Franz Boas photograph collection, 1868-1943 (bulk 1894-1902)
COLLECTION INFORMATION

Repository:
American Museum of Natural History, Special Collections-Library
Central Park West at 79th Street
New York, NY 10024

Collection: Franz Boas photograph collection

Creator: Boas, Franz, 1858-1942

Inclusive Dates: 1868-1943
Bulk Dates: 1894-1902

Call Number: PPC.B63

Extent: 4 boxes, 653 black and white photographs, 31 postcards, 152 individual contact prints, 3 envelopes, 1 newspaper illustration, 1 business card, 1 painting.

Physical Description: Collection consists of photographs (bulk of material), postcards, envelopes, contact prints, a newspaper illustration, business card, and painting.

Condition: The material ranges from fair to poor condition. All prints are sleeved, but some photographs are severely faded and/or tearing.

Prepared by/Date: Lauren Dzura, December 2011

Revised by/Date:
Franz Uri Boas is considered the “Father of Modern Anthropology" for his pioneering work on race, culture, and language, particularly within the cultures of American Indians. Boas was born on July 9, 1858 in Minden, Westphalia (Germany) and studied physics and geography. In 1881, Boas received his Ph.D. in Physics from Kiel for a piece concerning the perception of seawater by the Inuit.

Boas worked with the Inuit of Baffin Island from 1883-1884, spurring his interest in primitive culture from observations of the Eskimos. From 1885-1886 Boas worked with Rudolf Virchow and Adolf Bastian at the Royal Ethnographic Museum in Berlin. In 1886 Boas made the first of many trips to the North Pacific Coast to study the Kwakiutl and other tribes of British Columbia, on which he later specialized.

In 1887, Boas left Germany for a position as assistant editor of the journal Science in the United States, becoming a permanent U.S. resident. In 1888 Boas began teaching at Clark University, followed by a position at the Chicago Field Museum that lasted until 1894. In 1895, Boas was appointed Assistant Curator of Ethnology at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), became Curator of Ethnology from 1900-1903, and served as Curator of Anthropology at AMNH from 1904-1905. Boas led the Boas Expedition to Northwest Territories in 1894, traveling to Vancouver, British Columbia to collect materials on Northwest Coast Indians. Boas also directed and edited reports for the Jesup North Pacific Expedition: 1897-1902, the purpose of which was to investigate relationships between the aborigines of Siberia and North America. George Hunt and James Teit served as Boas’ guides to facilitate interactions and aid in translation on his Northwest Coast expeditions. Between 1897 and 1903 Boas secured funding, fielded research teams, and over the next three decades, edited and supervised Expedition publications in addition to his other writing.

Boas began teaching at Columbia University in 1896 and became Professor of Anthropology at Columbia in 1899. Boas trained and influenced many notable ethnologists and linguists, such as Robert Lowie, Margaret Mead, Melville Herskovits, and Zora Neale Hurston. Boas is credited for being responsible for encouraging women to enter the field of anthropology.

Boas left AMNH in 1905 and continued working at Columbia until his death on December 21, 1942. During his lifetime he established the International Journal of American Linguistics, and played a key role in organizing the American Anthropological Association. As a specialist in cultures and languages of the American Indians, Boas facilitated the creation of at least two dictionaries of Native American languages, including Kwakwala by Dan Cranmer and another of Dakota language co-written with his student Ella Cara Deloria. In fall 2008, members of the Kwakiutl tribe traveled to AMNH to advise researchers concerning the temporary exhibit, Chiefly Feasts: The Enduring Kwakiutl Potlatch, October 18, 1991-February 23, 1992, where portions of this photo collection were displayed.
SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Franz Boas Photo Collection consists mainly of photographs of Northwest Coast Natives from the Jesup North Pacific Expedition: 1897-1902, sponsored by AMNH, and the Boas Expedition to Northwest Territories in 1894. There was no original order within this collection and most of the collection is stamped with the marking, “From the Boas Collection 43.” Many other sources besides Boas contributed to this collection, including the British Columbia Provincial Museum, the Field Museum of Chicago, C.F. Newcombe, Edward Dossetter, and Richard Maynard. The only photographs taken by Boas himself are the contact prints found in Boxes 1, 2, and 3. Some images were pulled in preparation for publications and memoirs of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition. Additionally, some of the photos were used in AMNH’s temporary exhibit, Chiefly Feasts: The Enduring Kwakiutl Potlatch, October 8, 1991-February 23, 1992, as well as the monographs published by AMNH, Chiefly Feasts: The Enduring Kwakiutl Potlatch and From the Land of the Totem Poles: The Northwest Coast Indian Art Collection at the American Museum of Natural History, both edited by Aldona Jonaitis.

Box 1 contains black and white portraits. Subjects of these portraits include Vancouver Indians, most likely Kwakiutl, who live in the coastal rainforests in British Columbia, Canada. There is a portrait of a Thompson Indian woman in British Columbia, and a portrait of a Haida Indian photographed in the Haida village of Masset at Port Essington, highlighting chest tattoos.

Several photos are specified as being taken in Fort Rupert, B.C. by Oregon C. Hastings and George Hunt in 1894. Hastings was employed Boas to capture images during his Northwest Coast expeditions. George Hunt, half-English, half-Tlingit, was raised in Fort Rupert and while not Kwakiutl by blood, he was integrated into the culture. Hunt was an extremely valuable collaborator to Boas, being fluent in English and bilingual.

The field photographs in Box 1 document houses, totems, landscapes, village scenes, and native people in the Northwest Coast. Dates range from 1894-1921 and locations include Fort Rupert B.C., Alert Bay, B.C., and Harbledown Island, B.C. Subjects include Boas’ potlatch, Kwakiutl dancers, Bob Harris and wife, George Hunt and wife, and the famous Kwakiutl raven mask.

A potlatch is a traditional ceremony that validates that status of a Kwakiutl family. The ceremony consists of elaborate dances, feasting on rich foods, and the distribution of hundreds of gifts. The host displays rank by showing his right to use certain masks and perform special dances. Guests are served lavish meals in intricately carved bowls, and as the potlatch ends the host pays the guests for witnessing the displays of the privileges the host claimed. Accepting gifts validate this claim. Before European influence, gifts included furs, skins, cedar bark and boxes. By the time Boas arrived, woolen blankets were the most common form of payment. For many years this tradition was on the brink of extinction when the Canadian government made potlatches illegal in 1884. The government saw potlatch activities as a threat to the assimilation into Western culture. Potlatches were still held in secret during this period and the law was revoked in 1951.

In Kwakiutl culture, the raven is a mythic cannibal bird who attends to Baxwbakwalanuxwsiwe, the great Cannibal-Spirit-at-the-North-End-of-the-World. The mask is displayed and used in dances and potlatches. The raven’s beak snaps open and shut while making the sound of a raven.
Photographers include Hunt, Hastings, and C.F. Newcombe. Newcombe lived in Victoria, B.C. and studied the culture of the Northwest Coast Indians and collected objects for the British Columbia Provincial Museum. Boas hired Newcombe to conduct research on the Haida history of the southern portions of the Queen Charlotte Islands.

Many of the photographs have original writing on the back. The postcard dates range from 1907-1917, and subjects include the Kwakiutl and Bella Coola.

One photograph is noted as published in *House and Garden* magazine in June 1943 and features Kwakiutl ghost puppets, taken in Kingcome Inlet, B.C.

There are black and white photos from the Field Museum of Chicago taken in 1894 and feature Kwakiutl costumes, including a killer-whale mask and wasp mask.

The contact prints, taken by Boas, include images of native peoples, totems, houses, and landscape.

*Box 2* contains black and white photographs of Northwest Coast Indian artifacts, dated 1917 and 1922, with the note “Alert Bay, B.C., Provincial Museum, B.C.,” and envelopes with no photographs inside, possibly containing Bella Coola and Kwakiutl writing. There are photographs of the Haida Canoe at AMNH, and black and white postcards. Most of the postcards have the note “Copyright in Canada by B.W. Leeson.” Subjects of the postcards include Northwest Coast Natives, costumes, village scenes, and totems in Alert Bay, B.C.

There are black and white photos specifically marked from the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, taken by James Teit, 1901-1903. Teit was from Scotland’s Shetland Islands, immigrated to Canada, and married a local Thompson woman. Teit was hired by Boas for the Jesup North Pacific Expedition to collect artifacts and conduct research. The subjects of Teit’s photographs include two Chilcotin photos for Teit’s monograph, "Notes on the Chilcotin Indians", Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History 4 (7): 759-789, 1909, Chilcotin graves, snowshoes, and a sweathouse.

The field photographs document the Northwest Coast peoples and village scenes, ranging from 1868-1912. These include mounted photographs marked “copied by Thomas Lunt, Oct 1910 from transparency,” and several are credited as taken by Dossetter. Subjects include the Salish, Bella Coola, Kwakiutl, Mamalilikulla, Haida, and Tlingit peoples, and were taken in Fort Rupert, B.C., Alert Bay, B.C., areas near the Fraser River, and Queen Charlotte Island.

Some photos appear to have Hunt’s writing on the back. Photographers include Jessie Tarbox Beals, E.W. Merrill, Hastings, Richard Maynard, H.I. Smith, and Hunt. Beals is known as the first female photojournalist and lived in New York City. Merrill was a resident and commercial photographer in Sitka, Alaska. Maynard was a photographer and boot and shoe maker living in the Pacific Northwest, and also mined gold in the area, where he was reputed to have made a fortune.

Other photos include the mask of the Dzunukwa, called the geekumhl. In Kwakiutl mythology, the Dzunukwa is a spirit known to cause death and destruction, or bestow blessings, life, wealth, and knowledge, and is also known as a feared cannibal who feasts on children. This mask is
usually worn by the host to signify the end of a potlatch ceremony. Additionally, there are photographs of a potlatch in 1875 and Salish graveyards from 1868, both taken by Maynard.

The contact prints contain the handwritten note “Kwakiutl?, Prob. Fort Rupert. Small villages found by NW Coast material. 1930 (Oct.-Dec.) by F. Boas.”

**Box 3** contains black and white field photographs, black and white portraits, Indian grave postcards, a newspaper illustration, black and white photos of Kwakiutl objects from the NW Coast Collection, and contact prints. The field photographs were taken from 1878-1904, and include photos of totems belonging to the Kwakiutl and Haida people in Price Whales Island, Alaska, Queen Charlotte Islands, Kitwanga, B.C., Klukwan, Alaska, and Alert Bay, B.C. There are also village scenes including the Bella Coola and Haida people in Alert Bay and Fort Rupert, taken by Hunt and Maynard, and photographs of Thompson Indians, Babine Indians salmon fishing, a potlatch, a Kwakiutl healing ceremony, and other domestic scenes. Other photographers include Smith and Newcombe. One photo is mounted and marked “copied by Thomas Lunt, Oct 1910 from transparency.”

The black and white portraits are of Nootka Indians. Along with the Kwakiutl, these two tribes formed the Wakashan language family, which consists of seven different languages divided into Northern Wakashan (Kwakiutlan) languages and Southern Wakashan (Nootkan) languages.

The newspaper clipping illustration goes along with the black and white Indian grave postcards, captioned “Burial place and Idols of the Frazer River Indians,” dated May 1873.

The black and white photographs of the Kwakiutl objects from the NW Coast Collection were taken by R. Weber in the 1930s and contain explanations by Hunt, with additional comments from Boas on the backs.

The contact prints were taken between 1930-1931 and the main subject is of the Kwakiutl at Ft. Rupert. There is a set of contact prints captioned, “Geo. Hunt and wife and 2 nephews (Cadwallader) Julia Averkieva, Ft. Rupert, 1930.” Averkieva was a student of Boas’ and was the Director of North American Studies at the Institute of Ethnography in Moscow, and compiled an extensive collection of Kwakiutl string figures.

**Box 4** is divided into 13 folders and 5 envelopes and contains black and white portraits, field photographs, a business card, and reproduction of a painting. The mounted black and white portraits of Northwest Coast Indians include Nootka, Haida, and Chinook Indians. Some are marked by the photographer, Naegeli in New York City.

In Folder 5, many of the portraits have Boas’ handwritten captions on the back and are labeled as “Taken by The Hastings Art Studio.” Subjects of the portraits include tattooed Northwest Coast Natives.

Folder 7 contains a Carl Gunther business card with a posed Bella Coola Indian on the front.

Folder 9 contains a black and white photo of an 18th century sketch entitled, ‘Cheslakee’s Village in Johnstone’s Straits.’ The sketch was originally done by J. Sykes, circa 1798.
Envelope 15 includes a professional black and white photo of James Teit with three Thompson Indians, credited to The King Studio, Vancouver B.C. Thompson Indians were named after a river in the area they inhabited in the southern interior of British Columbia and call their entire tribe Ntlakyapamuk.

The field photographs include black and white photo of totems from Portland, Oregon, Wrangell, Alaska, and Howkan, Alaska, as well as photos of the Stikine River in British Columbia.

In Folder 8 the black and white photo of the painting of Haietlik in Nootka, B.C. may have been taken by Boas or Hunt. The Haietlik is a mythical water serpent of the Nootka.

Other photographers include S.A. Spencer, F.W. Carolyn, and Maynard. Envelope 17, circa 1911, contains 1 black and white reproduction of a painting with NW Indian activity, by Will S. Taylor.

**SEPARATED MATERIAL**

One envelope was removed from Box 1 and returned to PPC.A381. All materials are stamped, “Boas Collection 43.” The envelope contains 30 black and white photographs of unidentified African objects, 2 original prints by Jessie Tarbox Beals of Pygmies at the St. Louis Expo, 1904, 2 mounted photographs, and 1 autographed portrait and sleeve of Michael E. Anash, Gold Coast West Africa, taken at the Tuskegee Institute, Alabama.

**RELATED MATERIAL**

Related material can be found in the AMNH Anthropology Archives. The majority of the Anthropology collection is stamped “Boas Collection 43” with the exception of the Anthropometric data sheets.

Catalog/Call Number: PH 1/92 contains 71 photographs from Boas’ personal collection. Photos in this collection were all taken by Jessie Tarbox Beals, Press Photographer, St. Louis, Missouri.

Catalog/Call Number: PH 1/93 contains 265 photographs, 21 postcards, and 1 illustration from Boas’ personal collection. Collection includes photos of various tribes and locales, photos of objects in other collections, postcards, and miscellaneous other subjects.

Catalog/Call Number: .B637 includes artwork from Boas’ personal collection and also includes North American Indian data sheets collected under Boas’ direction, 1891-1902 and Arctic and Siberian data sheets collected by Waldemar Jochelson.

**ACCESS CONDITIONS AND RESTRICTIONS**

Requests to use the collection should be made in advance to the Senior Special Collections Librarian, who may be contacted at 212-769-5420 or at speccol@amnh.org
PREFERRED CITATION

SOURCE OF ACQUISITION
Transferred from the Department of Anthropology in 1992. Part of this collection was found in Dr. Stanley Freed’s office by Stacey Marcus in 1989 while preparing the Chiefly Feast exhibit and catalog.

SUBJECTS

PERSONAL NAMES
Averkieva, Iuliiia Pavlovna.
Beals, Jessie Tarbox.
Boas, Franz, 1858-1942.
Dossetter, Edward.
Hunt, George.
Newcombe, C. F. (Charles Frederick), 1851-1924.
Smith, H.I.
Teit, James Alexander, 1864-1922.

CORPORATE NAMES
British Columbia Provincial Museum.
Chicago Natural History Museum. (formerly Field Museum of Natural History)

EXPEDITIONS
Jesup North Pacific Expedition (1897-1902)

TOPICAL TERMS
Bella Coola Indians.
Chinook Indians.
Haida Indians.
Kwakiutl Indians.
Ntlakyapamuk Indians.
Potlatch.
Tattooing.
Tlingit Indians.
Totems.
Nootka Indians.
Salish Indians.
Indians of North America -- British Columbia.
Indians of North America -- Northwest Coast of North America.

**GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS (LOC)**
Alert Bay (B.C.)
Prince of Wales Island (Alaska)
Sitka (Alaska)
Wrangell (Alaska)
Haida Gwaii (B.C.)
Kluckwan (Alaska)
Stikine River (B.C. and Alaska)

**GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS (TGN)**
Port Essington
Fort-Rupert
Kitwanga

**UNCONTROLLED**
Carolyn, F.W.
Gunther, Carl
Hastings, Oregon C.
Maynard, Richard
Merrill, E.W.
Spencer, S.A.
Sykes, J.
Boas Expedition to Northwest Territories
Mamalilikula Indians
Chiloctin Indians
Harbledown Island (B.C.)
Kingcome Inlet (B.C.)
CONTAINER LIST

Box 1: 205 photos, 10 postcards, 6 contact prints

1. 60 black and white portraits. Subjects of these portraits include several portraits of Vancouver Indians. Several photos are specified as being taken in Fort Rupert, B.C. by Oregon C. Hastings and George Hunt in 1894. Portrait of a Thompson Indian woman in British Columbia, and a portrait of a Haida Indian photographed in the Haida village of Masset at Port Essington, highlighting chest tattoos. 1894.

2. 140 field photographs. Documenting houses, totems, landscapes, village scenes, and native people in the Northwest Coast. Locations include Fort Rupert B.C., Alert Bay, B.C., and Harbledown Island, B.C. Subjects include Boas’ potlatch, Kwakiutl dancers, Bob Harris and wife, George Hunt and wife, and the famous Kwakiutl raven mask. Photographers include George Hunt, Oregon C. Hastings, and C.F. Newcombe. Many of the photographs have original writing on the back. 1894-1921.

3. 10 postcards. Subjects include Kwakiutl and Bella Coola. 1907-1917.

4. 1 photograph is noted as published in House and Garden magazine and features Kwakiutl ghost puppets, taken in Kingcome Inlet, B.C. 1943.

5. 4 black and white photos from the Field Museum of Chicago feature Kwakiutl costumes, including a killer-whale mask and wasp mask. 1894.

6. 6 contact prints. Taken by Boas, include prints of native peoples, totems, houses, and landscape. No Date.

Box 2: 196 photos, 16 postcards, 3 envelopes, 25 contact prints

1. 4 black and white photographs of Northwest Coast Indian artifacts, with the note “Alert Bay, B.C., Provincial Museum, B.C.” 1917-1922.

2. 3 envelopes with no photographs inside, possibly containing Bella Coola and Kwakiutl writing. No Date.

3. 2 photographs of the Haida Canoe at AMNH. No Date.

4. 16 black and white postcards, most have the note “Copyright in Canada by B.W. Leeson.” Subjects of the postcards include Northwest Coast Natives, costumes, village scenes, and totems in Alert Bay, B.C. No Date.

5. 4 black and white photos specifically marked from the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, and taken by James Teit. The subjects of Teit’s photographs include two Chilcotin photos for Teit’s monograph. (“Notes on the Chilcotin Indians”, Memoirs of the American

6. 186 field photographs, documenting the Northwest Coast peoples and village scenes. These include 7 mounted photographs marked “copied by Thomas Lunt, Oct 1910 from transparency,” and several are credited as taken by Edward Dossetter. Subjects include the Salish, Bella Coola, Kwakiutl, Mamalilikula, Haida, and Tlingit peoples, and were taken in Fort Rupert, B.C., Alert Bay, B.C., areas near the Fraser River, and Queen Charlotte Island. Some photos appear to have Hunt’s writing on the back. Photographers include Jessie Tarbox Beals, E.W. Merrill, Oregon C. Hastings, Richard Maynard, H.I. Smith, C.F. Newcombe, and George Hunt. 1868-1912.


Box 3: 199 photos, 5 postcards, 1 newspaper illustration, 121 contact prints

1. 180 black and white field photographs. Include photos of totems belonging to the Kwakiutl and Haida people in Price Whales Island Alaska, Queen Charlotte Islands, Kitwanga, B.C., Kluwan, Alaska, and Alert Bay, B.C. There are also village scenes including the Bella Coola and Haida people in Alert Bay and Fort Rupert, taken by George Hunt and Richard Maynard, and photographs of Thompson Indians, Babine Indians salmon fishing, a potlatch, a Kwakiutl healing ceremony, and other domestic scenes. Other photographers include H.I. Smith and C.F. Newcombe. 1878-1904.

2. 8 black and white portraits of Nootka Indians. No Date.

3. 5 black and white Indian Grave Postcards. No Date.

4. 1 newspaper illustration, captioned “Burial place and Idols of the Frazer River Indians.” 1873.

5. 11 black and white photographs of the Kwakiutl objects from the NW Coast Collection were taken by R. Weber and contain explanations by George Hunt, with additional comments from Boas on the backs. 1930s.

6. 121 contact prints. The main subject is of the Kwakiutl at Ft. Rupert. There is a set of 14 contact prints captioned, “Geo. Hunt and wife and 2 nephews (Cadwallader) Julia Averkieva, Ft. Rupert, 1930.” 1930-1931.

Box 4: 53 photos, 1 business card, 1 painting

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<th>Box</th>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Portraits of Tattooed Northwest Indians. 1890s.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Portraits of Tattooed Northwest Indians. 1890s.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Indian Portraits. British Columbia or Alaska. Circa 1890s.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>B/W photos of Indians in British Columbia. Circa 1890s.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Mounted b/w photos of Indians. British Columbia. No Date.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Portraits of Northwest Indians. Photos of totems, Northwest. 1890s.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Carl Gunther business card w/ posed Indian on front – Bella Coola. Circa 1880.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>“Painting of the Haietlik” Nootka, B.C. 1896.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Photo of an 18th century sketch entitled, “Cheslakee’s Village in Johnstone’s Straits.” 1943.</td>
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<td>Mounted b/w photo of chief’s house. 1870.</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>B/W photos of totems. Circa 1890s.</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>B/W photo of tattooed Haida or Nootka Indian from Northwest. 1890s.</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>B/W photos of totems, Indian tribal ceremony, portrait of Indians or Eskimos. 1890s.</td>
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<td>B/W photos of S.S. Dirigo on Stickine River, British Columbia. 1901.</td>
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<td>B/W photos of Northwest Indians, sites, and sculptures. Circa 1890s.</td>
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<td>B/W photos of Northwest Indian home and totems. Circa 1890s.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Reproduction of painting w/ Northwest Indian activity. Circa 1911.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>B/W photos of Chinook Indians. 1890s.</td>
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