Park, Maryland), and the George Eastman House (Rochester, New York).

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank the faculty of the Photographic Preservation and Collections Management Program at Ryerson University and the George Eastman House, specifically Marta Braun, my thesis advisor, and David Harris, my second reader. They provided invaluable insight during the preparation of this thesis. From the Eastman House, Sean Corcoran, Assistant Curator of Photographs and Alison Nordström, Curator of Photography also deserve special praise for the guidance and support they provided during the first months of the process. Thanks to Robert Burley, program co-director, who always insisted that everything would be O.K.

The staff who allowed me access to O'Sullivan's prints deserve thanks: Joe Struble, Assistant Archivist at the George Eastman House, Mia Fineman, Senior Research Associate, and Malcolm Daniel, Curator in Charge, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Department of Photographs, and especially Edward McCarter, Supervisory Archivist, and Holly Reed, at the National Archives Still Picture Branch who allowed me to see the brilliant and fragile King albums.

To everyone in the field who took the time to respond to my inquiries, I thank you. I was overwhelmed by the volume and quality of responses I received. Without you I would never have been able to complete this thesis. I would specifically like to thank Jessica May, Assistant Curator of Photographs at the Amon Carter Museum (Fort Worth, Texas); Joel Smith, Curator of Photography at the Princeton University Art Museum (Princeton, New Jersey); Janel Anderson, Communications Officer and Jennifer Watts, Curator of Photographs at the Huntington Library (San Marino, California); Patrick Murphy, Assistant Curator at the Museum of Fine Arts (Boston, Massachusetts); Daniel Kosharek, Photo Archivist at the Museum of New Mexico (Santa Fe, New Mexico); Tim Hennies, Library Assistant at the Cincinnati Art Museum (Cincinnati, Ohio); Carol C. Gillham, Assistant Curator for Collections at the Ackland Art Museum (Chapel Hill, North Carolina); Eric Lutz, Assistant Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs at the St. Louis Art Museum (St. Louis, Missouri); Steve Moriarty, Milly and Fritz Kaeser Curator of Photography at the Snite Museum of Art (University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana); Newell Smith, Collection Manager at the Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago, Illinois); Michelle Lamunière, Charles C. Cunningham Sr. Assistant Curator of Photography at the Fogg Art Museum (Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts); Tracy Ann Leach, Collections Manager/Registrar at the Fisher Gallery (University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California); Marla Misunas, Collections Information Manager at SFMOMA (San Francisco, California); George Miles, Curator of the Yale Collection of Western Americana (Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut); Jacqueline Warren, Documentation Officer, Photographs at the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa, Canada); Nan Brewer, The Lucienne Glaubinger Curator of Works on Paper at the Indiana University Art Museum (Bloomington, Indiana); Daniel Davis, Photograph Curator at the Utah State University Special Collections & Archives (Logan, Utah); Jessica McDonald at the New York Public Library (New York, New York); George Roland, Curator of Prints and Drawings at the New Orleans Museum of Art (New Orleans, Louisiana); Brett Abbott, Assistant Curator of Photographs at the The J. Paul Getty Museum (Los Angeles, California); Sherri B. Sorensen, Assistant Curator at the University of New Mexico Art Museum (Albuquerque, New Mexico); Colleen E. Allen at the United

States Geological Photographic Library (Denver, Colorado); Jan Greci, Reference Specialist at the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division (Washington, DC); Clare I. Rogan, Curator at the Davison Art Center (Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut); Judy Steiner, Associate Curator of Photography at the Colorado Historical Society (Denver, Colorado); David Haberstick, Curator of Photography at the National Museum of American History Archives Center (Washington, DC); Jovanka Ristic, Reference Librarian at the American Geographical Society Library (University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Wisconsin); Lee Brumbaugh, Curator of Photography, Nevada State Library and Archives (Reno, Nevada); Sarah Newby, Curatorial Assistant at the Center for Creative Photography (Tucson, Arizona); Vyrdis Thomas, Archives Specialist at the Smithsonian Institution National Anthropological Archives (Washington, DC); Jane Aspinwall, Assistant Curator at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art (Kansas City, Missouri).

I would also like to thank my family and friends who have always supported me in my decisions and endeavors: Mom and Dad, Amanda, Ben, and Natalie. To my classmates and colleagues in the PPCM program, thank you for your friendship in the last two years: Jessica, Stefanie, Alison, Patty, Lisa, Jennifer L., Maryam, Beth, Olivia, Ola, Dawn, Reilly, Jennifer R., Kate and Rachel. I surely wouldn't have made it without you. Last but not least, Matt Darragh, the source of my sanity, who became my primary soundboard, editor and advisor.

For Matt

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Introduction

Timothy H. O'Sullivan (1840-1882) was a relatively unknown photographer until the mid-twentieth century when a series of events thrust his work into the spotlight. The story begins with the gift of an album to the photographer Ansel Adams, a twentieth century photographer known for his photographs of Yosemite National Park and other western locales, by Francis Farquhar, an active Sierra Club member, president and long time editor of the *Sierra Club Bulletin*. The album contained a selection of the photographs made by the Wheeler Survey (1869-1879), a government-sponsored survey led by Lieutenant George M. Wheeler that explored the region west of the one hundredth meridian in the American West. The photographers whose work was represented in *Geological and Geographical Explorations and Surveys West of the 100th Meridian* (1873) were Timothy O'Sullivan and William Bell.¹ Adams recalls his reaction to the photographs in his introduction to the 1966 exhibition catalogue, *T.H. O'Sullivan: Photographer*:

I was weary of mere "record" photographs; while the subject matter might command interest the treatment was usually quite sterile and the quality poor. The O'Sullivan photographs opened wide a new world for me. Here were perceptive images, well-composed, of high technical quality, and definitely suggesting a creative personality. The single-weight albumen prints were neatly mounted on horizontal album cards and the effort as a whole revealed excellent craftsmanship and respect for the medium.²

When asked in 1937 by curator Beaumont Newhall to submit work to the Museum of Modern Art's first photography exhibition, *Photography 1839-1937*, Adams sent the Wheeler album along with his own work, describing O'Sullivan's photographs as "extraordinary" and "as fine as anything [he had] ever seen."³ Newhall exhibited

¹ Ansel Adams donated the album to the Museum of Modern Art, where it now resides. He later acquired a second copy of the album, which he donated to the Center for Creative Photography in Tucson, Arizona.

² Beaumont and Nancy Newhall, *T. H. O'Sullivan: Photographer* (Rochester: George Eastman House, 1966), 5.

³ Letter to Beaumont Newhall, from Ansel Adams, New York, ca. 1936-7, as quoted in Newhall, *O'Sullivan*, 5.



1.
Timothy O'Sullivan
"Ancient Ruins in the Canyon de Chelly"
1873
Albumen print
The George Eastman House
79:0014:0041

O'Sullivan's "Canyon de Chelly" from the album (see figure 1) in *Photography 1839-1937* and in 1958 he included O'Sullivan in his landmark publication, *Masters of Photography*.⁴ Newhall also included O'Sullivan in his 1949, 1964 and 1982 editions of *The History of Photography, from 1839 to the Present Day*.⁵

Joel Snyder, a leading O'Sullivan scholar, states in his 2006 exhibition catalogue, *One/Many: Western American Survey Photographs by Bell and O'Sullivan*, that Adams and Newhall were interested in the aesthetics of O'Sullivan's western photographs, not their "functional value."⁶ He writes:

⁴ *Photography, 1839-1937* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1937), 105.

⁵ Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography, from 1839 to the Present Day*, 1st ed. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1949). See also *The History of Photography, from 1839 to the Present*, 4th ed. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1964) by Beaumont Newhall and *The History of Photography, from 1839 to the Present*, revised and enlarged ed. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1982) by Beaumont Newhall.

⁶ Joel Snyder, *One/Many: Western American Survey Photographs by Bell and O'Sullivan* (Chicago: The David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, 2006), 14.

This new interest in O'Sullivan's photographs grew out of a self-conscious attempt by a small group of photographers and writers/curators [including Adams and Newhall] to establish a tradition of photographic practices and a canon of works that would authenticate their own preferences and critical interests...The elevation of O'Sullivan's western exploration photographs to the emerging photographic canon was predicated on the principle adopted by nearly all American avant-garde photographers of the 1930s...that photography was different in kind from all other representational media.⁷

The photographers valued photography that turned away from pictorial traditions of painting and emphasized the unique characteristics of photography, such as, "delineation of fine detail, inhuman precision, [and] instantaneity." Snyder argues that the photographers and writers/curators assembled a canon to support their views of photography, seeking out "the work of those practitioners of the past whom they judged to have been engaged in the 'honest' and 'direct' work of 'recording' the facts that lay before their cameras."⁸ They chose O'Sullivan to be included in the canon because "the aesthetic value of O'Sullivan's photographs was achieved 'honestly,' because unselfconsciously."

Without artistic pretensions or intentions, photographers like O'Sullivan, it was argued, were able to emphasize the essential features of photography, and, in doing so, produce work that was purely photographic – free from the formulae of painting. O'Sullivan's art was made possible by his innocence of painting and his commitment to honest, hard work.⁹

Until Adams and Newhall took an interest in O'Sullivan, O'Sullivan was known only for his Civil War photographs, forty-four of which were included in Alexander Gardner's *Photographic Sketch Book of the War* (1866). Photographs from his survey work were unfamiliar because the prints produced from the Wheeler Survey and the two other government surveys he took part in, the King Survey (1867-1878) of the fortieth parallel region of the American West and the Darien Survey (1870) of the Darien area of Panama,

⁷ Ibid., 14-15.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

were produced for government record and Congress, and were therefore not distributed to the public. In fact, O'Sullivan had been given permission to produce Wheeler Survey prints for sale to the general public in 1875, but never acted on it.¹⁰

In 1966, the first monograph on O'Sullivan, *Timothy O'Sullivan, America's Forgotten Photographer*, by James D. Horan, was published. The extensive book covered the entirety of O'Sullivan's career and unearthed new documentation relating to O'Sullivan's life and career, as well as reproducing many of O'Sullivan's photographs. To this day, Horan's book is still the most comprehensive publication on O'Sullivan, though newer publications offer revised interpretations based on new research.

In the late 1970s, the *Rephotographic Survey Project* was conceived by a group of practicing photographers, Mark Klett, JoAnn Verburg, Gordon Bushaw and Rick Dingus, who would spend the three years (1977-1979) rephotographing locations of photographs from the survey expeditions of the 1860s and 1870s, in some cases using triangulation to recreate the exact view of the original. Their goal was to discover the ways in which the American West had changed over the preceding one hundred years and humanity's impact on and changing relationship to nature. O'Sullivan's western survey photography was included in the project, shedding new light on the photographer's technique, revealing that O'Sullivan sometimes tilted his camera to create a more dramatic view, or perhaps in a modernist sense, a more aesthetic one. This was a revelation in O'Sullivan scholarship as it proved to some that O'Sullivan had not merely photographed what was in front of the camera; he had carefully selected and framed his views for reasons other than simple documentation.

¹⁰ Joel Snyder, *American Frontiers: The Photographs of Timothy H. O'Sullivan, 1867-1874* (Millerton, N.Y.: Aperture, 1981), 32.

In addition to the Rephotographic Survey book, *Second View: The Rephotographic Survey Project*, the late 1970s and early 1980s produced many other publications devoted to or including O'Sullivan. Weston Naef and James Wood's catalogue, *Era of Exploration: The Rise of Landscape Photography in the American West, 1860-1885* was published in 1975; Joel Snyder published *American Frontiers: The Photographs of Timothy H. O'Sullivan, 1867-1874* to accompany his Philadelphia Museum of Art exhibition in 1981; in the same year, Eugene Ostroff, Curator of Photography at the National Museum of American History, published his catalogue, *Western Views and Eastern Visions* to accompany the Smithsonian Institution's traveling exhibition; and in 1982, the photographer Rick Dingus, who was one of the Rephotographic Survey photographers, published a book, based on his MFA thesis, on O'Sullivan titled, *The Photographic Artifacts of Timothy O'Sullivan*.

Over the years since Ansel Adams's introduction to O'Sullivan's western work, O'Sullivan was slowly integrated into the photography canon. His photographs were shown in exhibitions at and collected by art institutions, inspired working art photographers, and were written about as art objects. Among others, Joel Snyder wrote of O'Sullivan's artistic approach to documentary photography. Snyder contended that O'Sullivan made conscious decisions regarding the aesthetic nature of his compositions, such as "pictorial integrity, coherence, the quality of light, and the range of tonal values," because he would have been instructed by the survey leaders to make pleasing pictures.¹¹ However, instead of following the "picturesque" movement currently engulfing his contemporaries, O'Sullivan's photographs seem to Snyder to be a throwback to an older convention, that of the "sublime"; instead of creating majestic, inviting views, O'Sullivan opted for a view of nature that was

¹¹ Snyder, *American Frontiers*, 40-1.

threatening, difficult and foreboding. Regardless of O'Sullivan's own intentions, which are not known, Snyder believes that O'Sullivan can be called an artist:

As with a graceful bridge or a beautiful piece of pre-Columbian pottery, it is the quality of the work that allows us to qualify a maker of things as an artist and not the quality of the intention.¹²

Continuing the discussion of how O'Sullivan's photographs related to art history, the photographic artist Robert Adams wrote in 1983 of his great affection for O'Sullivan and his methods, comparing him to the painter Paul Cezanne:

Timothy O'Sullivan was, it seems to me, the greatest of the photographers because he understood nature first as architecture. He was our Cezanne, repeatedly creating pictures that were, while they acknowledged the vacancy at the center (a paradoxical symbol for the opacity of life), nonetheless compositions of perfect order and balance. O'Sullivan's goal seems to have been, as Cezanne phrased it, "exciting serenity." Each was an artist/geologist, in love with light and rock.¹³

O'Sullivan became integrated into the history of photography canon and was frequently included in art-related discussions for at least two reasons. First, little is known about O'Sullivan the man and O'Sullivan's photographs differed greatly from other survey photographers, a fact that Ansel Adams picked up on and admittedly found refreshing, noting they evidenced a "creative personality." While other photographers created conventional, inviting and picturesque views, O'Sullivan created desolate and foreboding landscapes with an unusual, proto-twentieth-century modernism. Their sense of modernity comes, in the opinion of Robin Kelsey, from their "stark geometric relations, radical value contrasts, [and] instances of insistent planarity and graphic reduction."¹⁴ Scholars have long attempted to

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Robert Adams, "Introduction," in *The American Space: Meaning in Nineteenth-Century Landscape Photography*, edited by Daniel Wolf (Middleton, C.T.: Wesleyan University Press, 1983), 8.

¹⁴ Robin Kelsey, "Viewing the Archive: Timothy O'Sullivan's Photographs for the Wheeler Survey, 1871-74," *The Art Bulletin* (December 2003): 702.

deduce O'Sullivan's intentions when making his unusual photographs, guesswork at best that frequently concluded in speculations about O'Sullivan's artistic vision.

The second factor that I believe contributed to O'Sullivan's initiation into the art world was the growing art market, beginning in the 1970s and escalating in the 1980s that put a monetary value on all photography, no matter what its original function. In her book, *Print the Legend*, Martha Sandweiss laments the loss of historical context that was the result of this development:

That growing market interest instructed us to value pictures that had been little valued before, but it also encouraged us to value pictures for reasons entirely unrelated to their original purpose. Photographs made to promote particular economic interests, for example, became valued as art. And photographs once valued only for the visual information they contained became valued anew as material artifacts in and of themselves. As early photographs moved onto museum walls and into collectors' hands, they were often severed from the other literary and pictorial material that had once rooted them in a particular historical period.¹⁵

The appropriation of O'Sullivan by the art photography world and the discussion surrounding it came to a head in 1981 when O'Sullivan's photographs were included in Peter Galassi's *Before Photography* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. With his exhibition, Galassi continued the tradition at the Museum of Modern Art of including O'Sullivan in photographic art exhibitions, beginning with Beaumont Newhall and continued by John Szarkowski. Szarkowski included O'Sullivan's work in his 1963 and 1981 landscape exhibitions (with catalogues), *The Photographer and the American Landscape* and *American Landscapes*, respectively.

Galassi attempted to prove in the *Before Photography* exhibition and its accompanying catalogue that "photography was not a bastard left by science on the doorstep

¹⁵ Martha Sandweiss, *Print the Legend: Photography and the American West* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2002), ix.

of art, but a legitimate child of the Western pictorial tradition.”¹⁶ Photography was a direct product of and influenced by art (the realist painters, to be exact) and in turn influenced modernist art. Due to their “modernist” qualities several of O’Sullivan’s photographs were featured in the exhibition, namely three variations of his “Buttes near Green River City, Wyoming” from the Wheeler Survey and “Steam Rising from a Fissure near Virginia City, Nevada” from the King Survey.¹⁷

Some, like the scholar Rosalind Krauss, took issue with O’Sullivan’s inclusion in an essentially art historical exhibition because of the photographs’ original, documentary purpose. In her 1982 article, “Photography’s Discursive Spaces: Landscape/View” in *Art Journal*, she argued against Galassi and the growing trend of attempting to “legitimize” nineteenth century photography as art. Krauss contended that nineteenth century photographers such as O’Sullivan, Samuel Bourne, Auguste Salzmann, and Eugène Atget, who had been drafted into the art world, had been so mistakenly. She believed that documentary photographs should not have been included in exhibitions or collections as works of art as they were originally intended as documents:

But did O’Sullivan in his own day, the 1860s and 1870s, construct his work for the aesthetic discourse and the space of exhibition? Or did he create it for the scientific/topographical discourse which it more or less efficiently serves? Is the interpretation of O’Sullivan’s work as a representation of aesthetic values...not a retrospective construction designed to secure it as art? And is this projection not illegitimate, the composition of a false history?¹⁸

Krauss systematically dismantles this “false history” by arguing that O’Sullivan was not an “artist” as he had come to be called, but was merely a “photographer.” He, by his own

¹⁶ Peter Galassi, *Before Photography: Painting and the Invention of Photography* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1981), 12.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 90, 106-8

¹⁸ Rosalind Krauss, “Photography’s Discursive Spaces: Landscape/View,” *Art Journal* 42, no. 4 (Winter 1982): 313.

words, created “views,” not “landscapes.” The first is defined by a lack of authorship; the latter is defined by artistic intention.¹⁹ Krauss ends her article with an emphatic statement denouncing the scholars who are responsible for perpetuating the falsities:

Everywhere at present there is an attempt to dismantle the photographic archive - the set of practices, institutions, and relationships to which nineteenth-century photography originally belonged – and to reassemble it within the categories previously constituted by art and its history. It is not hard to conceive of what the inducements for doing so are, but it is more difficult to understand the tolerance for the kind of incoherence it produces.²⁰

In the aftermath of Galassi’s exhibition and Krauss’s article, scholars have attempted to make sense of differing opinions over the interpretation of O’Sullivan’s work. Robin Kelsey, in particular, wrote a lengthy dissertation and shorter article in *The Art Bulletin* on the interpretation of O’Sullivan’s Wheeler Survey photographs, arguing that neither the contextualists, like Krauss, nor the modernists, like Galassi, were correct:

Although this contextualist turn has soundly reminded us to pay careful attention to the actual circumstances of production and reception, the distinctiveness of these photographs as pictures has never received an adequate historical account. If the modernists have suppressed the governing circumstances of O’Sullivan’s practice, the contextualists have suppressed his puzzling pictorial choices. Weaving together the emphases of both camps may yield a more compelling understanding not only of how O’Sullivan approached his work but also of how his work performed its instrumental and ideological functions.²¹

In his 2003 article, Kelsey attempted to weave the two theories together by providing evidence and arguing that O’Sullivan “[inflected] pictorial conventions with values and strategies drawn from the survey visual culture in which his practice was embedded.”²² In that way, Kelsey believes that O’Sullivan’s photographs *were* from an identifiable pictorial tradition, one that did not conflict with their original context.

¹⁹ Ibid., 313-8.

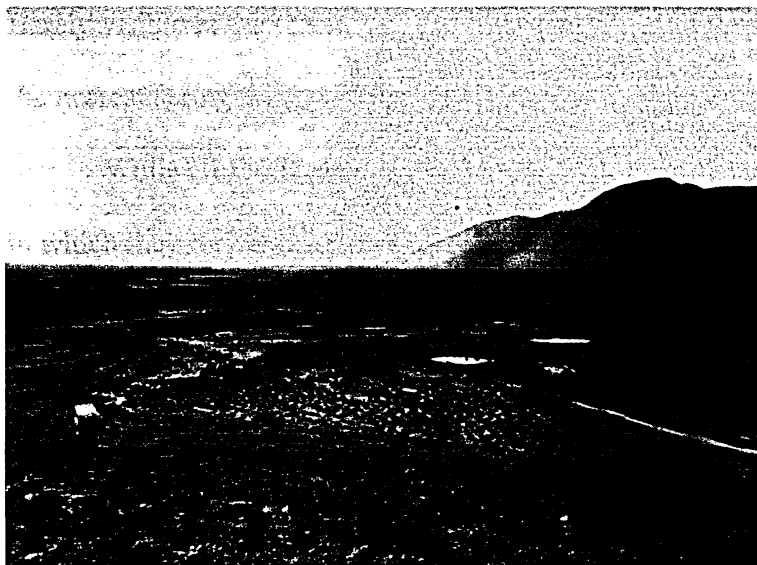
²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Kelsey, “Viewing the Archive,” 702.

²² Ibid.

In this thesis I will continue this discussion relating to the interpretation of O'Sullivan's photographs but will not attempt to offer a new way in which they should be interpreted. I feel that it is impossible to do so when so little is known about O'Sullivan himself and his ideas of authorship. Instead, I will discuss how the history, use, and interpretations of O'Sullivan's photographs since their creation cannot be considered either irrelevant or illegitimate, as Krauss has claimed, no matter how those uses and interpretations may depart from the original context of the works. I feel that now, in the year 2007, O'Sullivan's photographs are as inextricably linked to the debate surrounding the meaning of his photography, including the discussion of how his work relates to concepts of art photography, as they are to their original context. Even though his photographs may have originally only been intended as documents – itself a complex term with its own issues – the fact remains that in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries his photographs *have* been used as art in exhibitions and publications, interpreted as art, collected as art and have inspired other photographers.

The fact is that O'Sullivan's photographs, like all works of art, including photography, have changed in meaning over time based on new information and new associations. Just as a nineteenth-century photograph of a South-Pacific native taken by a white man for the tourist trade is now classified as an "ethnographic" photograph and engenders interpretations of racism, colonialism, et cetera, O'Sullivan's photographs can now be seen as embodying not only larger ideologies of Manifest Destiny, man versus nature, and the changing geography of the American West, but can also, by twenty-first century viewers, be related to the history of photography, the art market, American landscape traditions, and the photography and artists that it has influenced.



2.
Timothy O'Sullivan
"Sou Hot Springs, Pah Ute
Range, Humboldt Desert"
1867
Albumen print
National Archives,
Still Pictures Unit
RG77-KS-1-34

Not only that, but the prints themselves have changed ownership since their creation, many now residing in art institutions and private collections as well as government archives. The fact that these objects, which were created as part of governmental records, did not only remain in governmental archives is a testament to their cultural, artistic, and monetary value.

To substantiate my argument, I have chosen a particular photograph from O'Sullivan's King Survey work to examine. This photograph was found in fourteen collections under many different names, such as "Humboldt Hot Springs, Nevada" or "Sou Hot Springs, Pah Ute Range, Humboldt Desert" (see figure 2). For clarity though, in this thesis the photograph will be referred to as "Sioux Hot Springs." O'Sullivan took this photograph in the Osobb Valley (now called the Dixie Valley) of central Nevada during either the 1867 or 1868 season of the King Survey. The image includes his camera equipment in the foreground, his converted ambulance wagon darkroom with four mules and a white horse standing near five hot springs in the middle ground, and the Pah Ute range (now called the Stillwater Range) of the East Humboldt Mountains in the background.

Barely visible to the naked eye, one of the members of the survey team stands at the edge of the nearest spring and is reflected in the water.

While all fourteen prints will be taken into consideration for the range of collections in which they reside and their provenances, prints from the three collections will be examined in more detail: the George Eastman House, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the National Archives.²³ These three prints were chosen for closer examination for many reasons. First, a close, physical examination of all fourteen prints, which are located in collections scattered across the United States, was impossible to complete for this thesis. Second, an examination of the histories of the three prints reveals that they could be considered representative of the fourteen prints; the three prints' provenances include a variety of institutions and private collections as well as government archives, illustrating the varying ways in which O'Sullivan's photographs have survived and have been used since their creation. Lastly, the three prints represented three different formats for O'Sullivan's King Survey prints: unmounted, mounted but not in an album or portfolio, and mounted in an intact album.

Before delving into the discussion, it is first important to describe the original context of O'Sullivan's King Survey photographs with which Krauss is concerned. The first two chapters of this thesis will be devoted to establishing this; the first chapter will consist of a short biography of Timothy O'Sullivan and the second chapter has been reserved for a short overview of the King Survey. In the third chapter I will discuss how the three representative prints of "Sioux Hot Springs" differ, how their histories demonstrate the broader history of

²³ Images of three of the found prints of "Sioux Hot Springs" have been provided (see figures 2, 11, 12, 13), however in the case of the image from the National Archives, the reproduction is of the image area only. A full view of the album page and an image of the album were not available.

their changing interpretation, and will analyze the changing meaning of O'Sullivan's photographs as a whole.

Chapter 1

Timothy H. O'Sullivan

The relatively few facts of Timothy O'Sullivan's life are reasonably well known and laid out in Joel Snyder's *American Frontiers: The Photographs of Timothy O'Sullivan*. He was born in Ireland in 1840 to Jeremiah and Anne O'Sullivan, who immigrated with the young boy to Staten Island, New York sometime during that decade. Once in New York, O'Sullivan was educated in a local school, as letters he wrote later in life were written by a man who had some formal education. O'Sullivan entered into the field of photography via an apprenticeship in the studios of Mathew Brady while he was still a teenager. Brady was a gifted photographer who had studied under Samuel F. B. Morse, who had introduced the daguerreotype process to the United States.²⁴ O'Sullivan may have begun working for Brady in his New York studio, but had moved to his Washington, D.C. studio by 1857. The management of Brady's Washington studio was taken over by Alexander Gardner in 1858 and, once again, O'Sullivan found himself under the supervision of a master photographer.

Not only did the apprenticeship with Brady teach O'Sullivan how to prepare, expose and develop glass negatives in a process called wet-plate photography, but he also learned proper printing techniques in order to meet the "highest technical and esthetic standards of the art" that had come to be expected from Brady prints.²⁵ O'Sullivan, who would spend the rest of his life making glass negatives in treacherous and sometimes almost impossible conditions and printing thousands of pictures, benefited from the high level of training that

²⁴ Wayne Craven, *American Art: History and Culture*, Rev. 1st ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2003), 243.

²⁵ Joel Synder, *American Frontiers: The Photographs of Timothy H. O'Sullivan, 1867-1874* (Millerton, N.Y.: Aperture, 1981), 11.



3.
Timothy O'Sullivan
"A Harvest of Death,
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania"
July 1863
Albumen print
The George Eastman House
81:0004:0036

Brady's studio afforded him, making his apprenticeship there invaluable to the rest of his career.

With the technical aspects of photography well under his belt, O'Sullivan's next training would come on the battlefields of the U.S. Civil War. When the Civil War broke out in 1861, Brady was issued a pass to document the conflict. He assembled a team of photographers, and included O'Sullivan, who was only twenty-one at the time. Because the exposure time of wet-plate photography was too slow to photograph the action of battles, many photographers focused on the soldiers and camps and the devastating aftermath. O'Sullivan's first attempt at field photography came at the Battle of Bull Run in July of 1861. The battle was a disaster for the North and very nearly a disaster for O'Sullivan as well when a stray artillery shell struck his camera.

O'Sullivan was the photographer of several of the most poignant photographs taken during the war years, and as he was present at many of the most important and horrific battles such as Antietam, Fredericksburg, Gettysburg and Appomattox, O'Sullivan's photographs are some of the most well known. His photographs of battlefields such as, "A Harvest of

Death” (see figure 3) and “Field Where General Reynolds Fell,” both taken at Gettysburg in 1863, are often reprinted as examples of the horrors of war. Here we see the beginnings of O’Sullivan’s ability to create powerful images. These images of soldiers’ bodies bloating in the summer sun demolish all romantic notions of war.

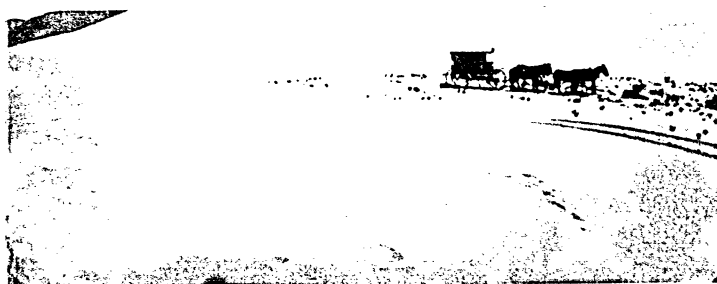
O’Sullivan worked for Brady’s Photographic Corps until May 1862, principally following the route of General William Tecumseh Sherman. When Alexander Gardner left Brady to form his own business in 1862, O’Sullivan followed and split his time between photographing under Gardner and working for the army in his new position with the Army of the Potomac, the Union’s premier Army in the East, copying maps and plans.

In 1866, Gardner published his *Photographic Sketchbook of the War*, containing one hundred photographs. Forty-four of these photographs are attributed to O’Sullivan, showing that he had truly mastered the art of photography, as well as crafting his own style. The experiences he endured photographing under duress and in difficult conditions during the Civil War would become useful to him throughout the rest of his career.

O’Sullivan spent the years 1867-1869 on the Geological Exploration of the Fortieth Parallel led by Clarence King. The West became a popular obsession in the antebellum period, both to the government and to the public. After the destructive and heartbreaking war, Americans were eager to move on to better things, and the West provided an opportunity. The American West was a place of hope and where “life could begin anew.”²⁶ Westward expansion became the goal, and the government surveys were the means. By cataloging, documenting and otherwise examining the lands of the Western United States, the government was able to better ascertain the resources available there, such as coal or

²⁶ Craven, 367.

4.
Timothy O'Sullivan
"Sand Dune near Sand
Springs, Nevada"
1867
Albumen Print
The George Eastman House
81:1886:0027



precious minerals, and the topography of the land through which settlers, soldiers and even the Transcontinental Railroad would travel, when it was completed in 1869.

The years of photographing the Civil War helped to prepare O'Sullivan for his years in the West. During the war he had traveled in a wagon he had fitted out as a makeshift dark room. These wagons, used by most of the war photographers, were loaded down with hundreds of glass plates, cameras, and other developing equipment. The wet-plate process required the immediate exposure and development of treated plates while the emulsion was still wet. Therefore, wet-plate photographers had to have their photographic equipment and darkroom with them at all times. Impossible as it seems, O'Sullivan employed this makeshift darkroom on his journeys through the rugged West in the form of a converted ambulance wagon drawn by four mules (see figure 4).²⁷

The Fortieth Parallel Survey ended in September 1869, but O'Sullivan immediately set back out in January of 1870, this time on the Darien Survey Expedition to present-day Panama led by Lieutenant Commander Thomas O. Selfridge. The goal of the expedition was

²⁷ William L. Fox, *View Finder: Mark Klett, Photography, and the Reinvention of Landscape* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 37.

to determine a location for what would eventually become the Panama Canal, which joined the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. The survey was short, ending in July of the same year.²⁸

In 1871, O'Sullivan once again headed West, this time with the Geographical and Geological Surveys West of the 100th Meridian directed by George M. Wheeler. This expedition, like the others, was both difficult and dangerous. For much of the journey the team rowed for 200 miles upstream on the Colorado River, which became extremely taxing as they got closer to the Grand Canyon and the current grew stronger.²⁹ O'Sullivan once again proved to be up to the challenge. According to one man on the survey team he was "never still," even after a long, hard day of rowing.³⁰ Because O'Sullivan had spent more time on a survey team in the West than any other man on the survey, Wheeler "immediately placed great trust in him," giving him the "authority to lead groups on explorations."³¹

O'Sullivan was given leave from Wheeler to return to King for the season of 1872, when the survey team was called back into the field to continue their work, but was back with Wheeler for the third and fourth seasons in the field in 1873 and 1874. O'Sullivan continued to photograph the landscapes of the West in these last two seasons; the most notable location was the Canyon de Chelly in New Mexico (see figure 1). He also had the opportunity to photograph some of the local Native American population as well (see figure 5). During this time, O'Sullivan married Laura Virginia Pywell of Washington, D.C. on February 11, 1873. The two would not be together permanently, though, until O'Sullivan's retirement from survey work and return to Washington at the close of the 1874 Wheeler survey season.

²⁸ James D. Horan, *Timothy O'Sullivan, America's Forgotten Photographer* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), 215-22.

²⁹ Beaumont and Nancy Newhall, *Masters of Photography* (New York: G. Braziller, 1958), 4.

³⁰ Horan, 251.

³¹ Snyder, *American Frontiers*, 27.



5.
Timothy O'Sullivan
"Aboriginal Life Among the Navajo Indians"
1873
Albumen print
The George Eastman House
79:0014:0038

In Washington, O'Sullivan spent his time printing photographs from the seven years he had spent on the surveys. Most of these photographs would end up in official survey albums, portfolios and reports. The rest of his years were spent in a private photographic practice in Washington and with the photography firm, Armstrong and Company. In 1880 he was appointed Chief Photographer at the Treasury Department. O'Sullivan came to the position with many enthusiastic recommendations from his friends and colleagues, but he was forced to resign in 1881 when he was diagnosed with tuberculosis. He died on the following January 14 at his parents' home on Staten Island at the age of forty-two.

Chapter 2

Geological Exploration of the Fortieth Parallel

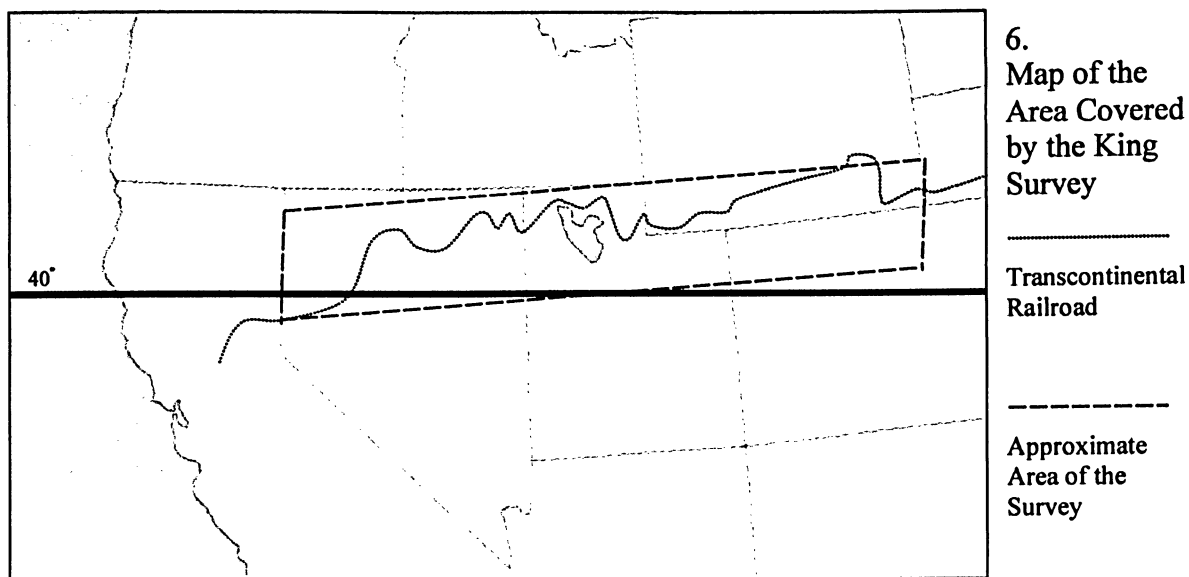
The King Survey provides the historical context for the photograph “Sioux Hot Springs.” Also known as the Fortieth Parallel Survey and officially known as “The United States Geological Exploration of the Fortieth Parallel”, the King Survey was conceived and proposed to Congress by Clarence King, a young twenty-five year old geologist with a penchant for exploration. In a letter dated March 21, 1867, from Brigadier General A.A. Humphreys, Chief of the Army Corps of Engineers, King was officially placed in charge of the expedition:

In accordance with the directions of the Secretary of War of this date, you are appointed to take charge of the explorations provided for in Sec. 3 of the Act of Congress approved March 2, 1867, authorizing the Secretary of War to direct a geological and topographical exploration of the territory between the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevada mountains, including the route or routes of the Pacific Railroad.³²

King was charged with leading a small group of men of his choosing over a one hundred mile corridor of land spanning from the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada Mountains through Nevada and Utah to the Rocky Mountains, a distance of eight hundred miles (see figure 6).³³ The men who would accompany King on the journey included some of the most skilled young geologists, geographers, paleontologists, biologists, and meteorologists of the time. King himself was a Yale-trained geologist who had already served for three years on

³² Letter to Clarence King, from A.A. Humphreys, Chief of the Army Corps of Engineers. Washington, D.C., 21 March 1867, as quoted in James Gregory Moore, *King of the 40th Parallel: Discovery in the American West* (Stanford, California: Stanford General Books, 2006), 331.

³³ Robert Wilson, *The Explorer King: Adventure, Science, and the Great Diamond Hoax: Clarence King in the Old West* (New York: Scribner, 2006), 9 and 199.



the California Geological Survey. His 1878 *Systematic Geology*, Volume I in the final report of the Fortieth Parallel Survey, in the opinion of a recent biographer of King, “served as a model for geological investigation and reporting for years to come. The volume remains to this day a classic in the field of historical geology, as well as a prime example of an accomplished blending of scientific data and literary creativity.”³⁴

A survey member was needed to accompany the expedition to pictorially record the survey. Previous surveys had employed artists for the task, but as King had an interest in the potential of “new innovations” and as the field of photography had advanced enough that images could be recorded out-of-doors in a relatively short period of time, Timothy H. O’Sullivan was invited to accompany the group.³⁵ O’Sullivan’s salary was set at one hundred dollars per month, as stipulated in the March 21 letter from Humphreys to King.³⁶

³⁴ James M. Shebl, *King, of the Mountains* (Stockton, C.A.: University of the Pacific, 1974), 44-5.

³⁵ Richard A. Bartlett, *Great Surveys of the American West* (Norman, O.K.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), 152.

³⁶ James Gregory Moore, *King of the 40th Parallel: Discovery in the American West* (Stanford, California: Stanford General Books, 2006), 331.

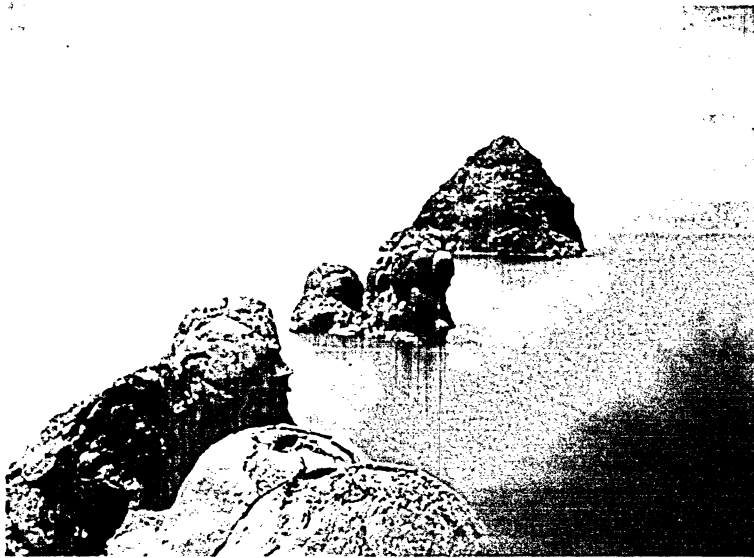
O'Sullivan immediately accepted the invitation and sent a list of photographic supplies he would need to King:

- 1 Camera box for 9x12 plates
- 1 Tripod stand for same
- 1 Camera for stereoscopic views
- 1 Table for 9x12 views by Zinburger of Philadelphia
- 75 English patent plates 9x12 in boxes of 25
- 50 English patent plates 8x10 in boxes of 25
- 1 Extra plate box to contain 25 plates for each size, viz., 9x12 and 8x10
- 1 Hard rubber bath for 9x12 plates, with 2 dippers
- 2 Hydrometers for silver solutions
- 1 Eight ounce fluid measuring glass
- 1 Glass filter and 2 packages of 13 mm filter paper
- 1 Small photographic tent
- 1 Plate holder for cleaning plates 9x12
- 1 Plate holder “ “ “ 8x10
- 6 Pounds Nitrate of silver
- 3 “ Rotten stone finely powdered
- 6 oz. Iodide of Potassium
- 3 “ “ “ Cadmium
- 3 “ Bromide
- 3 “ “ “ Ammonium
- 6 “ Crystallized Iodine
- 5 Pounds Cyanide of Potassium
- 4 “ Negative Varnish
- 1 Black cloth for focus shade.³⁷

King and O'Sullivan departed by steamer from New York on May 11, 1867, arriving in San Francisco after changing boats in Panama, and proceeded to a camp near Sacramento where they met up with the rest of the surveyors. The time in Sacramento was spent buying supplies, including the purchase of an ambulance wagon, which was converted into the traveling darkroom for O'Sullivan seen in "Sioux Hot Springs."³⁸ The party set out from Sacramento on June 3 and headed to Truckee Meadows near present-day Reno, Nevada, where they waited for the cavalry unit led by Sergeant W.A. Martin that was to accompany

³⁷ Letter to A.A. Humphreys, from Clarence King, Geologist in Charge of the Geological Exploration of the 40th Parallel. Washington, D.C., 16 April 1867, as quoted in Snyder, *American Frontiers*, 20.

³⁸ Fox, 37.



7.
Timothy O'Sullivan
"Pyramid Lake, Nevada"
April 1868
Albumen print
The George Eastman House
81:1887:0015

them as protection against potentially hostile Native Americans in the area. The party of nearly forty men set out on their journey by mid-July.

From the start, the survey team did not always stay together, choosing instead to periodically split into smaller groups in order to cover more ground faster. After breaking camp at Truckee and while some of the survey party headed deeper into Nevada, O'Sullivan and a small group of men headed to the nearby Pyramid Lake (see figure 7). The men sailed in a small boat called the *Nettie* down the Truckee River to the lake. The men's treacherous experience at the lake was described in John Sampson's 1869 *Harpers New Monthly Magazine* article, "Photographs from the High Rockies":

A visit to the largest pyramid developed the fact that it was occupied by tenants entirely capable of holding inviolate their prior right of possession against all human visitors. From every crevice there seemed to come a hiss. The rattling, too, was sharp and long continued. The whole rock was evidently alive with rattlesnakes. In every party that ever ventured into a country infested by rattlesnakes are some men who derive great pleasure in killing every snake that may show its head or sound its rattle. A loud shout of "Snakes! rattlers!" brought out the band of exterminators; but such a number of snakes came upon the field that it was clearly beyond the power of our snake-haters to carry on the combat with any hope of final victory. They gave up,

and abandoned the locality to the serpentine trice, which will probably retain the ownership for a period of time indefinite and unlimited.³⁹

They then rejoined King's group on foot and the party headed northeast to the Humboldt Valley.

Robert Wilson, in his recent book *The Explorer King*, writes that "the Humboldt Sink [was] an area known locally as 'the worst place between Missouri and Hell,' and [was] characterized either by rotting marshes or white alkali flats."⁴⁰ Robert Ridgeway, a zoologist with the expedition, wrote the following about the area in his *Ornithology*, Volume IV of the survey report:

Upon the whole, the entire region was one of the most desolate and forbidding that could be imagined, and in these respects is probably not surpassed by any other portion of the land of 'alkali' and the 'everlasting sage-brush.' The effluvium from the putrid water and decaying vegetation of the marshes was at times sickening, while at night the torments of millions of the most voracious mosquitoes added to the horrors of the place.⁴¹

Despite the "horrors of the place," John Sampson quotes O'Sullivan in "Photographs from the High Rockies" on his regrets at being forced to leave the location:

It was a pretty location to work in, and *viewing* [italics in the original] here was as pleasant work as could be desired; the only drawback was an unlimited number of the most voracious and particularly poisonous mosquitoes that we met with during our entire trip. Add to this the entire impossibility to save one's precious body from frequent attacks of that most enervating of all fevers, known as the "mountain ail," and you will see why we did not work up more of that country. We were, in fact, driven out by the mosquitoes and fever.⁴²

In this quotation, O'Sullivan addressed the dangerous situation the survey team faced in the Humboldt Sink with lightheartedness and sarcasm, revealing O'Sullivan's eagerness and

³⁹ John Sampson, "Photographs from the High Rockies," *Harpers New Monthly Magazine* 39, no. 281 (September 1869): 468.

⁴⁰ Wilson, 203.

⁴¹ Robert Ridgeway, *Report of the Geological Exploration of the Fortieth Parallel 4* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1870–), 3 and 353, as quoted in Horan, 163–4.

⁴² Sampson, 471.



8.
Timothy O'Sullivan
"At Work, Gould & Curry Mine"
1868
Albumen print
The George Eastman House
81:1887:0012

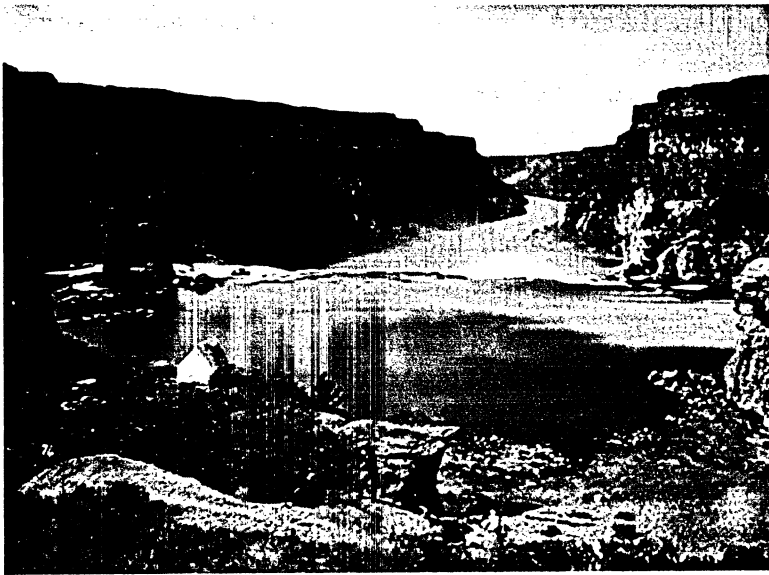
enthusiasm as well as affirming his reputation as a rugged individual. After the horrors of the battlefields of the Civil War, O'Sullivan was seemingly unaffected by nature's "horrors". The inhospitable place described in this passage is at the western edge of the Humboldt Desert, the desert in which O'Sullivan made "Sioux Hot Springs."⁴³

The survey spent the winter of 1867-68 in Carson City and Virginia City, Nevada. There O'Sullivan photographed the mining operations as well as the Comstock Lode, creating the first subterranean mining pictures produced in America thanks, in part, to his use of magnesium flash (see figure 8).⁴⁴ The group resumed their eastward trek over mountain ranges running north-south in early May, but were forced to "travel during the midnight hours" to ensure that the snow crust was thick enough to carry the men, mules and supplies.⁴⁵ After climbing the East Humboldt Range (today called the Ruby Range), O'Sullivan, King and some others

⁴³ Mark Klett, et al., *Second View: The Rephotographic Survey Project* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 189. This map pinpoints the location of "Sioux Hot Springs" (see site 3), in the middle of the Humboldt Desert. The Humboldt Sink, or Humboldt Lake as it is known today, is located to the west of site 3, east of site 2 and Interstate 80. The distance between these two locations is about fifteen miles.

⁴⁴ Snyder, *American Frontiers*, 24.

⁴⁵ Ibid.



9.
Timothy O'Sullivan
"Shoshone Falls, Looking
over Southern Half of Falls"
September 1868 Albumen
print
The George Eastman House
81:1887:0055

traveled to the Snake River Canyon and Shoshone Falls; a trip that produced some of O'Sullivan's most breathtaking views of the entire survey (see figure 9).

During the 1868 season, O'Sullivan may have also backtracked to areas previously visited, causing disparities in dating King Survey photographs, including "Sioux Hot Springs". The survey team was split into groups once more and, excluding the trip to Shoshone Falls with King, it is difficult to track O'Sullivan's movements. Small groups returned to Pyramid Lake and the Humboldt Sink, and visited areas, later revisited in the 1869 season, such as the region surrounding the Great Salt Lake. Regardless, "by the end of October they had worked their way as far east as the Great Salt Lake and as far north as Shoshone Falls, on the Snake River."⁴⁶

The survey members returned to Washington, D.C. during the winter of 1868-1869 on the Union Pacific Railroad from Green River City, Wyoming but were back in the field again by mid-May for the third season. O'Sullivan spent what he thought would be his last

⁴⁶ Rick Dingus, *The Photographic Artifacts of Timothy O'Sullivan* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 8.

season with the King Survey in the mountains surrounding Salt Lake City, in the Weber and Echo Canyons and the Uintah Mountains. After a lapse of two years (see Chapter 1), O'Sullivan returned to the King Survey for the season of 1872, his last, photographing the Washakie Badlands and the area surrounding the Green River City, Wyoming.⁴⁷

During the three seasons with the King Survey from 1867 to 1869, O'Sullivan made over one hundred and seventy photographs.⁴⁸ He presumably spent the winter seasons of 1868-1869 and 1869-1870 in Washington printing from these negatives, as government record albums of his photographs were printed as early as late 1868 or early 1869, again in 1870 and, containing the last season of photographs, in 1873.⁴⁹ O'Sullivan printed a small number of albums each time. In 1869-1870 less than ten were printed, in 1870 four were printed, and the 1873 printing produced one set of three portfolios.⁵⁰ In 1876, he printed one hundred and eighty photographs for the Library of Congress and the Centennial Exposition. O'Sullivan printed miscellaneous photographs in the late 1870s, though the purpose of these later prints remains unclear.

The summation of the Fortieth Parallel Survey was an extensive report consisting of seven volumes published between the years 1870 and 1880, and an atlas published in 1876. Each volume was written by one or more of the surveyors and published individually, illustrated with lithographs, many of which were taken from O'Sullivan's photographs. "Sioux Hot Springs" appears as a photolithograph, credited to O'Sullivan, in Volume II, *Descriptive Geology* by Arnold Hague and Samuel F. Emmons, under the title, "Sou [sic]

⁴⁷ Ibid., 11-2.

⁴⁸ William H. Goetzmann, "Desolation, Thy Name is the Great Basin: Clarence King's 40th Parallel Geological Explorations," in *Perpetual Mirage: Photographic Narratives of the Desert West*, organized May Castleberry (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1996), 59.

⁴⁹ Snyder, *American Frontiers*, 117.

⁵⁰ A set of mounted photographs much like an album, but unbound.



10.
Julius Bien & Company
(after Timothy O'Sullivan)
"Sou Springs, Osobb Valley,
Nevada"
Photolithograph

Arnold Hague and Samuel Emmons
Descriptive Geology
Washington, D.C.: Government
Printing Office
1877
Plate 20

Springs, Osobb Valley, Nevada" (see figure 10). The description of the scene in the lithograph appears on the adjacent pages:

On Plate XX is given a general view of this group of hot springs, showing their position on the border of the valley with the Osobb Desert, stretching far away to the southward. The ground is covered with a loose alkaline soil, over which is a scanty vegetable growth, somewhat richer in the immediate neighborhood of the springs. In the illustration, only a few of the larger and more elevated pools are shown, the others either lying at a lower level or hidden by the inequalities of the surface. Around each spring there has been built up a secondary mound or rim of calcareous tufa, which in some instances has contracted as it formed, producing a perfect dome over the hot spring, with a vent of 2 or 3 feet in diameter. The temperature of the hottest of those observed varied from 160° to 185°, although several of the largest springs have an agreeable temperature for bathing; indeed, a remarkable feature in connection with these springs is the very great variation of temperature within short distances.⁵¹

⁵¹ Arnold Hague and S.F. Emmons, *Descriptive Geology* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1877), 705.

Chapter 3

Analysis

In my introduction I proposed that O'Sullivan's photographs are inextricably linked to not only to their original function but also to their later histories, interpretations, and uses. Having established the original circumstances of O'Sullivan's King Survey photographs in the previous two chapters, specifically the image "Sioux Hot Springs," I will now delve into the reasoning behind my statement, including an analysis of the uses of O'Sullivan's photographs in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

First, I would like to discuss the ways in which O'Sullivan's western photographs were used during his lifetime. This will reveal that from the beginning, his photographs were used for reasons other than scientific documentation and that O'Sullivan himself may have aware of such intended uses. As previously discussed, O'Sullivan printed several editions of the King Survey photographs, most of which were given to government officials and became part of permanent government records. However, other prints were produced for diverging reasons. The earliest instance came in 1870 when Clarence King sent a twenty-two-page volume containing letters and poems to his half-sister Marian and her two friends. The volume, titled *The Three Lakes: Marian, Lall, Jan, and How They Were Named* (1870), was illustrated with eleven of O'Sullivan's photographs, which "served to visualize moments in the fairy-tale naming of three lakes in the mountains of Utah."⁵² Nowhere in the volume is the survey mentioned; King turns the story of naming three mountain lakes after the three

⁵² Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), 119. Trachtenberg describes the volume in detail in this passage and in a footnote (see page 302) lists the then-known locations of copies of the volume: Beinecke Library at Yale University, the New York Public Library, and Bancroft Library at the University of California at Berkeley.

girls into a fairy-tale for their enjoyment. The photographs that were included, all found in survey volumes, appear anonymously as illustration of King's narrative.

O'Sullivan himself printed King Survey photographs for distribution outside the government sphere. In 1873 he printed a set of photographs to be sent to the World Exposition in Vienna, Austria and in 1876 a set of one hundred and eighty photographs was produced for the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. Each of the expositions lasted six months and received millions of visitors; the Vienna Exposition received over seven million visitors and the Centennial Exposition received over ten million. These two events introduced O'Sullivan's photographs to a much wider audience than they had previously enjoyed. No one knows who exactly viewed the photographs, the context in which they were seen – whether, for example, they were credited to O'Sullivan – and how they were interpreted.

O'Sullivan produced other prints of his King Survey work, including stereograph prints, the distribution of which remains undocumented. The stereograph negatives that O'Sullivan created for the King Survey, now stored at the National Archives Still Picture Unit in College Park, Maryland, may have been intended for public consumption because of stereography's popularity in the late nineteenth century, but were never used in such a way. For the King Survey, O'Sullivan only printed two sets of stereographs: one in 1873 and one in 1876; both of these sets are now lost to us.⁵³ In contrast, large editions totaling over seven thousand individual stereographs were produced by the Wheeler Survey.

Beyond these original documented uses, it is necessary to look at the provenance of individual prints to trace the history of O'Sullivan's photographs and how they have been used since their creation. As a complete catalog of the King Survey photographs was an

⁵³ Snyder, *American Frontiers*, 117.

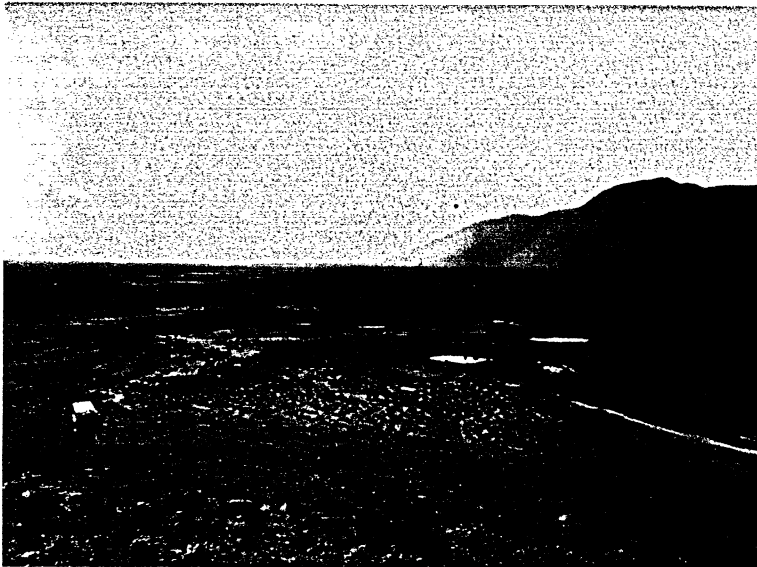
impossibly large undertaking for this thesis, I have chosen to examine the known prints of one King Survey photograph, “Sioux Hot Springs.” I contacted forty-three collections across the United States and Canada to search for prints of this photograph. Of the collections that responded to my queries, fourteen prints were found. Their provenances, ranging from government archives, to private collections, to art museums, to the completely unknown, demonstrate the varied, although still incomplete, histories of the King Survey prints that now reside in public collections.⁵⁴

Two prints of “Sioux Hot Springs” found in the surveyed collections are modern prints from the glass plate negative. The U.S. Geological Survey in Denver, Colorado, home of O’Sullivan’s negative, printed them in the 1980s for the Rephotographic Survey project, whose interests were discussed in the introduction. The modern prints of O’Sullivan’s photographs were included in portfolios alongside the Rephotographic Survey’s version of the photograph. These photographs are particularly interesting because the original, documentary function of the negative still applies, but the function of the new print also applies; the new function is to provide a comparison with the modern photograph.

Three of the fourteen prints, those from the George Eastman House, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the National Archives, were printed in the first printing of King Survey prints in 1868/1869. I examined these prints more closely for evidence of their past functions and interpretations.

The print from the National Archives (see figure 11), which is included in a two album set, represents an instance in which the print that has stayed closest to the original purpose and intention of the King Survey prints; it has remained in the government archive

⁵⁴ See Appendix A

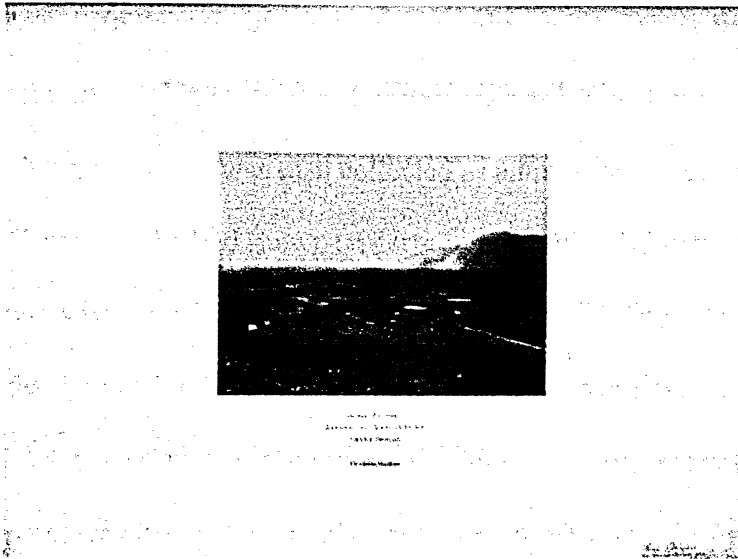


11.
Timothy O'Sullivan
"Sou Hot Springs, Pah Ute
Range, Humboldt Desert"
1867
Albumen print
National Archives,
Still Pictures Unit
RG77-KS-1-34

that holds most of the other survey documents since its creation. We know this because its provenance is clear: a book label on the inside cover of the album indicates that it was once housed in the Library of the U.S. Army Engineer Department. The National Archives' records indicate that the album was transferred directly from the library to the National Archives.

The National Archives print has also never been removed from its original container: an album. The album was produced in 1869 as Volume I of a two-volume set of eighty prints covering the survey seasons of 1867 and 1868. "Sioux Hot Springs" is mounted into the first album as plate 34.⁵⁵ The page's stub binding is still intact, indicating that it has never been removed. Physical aspects of the print provide further evidence that it has not been removed or even exhibited. The print is very dark and neutral and the mount is clean. Damage from atmospheric contaminants and ultraviolet light would likely be evident if the print had been exposed in an exhibition or removed from its binding during its lifetime.

⁵⁵ Dating of the album is based on information in the National Archives Still Picture Unit finding aid for Record Group 77, which states, "volumes I and II were printed in early 1869 and cover the King Survey for the years 1867 and 1868. There are no captions printed on these photos. Volumes 3 and 4 were originally volumes 3 and 2, respectively, of a 3 volume set put out by King in early 1876. They cover the entire survey, 1867 to 1872."



12.
Timothy O'Sullivan
"Sioux Springs – Near
Humboldt Salt Marsh,
Nevada"
1868
Albumen print
The George Eastman House
81:1887:0003

The print owned by the George Eastman House in Rochester, New York (see figure 12) is also mounted, but does not form part of an album or an intact portfolio. The print was acquired as part of a group of 364 photographs from the Department of Geological Sciences at Harvard University in 1962, which included photographs by William Jackson, Carleton Watkins and John Hillers in addition to many by O'Sullivan. The article describing the acquisition in the Eastman House's bulletin, *Image*, quotes Robert A. Navias, Preparator of the Department of Geological Sciences at the time:

The photographs recently given to Eastman House were part of a much larger collection of photographs and lantern slides known as the Gardner Collection. [In] about 1896 George A. Gardner gave a sum of money to the Department of Geology and Geography...the income of this fund to be used for the purchase of photographs and lantern slides as visual aids in the teaching of geology and geography...After 1914 the collection became inactive.⁵⁶

Harvard University presumably used the print, as described by Navias, as a visual aid for its geological courses. We do know that by 1962, the prints had been long disused and Harvard sought a home for them in other institutions. The Eastman House, an institution devoted to preserving the history of photography, accepted the gift willingly.

⁵⁶ Robert Doty, "Gift of Jackson and O'Sullivan Photographs." *Image* 11, no. 5 (1962): 21-2.

In the case of this particular print and its known provenance, it was used first as a teaching tool in a geology department, a task not unsuitable for the original function of the photograph, and was then collected as a historical object by the Eastman House. Beaumont Newhall, who had shown an early interest in O'Sullivan while at the Museum of Modern Art and who included him in exhibitions and publications, was director of the Eastman House at the time and led the effort to acquire the photographs. The mission statement of the Eastman House, available on the museum's website, states its main function as, "to collect and preserve objects that are of significance to photography" as well as "to keep and care for images, literature, and technology to tell the story of photography in history and in culture."⁵⁷ I do not find that either of these missions is in opposition to the original function of "Sioux Hot Springs" as the print is undoubtedly part of the history of photographic medium as an example of how photography was used on the government surveys. Therefore while the provenance of this print differs from that of the National Archives print, it still preserves the original function, that of a documentary tool used by the government.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Department of Photographs holds eleven unmounted King Survey prints in its collection, one of which is a print of "Sioux Hot Springs" (see figure 13). This print and the ten other unmounted King Survey prints are unique as far as we know; to date, no other unmounted King Survey prints have been discovered.

The most important item to note is that the circumstances under which the print was collected, identified by examining the Metropolitan's mission statement, is clearly different from the other two institutions:

⁵⁷ George Eastman House, "The Museum: Mission Statement," George Eastman House, http://www.eastmanhouse.org/inc/the_museum/mission.php.



13.
Timothy O'Sullivan
"The Humboldt Hot Springs"
1868
Albumen print
The Metropolitan Museum of
Art, Department of
Photographs
2005.100.103

The mission of The Metropolitan Museum of Art is to collect, preserve, study, exhibit, and stimulate appreciation for and advance knowledge of works of art that collectively represent the broadest spectrum of human achievement at the highest level of quality.⁵⁸

The Metropolitan collects "works of art," so clearly it considers "Sioux Hot Springs" to be a work of art regardless of its original context.

It is evident that the print's previous owner also considered the print to be art. In 2005 the Gilman Paper Company Collection, a prestigious private collection considered to be one of the foremost collections of photographs from the first one hundred years of the medium, was given to the Metropolitan. While in the Gilman Collection, the print was exhibited at the Metropolitan in *The Waking Dream: Photography's First Century*, a landmark exhibition and "pivotal event in cementing the public's appreciation of photography as art."⁵⁹

Prior to the Gilman Collection, the print belonged to John Coplans, a curator, critic, editor, and, towards the end of his life, a photographic artist. The print had resided in

⁵⁸ The Metropolitan Museum of Art, "Visitor Information: Frequently Asked Questions: The Museum and Its History," The Metropolitan Museum of Art, http://www.metmuseum.org/visitor/faq_hist.htm.

⁵⁹ *Important Photographs from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, including Works from the Gilman Paper Company Collection* (New York: Sotheby's, 2006), 7.

Coplans' large collection for an undocumented length of time. The original owner of the print was Alfred Waud, revered Civil War illustrator and personal acquaintance of Timothy O'Sullivan. O'Sullivan met Waud when the two accompanied Mathew Brady to the Battle of Bull Run in July 1861. Because the print is unmounted and uncropped, it is possible that O'Sullivan gave the print to Waud as a gift. Nine of the ten other unmounted prints at the Metropolitan are documented as being from Waud's collection. One might conjecture that Waud would be interested in the print in order to create illustrations in the form of a lithograph or engraving. However, the official lithographer for the King Survey was Julius Bien & Company of New York. Bien's lithograph of "Sioux Hot Springs" appears as Plate XX in *Descriptive Geology* by Arnold Hague and S.F. Emmons. While the fact that the print is unmounted and was obviously inferiorly printed suggests that Waud wanted to use it as a study for a lithograph, we unfortunately do not know his true intention or use of the print.

As one can see from the examination of three version of just one of O'Sullivan's King Survey photographs, the original purpose of the photograph has not always been preserved. What is more, an examination of the uses of O'Sullivan's photographs within his lifetime reveals that even then, his photographs may have been seen by members of the public outside of the government and the sciences. However, I again come back to the point that while we know something about the nature and purposes of the King Survey, we do not know anything about O'Sullivan's personal ambitions beyond satisfactorily fulfilling his governmental contractual obligations.

If we look at the use of O'Sullivan's King Survey photographs more broadly, the public has on occasion been presented with his photographs in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries for reasons other than their original function. They have been included, for

example, in art historical exhibitions such as *Before Photography* at the Museum of Modern Art in 1981 and *The Waking Dream* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1993.

Photographic artists such as Ansel Adams and Robert Adams, both noted landscape photographers, have appreciated O'Sullivan's work and used it as inspiration. Other photographers, such as those involved with the Rephotographic Survey, have attempted to use O'Sullivan's photographs in a way that is consistent with their original function while still relating them to the twentieth century and arguing for O'Sullivan's creativity. Rick Dingus, author of *The Photographic Artifacts of Timothy O'Sullivan* and member of the Rephotographic Survey, for example, chose to not describe O'Sullivan's photographs as documents, preferring to call them artifacts. Dingus felt that the term *documents*, "implies an objectivity on the part of the photographs that detracts from [his] discussion of them as the product of a unique sensibility and intellect within the context of a given time and particular cultural climate."⁶⁰

Contemporary photographers are now exposed to O'Sullivan's photography early in their careers, in photographic history and theory textbooks. There, O'Sullivan is usually presented within the historical framework of the development of photography in America. O'Sullivan first appeared within the published history of photography with his inclusion in Newhall's *History of Photography* in 1949. Now his photographs even appear in general art historical surveys, such as Wayne Craven's *American Art: History and Culture*, published in 2002⁶¹ and the popular two-volume, all-encompassing *Art History* by Marilyn Stokstad, first published in 1995.⁶²

⁶⁰ Dingus, xi.

⁶¹ Wayne Craven, *American Art: History and Culture*, 1st ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2002).

⁶² Marilyn Stokstad, *Art History*, 1st ed. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995).

While curators, academics, and critics may continue to argue over the reappropriation and recontextualization of O'Sullivan's photography in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, I believe that this discussion, in its present form, has become irrelevant, largely because it is too narrowly focused. We have seen that regardless of speculations concerning O'Sullivan's original intentions, which may forever be undiscoverable, and regardless of the original context in which his photographs were made, his work has had an important impact on the photographic art world, and his photographs enjoy a strong presence in art institutions. In the year 2007, O'Sullivan is firmly entrenched in the photographic art canon.

Appendix A

Collections Survey: Collections Known to Own Photographic Prints of “Sioux Hot Springs”

Forty-three collections across the United States and Canada that are known to own Timothy O’Sullivan prints based on their inclusion in the *Index to American Photographic Collections*, compiled by the George Eastman House in 1996 were contacted in the spring and summer of 2007. Of the forty-three collections, thirty-nine have responded to date. Below is a list of the collections surveyed and a table of the prints of “Sioux Hot Springs, Humboldt Desert, Nevada” discovered in these collections.

Collections Surveyed:

Collection Name	Location
Ackland Art Museum, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill	Chapel Hill, NC
Addison Gallery of American Art	Andover, MA
Albin O. Kuhn Library, University of Maryland Baltimore County	Baltimore, MD
American Geographical Society Library, University of Wisconsin	Milwaukee, WI
Amon Carter Museum	Fort Worth, TX
Art Institute of Chicago	Chicago, IL
Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley *	Berkeley, CA
Boston Public Library*	Boston, MA
Center for Creative Photography	Tucson, AZ
Cincinnati Art Museum	Cincinnati, OH
Colorado Historical Society, Stephen Hart Research Library	Denver, CO
Davison Art Center, Wesleyan University	Middletown, CT
Duke University Library	Durham, NC
George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film	Rochester, NY
Harvard University Art Museums	Cambridge, MA
Huntington Library Art Galleries	San Marino, CA
Indiana University Art Museum	Bloomington, IN
J. Paul Getty Museum	Los Angeles, CA
Kansas State Historical Society*	Topeka, KS
Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division	Washington, DC
Metropolitan Museum of Art, Department of Photographs	New York, NY
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston	Boston, MA
Museum of New Mexico, Photographic Archive	Santa Fe, NM
National Archives and Records Administration, Still Pictures Unit	College Park, MD
National Gallery of Canada	Ottawa, Canada
National Museum of American History, Archives Center	Washington, DC
National Museum of American History, Photographic History Collection*	Washington, DC
Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art	Kansas City, MO
Nevada State Library and Archives	Reno, Nevada

New Orleans Museum of Art
New York Public Library
Princeton University Art Museum
Saint Louis Art Museum
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
Smithsonian American Art Museum
Smithsonian Institution, National Anthropological Archives
Snite Museum of Art, Notre Dame University
United States Geological Survey Photographic Library
University of Louisville Photographic Archives
University of New Mexico Art Museum
University of Southern California
Utah State University, Merrill-Cazier Library
Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library

* have not responded

New Orleans, LA
New York, NY
Princeton, NJ
St. Louis, MO
San Francisco, CA
Washington, DC
Washington, DC
Notre Dame, IN
Denver, CO
Louisville, KY
Albuquerque, NM
Los Angeles, CA
Logan, UT
New Haven, CT

List of Abbreviations in the Table *[Emily: I added the last three words here]*

A	Album
AGS	American Geographical Society Library, University of Wisconsin
AMON	Amon Carter Museum
CCP	Center for Creative Photography
CHS	Colorado Historical Society, Stephen Hart Research Library
DIS	Disbound Album
GEH	George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film
GPCC	Gilman Paper Company Collection
LOC	Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division
MET	Metropolitan Museum of Art, Department of Photographs
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration, Still Pictures Unit
ND	No Date
NELSON	Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art
OM	Official United States Army Engineer Department Mount
P	Portfolio
RPS	Rephotographic Survey Project
SG	Silver Gelatin Print
U	Unmounted
USGS	United States Geological Survey Photographic Library
YALE	Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library

Collections Survey: Prints of “Sioux Hot Springs, Humboldt Desert, Nevada”

Collection	Print ID #	Title	Date	Format	Dimensions	Provenance
AGS	79:254	“O’Sullivan’s ambulance – darkroom – Humbolt [sic] Hot Springs” or “Humboldt Hot Springs, from the series Geological Exploration Fortieth Parallel – 1868”	1868	OM	Print: 18.3 x 27 cm. Mount: 45.5 x 60.8 cm.	Unknown
	79:255	“O’Sullivan’s ambulance – darkroom – Humbolt [sic] Hot Springs”	ND [1868]	OM	Print: 19.6 x 27 cm. Mount: 45.9 x 61 cm.	Unknown
AMON	P1989.18.63	“Hot Springs, Smokey Valley”	Printed: c. 1985	SG / U	Print: 16.2 x 22.2 cm.	USGS modern print from original negative for RPS portfolio
CCP	2003.12.29a	“Hot Springs, Smokey Valley”	Image: 1868 Printed: 1984-5	SG / U	Print: 15.9 x 22 cm.	Purchase from Mark Klett, 2003 USGS modern print from original negative for RPS portfolio
CHS	373031.24	“Sou Springs Humboldt” Portfolio Title (28 Prints): “Photographic Items (Along the Fortieth Parallel)”	Portfolio: c.1868	OM / P	Print: 19 x 26.7 cm. Mount: 45.7 x 61 cm.	Donated by Denver antiquarian book dealer Fred Rosenstock before 1976
GEH	81:1887:0003	“Sioux Springs – Near Humboldt Salt Marsh, Nevada”	1868	OM	Print: 19.8 x 26.9 cm. Mount: 46 x 61 cm.	Harvard University Geology Department
LOC	Lot 7096, no. 84	“Sou Springs, Pah Ute Range, Nev.”	1867	OM / DIS	Print: 20 x 27 cm. Mount: 42 x 55 cm.	Unknown Acquired by LOC in 1876
MET	2005.100.103	“The Humboldt Hot Springs”	1868	U	Print: 21.8 x 29.1 cm.	GPCC / John Coplans / Alfred R. Waud
NARA	77-KS-1-34	“Sou Hot Springs, Pah Ute Range, Humboldt Desert”	Photo: 1867 Album: 1869	OM / A	Print: 20 x 27 cm. Mount: 45.7 x 59.7 cm.	Library of the U.S. Army Engineer Department
	77-KS-3-161	“Sou Hot Springs, Pah Ute Range, Humboldt Desert”	Photo: 1867 Album: c.1875-6	OM / A	Print: 20.2 x 27 cm. Mount: 40.8 x 55.2 cm.	Unknown
	77-KSP-29	“Sou Hot Springs, Pah Ute Range, Humboldt Desert”	Photo: 1867 Portfolio: 1869	OM / P	Print: 19.7 x 27 cm. Mount: 45.7 x 61 cm.	Library of the U.S. Army Engineer Department
	79-BC-58	“Sou Hot Springs, Pah Ute Range, Humboldt Desert”	1867	OM	Print: 20 x 27.9 cm. Mount: 45 x 61.6 cm.	Bellinger Collection**

Collections Survey, continued

Collection	Print ID#	Title	Date	Format	Dimensions	Provenance
NELSON	2005.27.3239	"Hot Springs, Salt Valley, Humboldt Mountains"	1868	OM / DIS	Print: 19.7 x 27 cm. Mount: 46 x 61 cm.	Hallmark Photographic Collection
YALE	Group #: WA Photos Folio 22	"Humboldt Hot Springs, East Humboldt Mountains, Nevada"	1867-1869	OM / P	Print: 20.5 x 31 cm. Mount: 46 x 61 cm.	Unknown (Most likely acquired in 19 th century by Yale Geology Department or Geology Library)

* Unless otherwise noted, photographs are albumen prints

** Given to the National Park Service in 1967 by Louisa Bellinger, granddaughter of the founder of the American Institute of Mining Engineers, Rossiter Worthington Raymond

Appendix B

Literature Survey: Known Reproductions of the Photograph, “Sioux Hot Springs”

- Dingus, Rick. *The Photographic Artifacts of Timothy O’Sullivan*. Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1982. Figure 82, page 101. The reproduction was made from a print in the National Archives.
- Fox, William L. *View Finder: Mark Klett, Photography, and the Reinvention of Landscape*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001. Page 106. The reproduction was made from a print in the United States Geological Survey.
- Hambourg, Maria Morris, et al. *The Waking Dream: Photography’s First Century, Selections from the Gilman Paper Company Collection*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1993. Plate 115, page 160; catalog no. 150, page 324. The reproduction was made from a print in the Gilman Paper Company Collection (now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Department of Photographs).
- Horan, James D. *Timothy O’Sullivan, America’s Forgotten Photographer*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966. Page 180. The reproduction was made from a print in the James D. Horan Civil War and Western Americana Collection.
- Klett, Mark, et al. *Second View: The Rephotographic Survey Project*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984. Figure 221, page 154; catalog entry, page 208. The reproduction was made from a print in the United States Geological Survey.
- Ostroff, Eugene. *Western Views and Eastern Visions*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, 1981. Figure 44A, page 63. The reproduction was made from a print in the United States Geological Survey.
- Naef, Weston J. *Era of Exploration: The Rise of Landscape Photography in the American West, 1860-1885*. Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1975. Figure 69, page 54 [detail of camera equipment]. The reproduction was made from a print in the American Geographical Society.

Known Reproductions of the Photolithograph, “Sou Springs, Osobb Valley, Nevada”

- King, Clarence. *Report of the Geological Exploration of the Fortieth Parallel, made by order of the Secretary of War according to acts of Congress of March 2, 1867, and March 3, 1869 under the direction of Brig. and Bvt. Major General A.A. Humphreys*. 7 vols.

and atlas. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1870-1880. Vol. II: *Descriptive Geology*, by Arnold Hague and Samuel F. Emmons. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1877. Plate 20.

Moore, James Gregory. *King of the 40th Parallel: Discovery in the American West*. Stanford, C.A.: Stanford General Books, 2006. Plate 7.12, page 158.

Ostroff, Eugene. *Western Views and Eastern Visions*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, 1981. Plate 44B, page 63.

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