

JOURNEY THROUGH THE DESERT - THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED  
Palm Springs Art Museum in Palm Desert  
March 17 through July 29, 2018



Stuart Klipper, American, born 1941

*Intersection, H'ways 166/118, Jeff Davis Co., Texas* 28 Dec 2004. 2004

type c print

29 ¼ x 66" inches framed, Collection Palm Springs Art Museum, purchase with funds derived from a previous gift from Kirk and Anne Douglas (39-2006)

Co-curated by Christine Giles and Katherine Hough

- 50-60 Photographs drawn from the museum's Permanent Collection

Features the work of approximately 20 American photographers from early 20<sup>th</sup> century to 21<sup>st</sup> century including:

- Stephen H. Willard
- John Divola
- Lee Friedlander
- Mark Klett
- Michael McMillen
- Richard Misrach
- Mark Ruwedel

Themes: Organized into three major themes:

Land/Sky

Abandoned/Forgotten Places

Tracks in the Sand

The exhibition is not about the history of photography, but seeks to examine individual artist's distinct vision and their experience photographing the American deserts of the West .



*Self Portrait at Easel, Palm Springs Studio, circa 1935*

(X B32)

*Stephen Hallet Willard,*

Born in Illinois, 1894-1966, Died in Lone Pine, CA



*...silent, hot, and fierce.*



*“The desert, above all subjects in nature, contains, for me, some elements of spiritual quality which are not to be captured by a casual trip along paved highways where traffic passes every few minutes. The spirit of the subject is best felt miles away from any habitation or work of man, where the desert lives “silent, hot, and fierce.”*

Stephen H. Willard

Stephen H. Willard, American, 1894-1966. *Sand Dunes* (with Santa Rosa Mountains in the distance), 1925, gelatin silver print, (Willard No. 1206), Palm Springs Art Museum, gift of the San Diego Art Museum, © Palm Springs Art Museum (1-1985.1/X L33)

*While the Wind and Sands are Resting*, January, 1925, gelatin silver print. Palm Springs Art Museum, gift of Dr. Beatrice Willard, © Palm Springs Art Museum (Willard IB44/original negative VIII L12)

## The Hunter in Pursuit of the Extraordinary

At the early age of 17, the desert had captivated Stephen H. Willard and he became “as the hunter in pursuit of the extraordinary.” “The eternal stillness of the place!” The sense of desolation and of illimitable distance; of space; the haunting feeling of mystery over it all. These were the things that made a life-long impression.”



Timothy O'Sullivan on desert sand dunes about 1865 and Willard ca. 1920 and his Chalmers with photography and camping gear

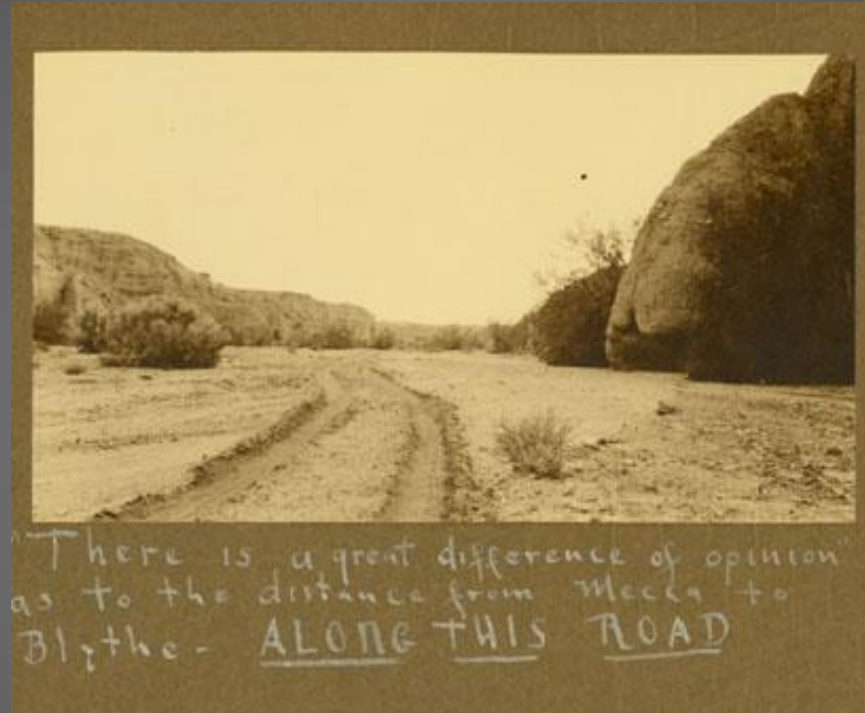
# Stephen H. Willard Photography Collection & Archive

1. Photo Albums of Willard's Desert Road Trips

2. Stephen H. Willard, "Desert Photography," published in *The Complete Photographer*, 1942.

A technical treatise on "how to photography in the desert," including advice ranging from what photographic equipment to use to treating your automobile as a vital part of your field equipment, because "If you are far out in the real desert it may stand between you and death."

# Willard Photo Album



“There is a great difference of opinion as to the distance from Mecca to Blythe – ALONG THIS ROAD”

(IIR 104a)



Stephen H. Willard on horseback in the desert with pack horse, 1920,  
Album page: gelatin silver print  
(I1K153)

Stephen H. Willard with Camera and Tripod, ca. 1918  
Willard II P3F

Motorcycle, 122e



By 1942, when Willard published his article on “Desert Photography” in the *Complete Photographer*, he had traveled over 300,000 miles, hunting desert pictures by automobile, horseback, and on foot.

Trip to Morongo Pass April 1914



a



b

Camp at "Windy Bend" White Water River

The White Water, a River of the Desert



c

c



d

White Water River and Mt. San Jacinto



Upper White Water from Red Mountain

## Trip to Morongo Pass, April 1914

photo album page, gelatin silver prints

Willard IIR66a-e; IIR67



In Dry Morongo Canyon

*Remember that the desert is a terrible enemy.  
Do not trifle with it.*



*Over the Sand Hills to Yuma before the days of the Highway - 35  
miles of Hell.  
1917*

II A 17



1917 - 36 X 4 tires

*(changing tires before the demountable rim days)*

*Changing tires before the demountable rim days*

IIA9



1929 - On edge of Soda Lake



1920-3775 am) (Mountain pass near Indio 27 miles (R. W. S.))

- a. On edge of Soda Lake - 1929.
- b. A mountain pass near Indio  
27 miles of this - 1920.

photo album page, gelatin silver print  
Gift of Dr. Beatrice Willard  
Willard IIA9

II A6



Jan. 1920 - 37X5 tires  
Death Valley

Death Valley, 1920  
photo album page, gelatin silver print  
Gift of Dr. Beatrice Willard  
Willard IIA6



C.P. Goerz 8 x 10 Format Bellow Camera, 1901-1925  
54-1999.21



“Regarding cameras, I believe most landscape workers will agree with me that there is ***nothing to equal the old view or stand outfit for serious work.***”

“The ability to ***compose the scene on a groundglass*** of sufficient size to give one an idea of the finished picture is a great aid in producing an effective composition. ***Almost all my best pictures have been made with the 8 x 10 camera.***” (Stephen H. Willard, “Desert Photography,” p. 1240)

“I have never been able to equal the ***quality of a contact print*** either by way of an enlargement or an enlarged negative. Secondly the ease of making contact prints as against enlargements is a consideration

***“A speck of dust*** which would be a serious defect in a miniature negative is hardly a factor at all with 8 x 10.”



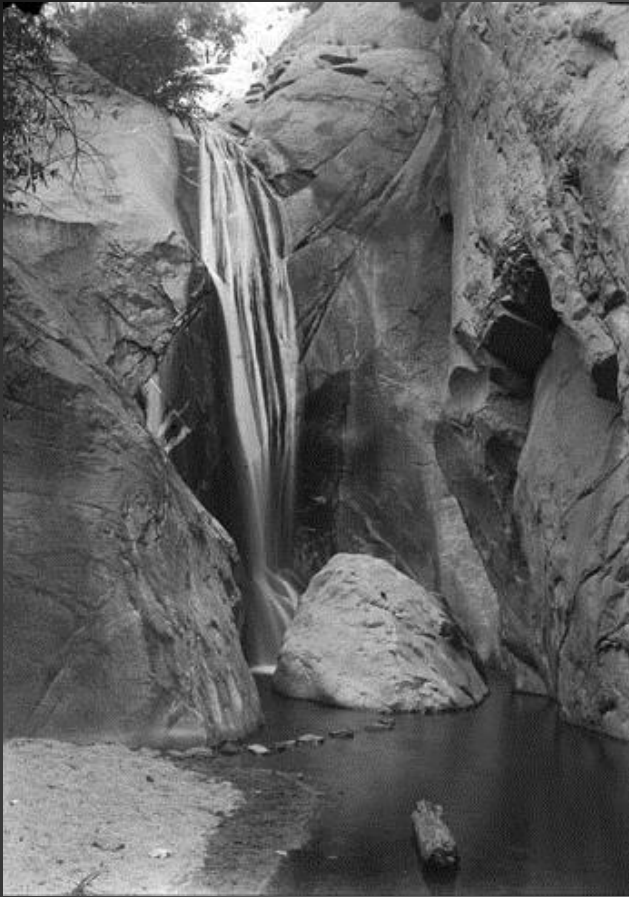
*West Fork of Palm Canyon, 1935*

gelatin silver print, (No. 1096)  
gift of Dr. Beatrice Willard  
IIV2, (original negative XL26)





*Mono Lake (with Tufa)*, May 1951  
gelatin silver print, (No. 3130)  
IH5, (original negative XL32)



Tahquitz Falls, ca. 1915

Original negative: VIII F11; ref: Album IIR 94c)

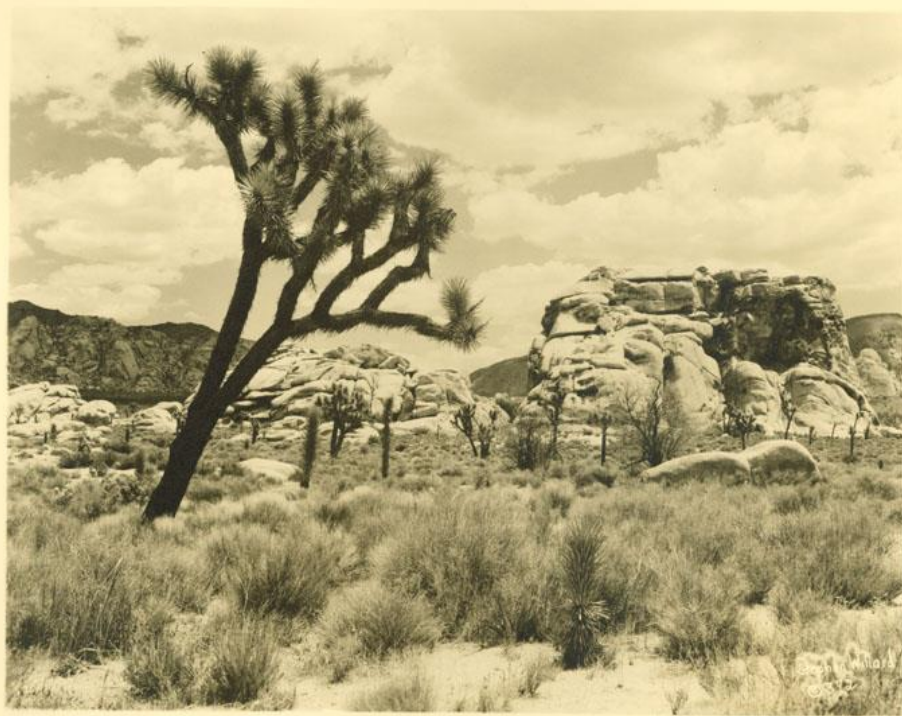


Harmony Borax, 1925

VIII P9

*“I am essentially a realist and believe, as far as possible, in straight photography....On the subject of definition as applied to the desert ... what other means than perfectly sharp definitions can apply in a country where distant mountain ranges are bitten out as sharply thirty of forty miles away as right at hand?”*

(Stephen H. Willard, “Desert Photography,” p. 1238)



*Untitled* (Joshua Tree and Rock Formations), n.d.  
gelatin silver print, (No. 372)  
IC19



Stephen H. Willard  
The Sea of Desolation  
VIII L3



Richard Misrach  
American, born 1949  
*Stranded Rowboat, Salton Sea*. 1983, printed 2005  
chromogenic print, edition 19/25  
(105-2006)

Martin Stupich

American, born 1949

*Drowned Desert Elk, Encrusted Alkali, Red Desert, Wyoming.*

2004 , pigment inkjet print

(55-2006)



*Stretches of truly pristine landscape face extinction at the same rate as other parts of the natural world. . . . With the passing of any beloved thing, or dear friend, one of the few ways to understand and bear the loss is to have a record—a photograph, a memento. The Red Desert Project aspires to that end.” Martin Stupich*



Stephen H. Willard, *At the Edge of the Barrens*, ca. 1920,  
Hand painted photograph. XIX B1

## Land and Sky



Stephen H. Willard, American, 1894-1966. *Sand Dunes* (with Santa Rosa Mountains in the distance), 1925, gelatin silver print, (Willard No. 1206), Palm Springs Art Museum, gift of the San Diego Art Museum, © Palm Springs Art Museum (1-1985.1/X L33)

Wanda Hammerbeck  
American, born 1945  
*The Vulnerability of Desert Space Incorrectly Perceived as Empty.*  
circa 1992  
type c print  
(59-2006)



# The End



VIII G16  
Stephen H. Willard, Skeleton, Painted Desert, ca. 1920



Martin Stupich, Coyote Running, Red  
Desert, Wyoming, 2003

