

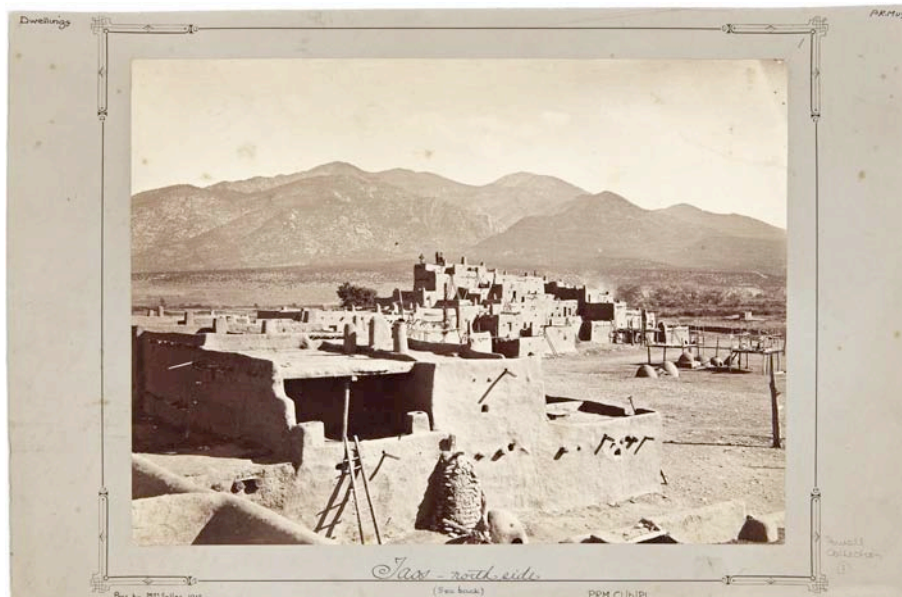
**Among the Pueblos:**

**John K. Hillers (1843–1925), Photographer of the American Southwest**

Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford

22 November 2010 – 27 March 2011

This exhibition presents eighteen original albumen prints by John Karl Hillers (1843–1925), pioneer photographer of the American Southwest. Born in Brinkum near Hanover, Hillers emigrated with his family to the United States in the 1850s and spent much of the next decade enlisted in the Fourth Artillery Regiment, seeing limited action during the Civil War. After his discharge from the army he worked a succession of jobs, including a stint as a boatman on the Colorado River, and from 1879 was employed as a photographer for the United States Geological Survey and newly established Bureau of Ethnology. His remarkable photographs of Zuni and Hopi pueblos in New Mexico and Arizona are among the earliest visual records made in the region, and they remain a reference point for the study of these cultures, documenting the numerous settlements and their inhabitants at the time of the ‘second opening’ of the West.



1998.163.11

Multi-storeyed houses in Taos Pueblo, a settlement which has been inhabited for over six centuries and is the northernmost of the Rio Grande pueblos.

*Photograph by John Hillers. Taos, New Mexico, United States of America. 1880.*



Portrait of a thirteen-year-old Hopi girl named 'Modisi', pictured sitting in front of a Navajo blanket.

*Photograph by John Hillers. Sichomovi, Arizona, United States of America. 1879.*

1998.273.20

Portrait of an elderly man named Wahu Tota who, according to James Stevenson's original documentation (prepared *circa* 1885), 'is supposed to have been the last of the living Pecos who formerly inhabited the ruined town on the Rio Pecos, some miles east of Santa Fe. He was residing with the Jemez people when the picture was taken.'

*Photograph by John Hillers. Jemez, New Mexico, United States of America. Circa 1879.*

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1998.192.13

The plaza of Sandia Pueblo, with a wooden cart (known locally as a *carreta*) in the foreground. 'As the village is located in a very fertile portion of the Rio Grande valley the inhabitants are devoted to pastoral and agricultural pursuits.'

*Photograph by John Hillers. Sandia, New Mexico, United States of America. 1880.*

Hillers was a self-taught photographer who learned the techniques of the craft when he accompanied John Wesley Powell on his 1871 expedition to map the Colorado River. An important scientific figure and a powerful patron, Powell subsequently became, in 1879, the first Director of the Bureau of Ethnology – established at the Smithsonian Institution 'to organize anthropological research in America' – and he took on Hillers as a staff photographer at a salary of \$1,800 per year. (Two years later Hillers was transferred to the payroll of the U.S. Geological Survey, the Directorship of which Powell had by this time also been given.) Employed alongside the collector James Stevenson – and also anthropologist Frank Hamilton Cushing, who lived for five years with the Zuni – Hillers was charged to make an extensive photographic record of the historic pueblos and the archaeological ruins of the Southwest. Using the heavy and unwieldy equipment of the day, and recording his images on large glass plates, Hillers produced many scenes which have proved invaluable for generations of scholars and have at the same time exerted a strong pull on the American imagination. The mounted prints and two pottery vessels exhibited here were sent in June 1885 by John Wesley Powell himself to Professors Henry Moseley and Edward Burnett Tylor in Oxford, who later donated or bequeathed them to the Pitt Rivers Museum.

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