ESSAYS: PHOTOGRAPHY, TRAVEL, AND TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHY

JOHN HENRY HAYNES’S TRAVELS AND PHOTOGRAPHS OF ANATOLIA IN 1884-1887

Robert Ousterhout, University of Pennsylvania

The career of archaeologist and photographer John Henry Haynes (1849-1910) is all but unknown today. An orphaned farm boy from upstate Massachusetts, Haynes studied classics at Williams College and subsequently worked briefly as a high school principal. A chance encounter in 1880 led him to join the first American archaeological expedition to the eastern Mediterranean. He was apparently recruited on behalf of the recently founded Archaeological Institute of America by its president, Charles Eliot Norton of Harvard, with whom he maintained a lengthy correspondence. When his team was unable to obtain a permit to excavate on Crete, Haynes went to Athens, where he learned photography by working as the assistant to William J. Stillman, the erstwhile leader of the failed Cretan mission. Haynes’s engagement as an archaeological photographer began almost immediately thereafter, at the Assos excavations of 1881-83, the first American venture into classical archaeology. Rather than return to the United States at the end of the season, Haynes found employment at American mission schools in the Ottoman Empire, first at Robert College in Constantinople, where he taught Latin and English, and subsequently at Central Turkey College in Aintab (Gaziantep). Through the 1880s, Haynes traveled with a camera, documenting his journeys through Anatolia, Syria, and Mesopotamia. He joined the Wolfe Expedition of 1884-85, an archaeological reconnaissance mission to
Mesopotamia, out of which grew the University of Pennsylvania excavations at Nippur (now in southern Iraq), which Haynes oversaw, first as business manager, later as field director. He also served as the first U.S. Consul in Baghdad (1888-92).

With the exception of select archaeological photographs from Assos and Nippur, the work of Haynes is all but unknown. After years of isolation at Nippur, working under harsh and hostile conditions, much of the time alone, Haynes slowly came unraveled. In the end, his accomplishments were discredited by the University of Pennsylvania’s eminent Babylonian scholar Hermann Hilprecht. The absentee director of the Nippur expedition, Hilprecht also claimed sole responsibility for Haynes’s discoveries—notably the famed “Temple Library” of cuneiform tablets. His career in shambles, Haynes succumbed to mental illness, ending his life a broken man.

He was, nonetheless, an accomplished and prolific photographer: several hundred unpublished photographs survive in the archives of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology and in the Aga Khan photographic archive at Harvard University—much of the latter purchased on Ebay. The surviving photographs are principally from the excavations at Assos and Nippur, as well as journeys Haynes undertook in the summers of 1884 and 1887 across Phrygia, Lycaonia, Cappadocia, Cilicia, and into Syria. The latter represent the earliest photographs for the many of the inland sites. These are accompanied by journals recording his impressions of people and landscapes, as well as the mundane details of travel. Although he has left quite a paper trail, Haynes was not the most compelling of diarists: he will belabor the less-than-satisfactory conditions of lodgings, the weather, or the best way to pack glass negatives. Haynes is maddenly brief concerning the sites he visited, presumably relying on his photographs to fill in the details. He often forgets to note placenames, and his site descriptions are vague at best. All the same, his photographs can be impressive.
Haynes seems to have learned more than just photographic technique from Stillman, who had been trained as a painter of picturesque landscapes by Frederic Church. Stillman later traveled through Europe with John Ruskin and became known as the “American Pre-Raphaelite.” Although his personality was much more subdued than that of his teacher, Haynes’s compositions often mirror Stillman’s. While in Athens in 1880-81, Haynes had assisted Stillman as he prepared his second Acropolis folio. Stillman’s first folio of 1869 had been a great success, but following the suicide of his first wife and the death of his beloved son—all part of a melodramatic artistic career punctuated with episodes of hysterical blindness—Stillman was monomaniacally attempting to recreate the exact framing, vantage points, and camera angles of his original photographs. This, I believe, had a lasting impact on Haynes’s own photography. For example, the dramatic angles, high vantage point, and spatial recession in Haynes’s photos of the Sultan Han seem to echo those employed by Stillman at the Parthenon (figs. 1-2). The dramatic isolation of monuments and figures within the landscape is also comparable: his views of Eflatunpinar compare nicely with Stillman’s views of Athens (figs. 3-4). So too Haynes’s striking contrasts of solids and voids matches Stillman’s: Haynes’s view of the massive türbe at Kayseri set against wispy tombstones and a view into limitless space may be seen side-by-side with Stillman’s view of the Parthenon stylobate (figs. 5-6). Several views of Athens in Haynes’s possession came into the collections at Penn and Harvard, and while these match published photographs by Stillman, they are unlabeled and might actually be the work of either man. While Haynes may be regarded as the father of American archaeological photography—that is, the first to systematically use a camera as a tool for site documentation—there is always an element of compositional artistry in his work. In sum, from his short apprenticeship in Athens, Haynes developed the discerning eye of a picturesque landscape painter.
Haynes’s first season at Assos did not turn out as planned, for he was unable to obtain the necessary photographic plates and ended up working as an archaeologist instead. Despite dissension within the team and the unprofessional behavior of J.T. Clarke, Haynes seems to have loved the experience of archaeology and styled himself an archaeologist (rather than a photographer) for the rest of his career. Properly equipped, he photographed in earnest the second season, struggling to perfect his darkroom techniques under challenging circumstances. His letters from this period are filled with apologies for what he viewed as less-than-satisfactory results.

Following the end of the schoolyear at Robert College in the summer of 1884, Haynes met his friend, the noted epigraphist and historical geographer John Robert Sitlington Sterrett (1851-1914) for an excursion across central Anatolia. The photography was bankrolled by the Archaeological Institute of America. Haynes and Sterrett knew each other from the excavations at Assos, where Sterrett had studied the inscriptions. Immediately following their journey together, the two went on the Wolfe Expedition to Mesopotamia, and they stayed in regular contact for years afterward. Immediately before their rendezvous in June 1884, Sterrett had been exploring the hinterland of Izmir/Smyrna with the historical geographer Sir William Ramsay—which is to say, Sterrett had better connections and better academic credentials than Haynes.

From Akşehir Haynes and Sterrett traveled to the Hittite shrine at Eflatunpınar and the Seljuk capital at Konya, and Haynes took numerous photographs at both sites. These are the earliest photos of Eflatunpınar, and they may be the earliest at Konya as well. At the former, he captures the romantic austerity of the isolated setting, while at Konya, he records countless details no longer evident or much altered, such as the long since destroyed Seljuk Kiosk below the Aleddin Keykubad Mosque, as well as a variety of details of the mosque itself, its portals, and the numerous spoliated Byzantine mullions (fig. 7). The view of the Ince Minare Medresesi
shows the minaret before its partial destruction. It is a view very typical of Haynes: high vantage point with a view into a barren landscape (fig. 8). At the Sultan Han, he did much the same as he composed his photographs, favoring high vantage points, dramatic angles that emphasize spatial recession, and isolated, posed figures.

The two then travelled across Cappadocia to Kayseri, where they visited the American Missionaries at Talas, and then continued eastward, as Sterrett hunted for Roman milestones and ancient inscriptions. They traveled as far east as Malatya, visiting the ancient lions at Asta and Aslantaş (fig. 9) before returning by way of Kayseri across Cappadocia, and then by way of Boğazköy to Ankara, where their journey effectively terminated. In his “Preliminary Report on an Epigraphical Journey” published the following year, Sterrett notes that Haynes had taken 320 photos during their travels together.

Haynes was particularly captivated by Cappadocia, visiting the region on both excursions (fig. 10). He took dozens of photographs in the areas around Selime in 1884, where Haynes and Sterrett seem to have been the first westerners to record a visit to the site. They also visited the Göreme, and Soğanlı Valleys, following in the footsteps of William Hamilton, who recorded his travels through the region in the 1830s. Haynes seems to have been more interested in the curious landforms than the architecture. Still, his photos are valuable documents. For example, the façade of the Bezirhane in Avıclar has subsequently collapsed, and Tomb 10 at the same site has been disfigured by erosion (figs. 11-12).

In his journal, Haynes recorded his first impressions of the region at Selime, where he slept on the roof of his lodgings and seems to have been too excited to sleep:

Here with the bright moon light to make night seem like day one feels rather like studying and admiring these wonderful abodes of past generations than like closing his wondering eyes in dreamy slumber, and yet it seems well nigh impossible to quiet one’s excited feelings with such surroundings. Altogether these rock formations and the multitude of excavated dwellings … appear to me
now the most wonderful thing I have ever been permitted to rest my eyes upon in all my travels and among all the wonderfully interesting things it has been my good fortune to see in the land of wonders.” (Journal 3, 1884)

He continues in this vein for several more pages, as he accepts the opinion that these were the dwellings of Christians fleeing persecution. Although he contemplated writing a book about the volcanic region, this never came to fruition. In a letter to his family in October 1885 he writes:

I am unfortunate enough to have more reputation as a photographer than I want: for my friends call upon me pretty frequently and I have in this way done a good deal but I do not like it. It makes a drudge of me and unfits me for any literary work. I ought moreover to find time for study and to work up into a treatise last summer’s investigations among the cave dwellers of Asia Minor. But as yet have not found the requisite time to do so. Pres. Norton urges me to write up some of my experiences for the ‘American Journal of Archaeology’ and I ought to do it or give up archaeological work forever.

In 1892 Haynes published a folio of photographs taken during a journey in the summer of 1887. Judging from its general obscurity, it was not a commercial success. In it he included forty-seven views of Cappadocia, writing in the brief introduction:

Who were the first occupants of these wonderful caves we do not know; but from the appearance of the excavations themselves we judge them to have been made in very ancient times by a race of people of whom we know very little. Whatever we may think of the origins of these peculiar habitations it is certain from the churches and chapels of the Byzantine period that they were once occupied by Christians. It is also reasonable to suppose that the persecutions of the Roman emperors drove these early Christians from the coasts of Asia Minor to this obscure region where they could live in concealment in these abandoned dwellings.

Many of his photos from the 1884 trip seem to have ended up as the property of his traveling companion, Sterrett, who appears in many of his photographs. Sterrett gives a good sense of what Haynes’s unwritten book might have been like in a 1919 article in the National Geographic, entitled “The Cone Dwellers of Asia Minor: A Primitive People Who Live in Nature-Made Apartment Houses Fashioned by Volcanic Violence and Trickling Streams.” In it he compares the inhabitants of Cappadocia to primitive, uncivilized cavemen, drawing
comparisons from ancient texts, such as Diodorus Siculus’s fanciful account of the races of the extreme south, the Ethiopians and the Troglydotes, which he quotes at length: they drink blood, run around naked, kill the aged and infirm, and make merry at funerals. Herodotus, Zenophon, and the Old Testament are quoted to similar effect. Moreover, Sterrett mocks the credulity of earlier European travelers to the region, and in the end he supposes it is a Bronze Age settlement with a few Byzantine intrusions. The article is illustrated with no less than fifty-two of Haynes’s photos, from both trips—alas, all credited to Sterrett. The article appeared several years after the deaths of both men, so Sterrett may not be at fault, but it seems to have been Haynes’s fate that his work would be credited to others. We can be certain that these are his photos, because they match those he kept in his possession and those that appeared in his 1892 folio, and Haynes’s journal regularly records Sterrett going ahead to find inscriptions while Haynes stayed behind to photograph the monuments and landscapes. Viewed more positively, Haynes’s photographs could make a splash more than thirty years after he took them.

Haynes’s tour of 1887, apparently supported by William R. Ware of Columbia University, was specifically for the purpose of photographing archaeological sites, revisiting several locations from his 1884 tour, including Eflatun Pınar, Cappadocia, and Kayseri; I suspect the folio he produced includes images gathered on both journeys. There was growing interest at the time in the Hittites and Phrygians and other obscure early peoples of Anatolia. This trip Haynes took measurements at many of the monuments he visited, as at Eflatun Pınar, where he notes simply, “Took photos and measured the huge pile. Found it difficult to climb to the top and get down safely.” Later he realized he had forgotten some of the measurements but determined these could be scaled from the recorded measurements and the photograph—that is, he realized the photogrammetric potential of the camera (figs. 13-14). At the rock relief at Ivriz it was necessary to construct a sacaffold in order to photograph and measure the sculptures; he reports
the god stands thirteen feet, eleven inches tall. At the German excavations at Zincirli, he simply left his rifle leaning against the relief for scale in an artfully composed photograph: note how the warrior on the orthostat block immediately behind brandishes a weapon similar to Haynes’s rifle (fig. 15). At Aslantaş, his traveling companion is positioned on horseback to echo the pose of the Hittite lions (fig. 9).

The ultimate goal of Haynes’s 1887 trip was the highland of Phrygia, to record the rock-cut monuments around the so-called City of Midas. Photographs of the area had been requested specifically by his patron, and Haynes often cut his journey short elsewhere to hasten toward Phrygia. Most of these monuments survive in more-or-less the condition in which Haynes recorded them.

Not so Binbirkilise. Haynes’s photographs from the so-called “Thousand and One Churches” at Karadağ are perhaps his most valuable. The early Byzantine site in Lycaonia is best known from the photographs by Gertrude Bell, who studied the site with Sir William Ramsay in 1907. But an earthquake seems to have leveled many of the buildings in the lower city sometime between Haynes’s and Bell’s visits. Thus Haynes’s photographs clarify numerous aspects of these buildings unknown to Bell. Haynes’s photograph of churches 8 and 13 (fig. 16) is taken from the southeast rather than the northwest, as in Bell’s view. By the time Bell had arrived on the scene, no. 8 had fallen but was still recognizable, while no. 13 was nothing but a pile of rubble, so much so that Bell didn’t bother to record it. Haynes’s view is our only photographic record of no. 13. Church no. 8 has long been of interest to scholars because of its similarities to the martyrium described by Gregory of Nyssa. Haynes’s photograph of no. 8 confirms that this was, indeed, an impressive building, and typical of Haynes, his traveling companions are posed in the windows.
Sadly, Haynes had to cut short his visit to Binbirkilise on 3 August 1887, having photographed only four or five of its buildings. He wrote in a letter to Ware, two years later: “Since there was no water within several miles and the sun was very hot I could only take a few photographs as speedily as possible and hasten away to join the caravan.” More critically, it seems, there was also no food for the horses.

Haynes’s letter stands as something of a swansong for his travel photography. He envisioned a folio of images, which two years after the trip he was still unable to produce. Moreover, Haynes realized that the rapid advances in scholarship were passing him by. “Neither money nor leisure nor books are at my command. In these days of the rapid growth of scholarship … to write anything of permanent value, one must consult the writings of others.” In an unpublished letter of March 17, 1886, he begs Brother Peet at the Bible House in Constantinople to sell him Hamilton’s *Researches in Asia Minor*. Apparently he was unsuccessful—the book is still in the Bible House library collection. By 1889, Haynes had become drawn into the difficult, isolated, and problematic excavations at Nippur, and these consumed—or some might argue, destroyed—the remainder of his career.

When Hilprecht’s infamous book, *Explorations in Bible Lands during the 19th Century*, was published in 1903, one of Haynes striking excavation photographs appeared uncredited as the frontispiece (fig. 17), but by that time Haynes was out of the picture, institutionalized in Massachusetts. I suspect Haynes never knew that his frontispiece image was subsequently used by Osman Hamdi Bey as the basis for his most uncharacteristic painting. Inspired by a romantic landscape painter at the beginning of his career, Haynes’s photograph in turn inspired another romantic to paint a most unusual landscape.

Distracted by his lack of resources at Aintab and his responsibilities at Baghdad and Nippur, Haynes’s folio appeared finally in 1892, but it never saw wide distribution. While the
Penn Museum does not have a copy—the Harvard Semitic Museum owns two copies, now housed in the Aga Khan photographic archives—the University of Pennsylvania Museum archives has the preliminary list of the captions in Haynes’s handwriting. Intriguingly, a second list of captions exists for archaeological sites in Syria, primarily from the “dead cities” of the Limestone Massif, but I have found almost no photographs by Haynes of the sites on this list. The UPM archives has a collection of photographs by Felix Bonfils of the region, apparently purchased by Haynes and filed with his photographs, but Bonfils’s numbers do not correspond to Haynes’s list. Haynes’s 1892 album ends with views of Qalat Saman and Aleppo—sites that were not on his recorded 1887 itinerary. Haynes passed through Syria in 1885 on the Wolfe Expedition and could have photographed the region then, but it was also easily accessible from Aintab, so he had ample opportunity while employed there. The more interesting question is what became of the photographs. Haynes often had financial support from the AIA, and there is a long correspondence with Charles Eliot Norton on the subject. I suspect that copies of his photographs went to prominent university collections, besides those at Penn and Harvard, both acquired long after Haynes’s death. Some may still exist but remain unidentified, owing to the general obscurity of the photographer, who died in 1910, “Broken in Body and Spirit,” as his obituary read in the North Adams Evening Transcript of 29 June 1910, unrecognized for his many accomplishments. Ironically, Haynes saw himself primarily as an archaeologist, a profession in which he was always overshadowed by others. After Nippur, his important photographic work goes almost unmentioned, but this represents his most important legacy. On the centenary of his death, it is our hope that the exhibition of his work is just the first step in the rediscovery of the father of American archaeological photography.
Bibliography


Illustrations

(all photos by Haynes unless otherwise noted)

Figure 1: Aksaray (near), Sultan Han, interior of hall (UPM archives)
Figure 2: W. Stillman: Athens, Parthenon frieze (courtesy of the Gennadius Library, Athens)
Figure 3: Eflatunpınar, Hittite shrine seen from a distance (Harvard Aga Khan archives)
Figure 4: W. Stillman: Acropolis seen from a distance
(courtesy of the Gennadius Library, Athens)
Figure 5: Kayseri, türbe and cemetery (UPM archives)
Figure 6: W. Stillman: Athens, steps of the Parthenon (UPM archives)
Figure 7: Konya, Alevdin Keykubad Mosque and Seljuk kiosk (UPM archives)
Figure 8: Konya, Ince Minare Medresesi (UPM archives)
Figure 9: Aslantaş, lion (UPM archives)

Figure 10: Cappadocia, riders in a field south of Göreme (UPM archives)
Figure 11: Göreme / Avcılar, Bezirhane Harvard Aga Khan archives

Figure 12: Göreme / Avcılar, Tomb 10 (Harvard Aga Khan archives)
Figure 13: Eflatunpınar, Hittite shrine seen from a distance (Harvard Aga Khan archives)
Monday Aug. 5, 1887

An awful wind made the tent an uncomfortable place to sleep in. Could not sleep until it died down early in the morning. Hastily took the necessary photographs, tent, etc., in the baggage. Massage and I followed, overtaking him at home. Arrived at Tophet about 3 p.m. A stream half as large and strong as that at Lysis makes green banks frequented by a multitude of cattle, mares, with their colts; sheep and goats. I sort the photos and measured the large pile. Found it difficult to climb to the top and get down safely.

Figure 14: Haynes's drawing of Eflatunpinar (UPM archives)
Figure 15: Zincirli sculptures (UPM archives)

Figure 16: Binbirkilise, view toward churches 13 (left foreground) and 8 (right middle ground) (Harvard Aga Khan archives)
Figure 17: Frontispiece to Hermann Vollrath Hilprecht, *Explorations in Bible Lands during the 19th Century* (Philadelphia, 1903); original photograph 1893 (author’s collection)