

**NATURAL
HISTORY
MUSEUM**
LOS ANGELES COUNTY

SEAVER CENTER FOR WESTERN HISTORY RESEARCH



Notes From the Archive

FEBRUARY 2024

This is a publication of the Seaver Center for Western History Research, a section of the History Department. If you are informed by what you read here, please share it with a friend or colleague.

Oil Discoveries in the Archive!

by John P. Smith, Jr.

Over the last year as a volunteer I have been cataloging negatives from the Mobil Oil Western Photography Department Collection. This is an eclectic mid-20th century collection depicting gas stations, dealer conventions, people, and street scenes.



(P-284-B12)

The dealer convention photographs from the late 1960's show how the service station of then are different from the gas station of today. Mobil dealers were encouraged to provide maps and travel guides to their customers so they could "discover America the friendly Mobil way." Without Google maps or Waze, we navigated with paper maps and travel guides as we went across town or across country.



(P-284-2830-429)

Another aspect of the service station concept was mechanical service. You could get most of your car needs taken care of at your local station. There were also aftermarket products. These would not have come on the car from the factory. At the 1966 convention, the Kar-Bar beverage system was on display. This was a kit installed under the dash in your car and would dispense by push button hot and cold beverages. Ask your parents or grandparents the weird things we were doing to our cars in the 60's.



(P-284-2830-227)

Fashion and what is perceived as appropriate has changed since the 60's. At several of the annual conventions, mink coats or stoles were offered as raffle prizes. These were modelled during the convention, I'm assuming as a joke, even by a man.



(P-284-3000-7)

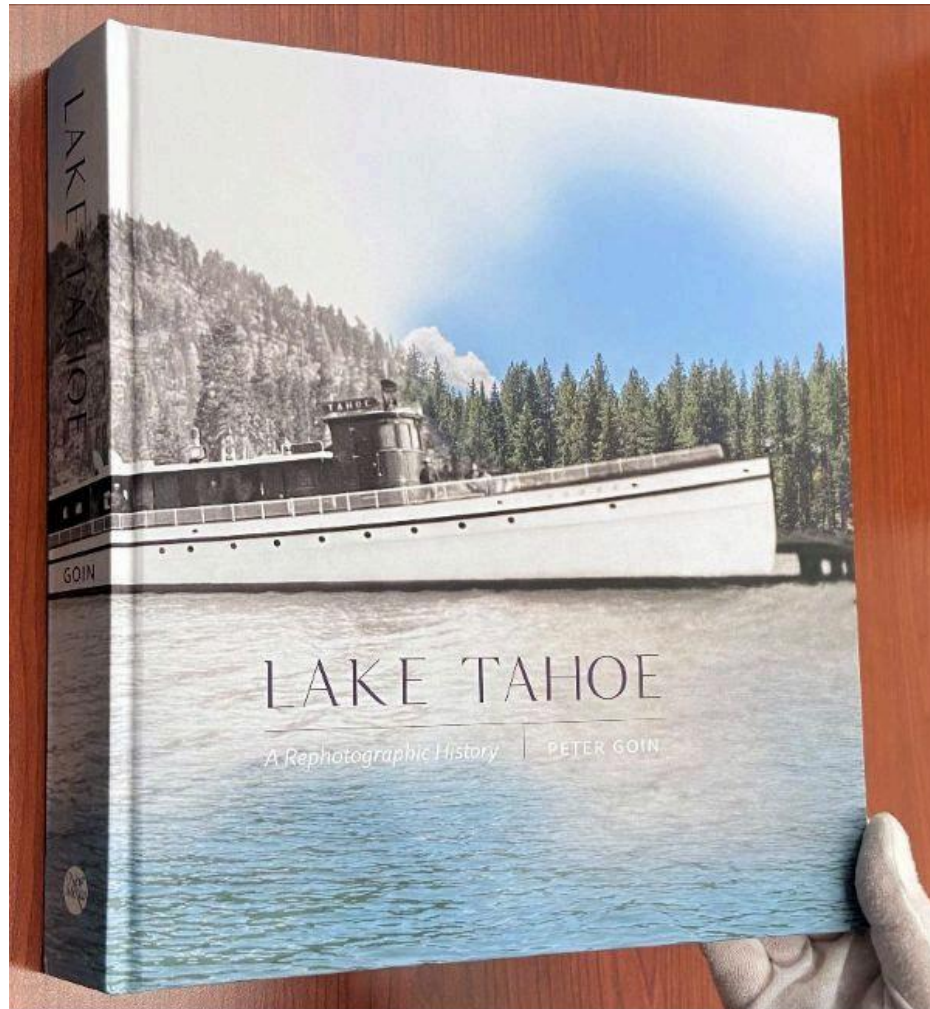
In the early 1950's photographs were taken of Mobil oil trucks driving on Los Angeles streets. Looking carefully often provide interesting insights to that era. I found a scene located near the Natural History Museum on Vermont Avenue near Vernon Avenue. A close look revealed a lobby card at the Vermont Theatre (seen on the left) for Charlotta Bass, the journalist and civil rights activist, who was going to be speaking on fair employment practices.

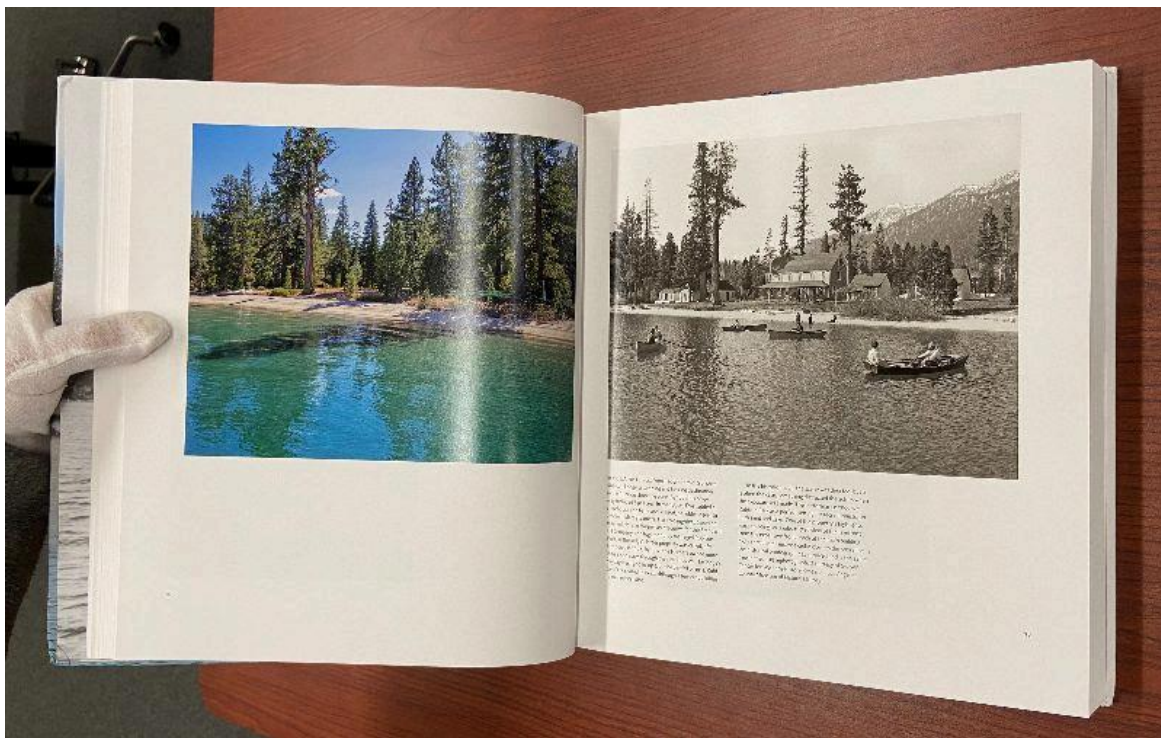
I am sure more fascinating stories will pop up as I continue my search. I'll share more later.

New Publication Highlight: *Lake Tahoe, a Rephotographic History*

Lake Tahoe, a Rephotographic History (University of New Mexico Press, 2023) by Peter Goin, includes eight images from our collections - among the

book's countless archival and contemporary photographs. The author is professor of art in photography and time-based media at the University of Nevada, Reno. Goin and his research group spent over twenty years looking for photos from the 19th and 20th centuries and then rephotographing select views from 2009 through 2021.

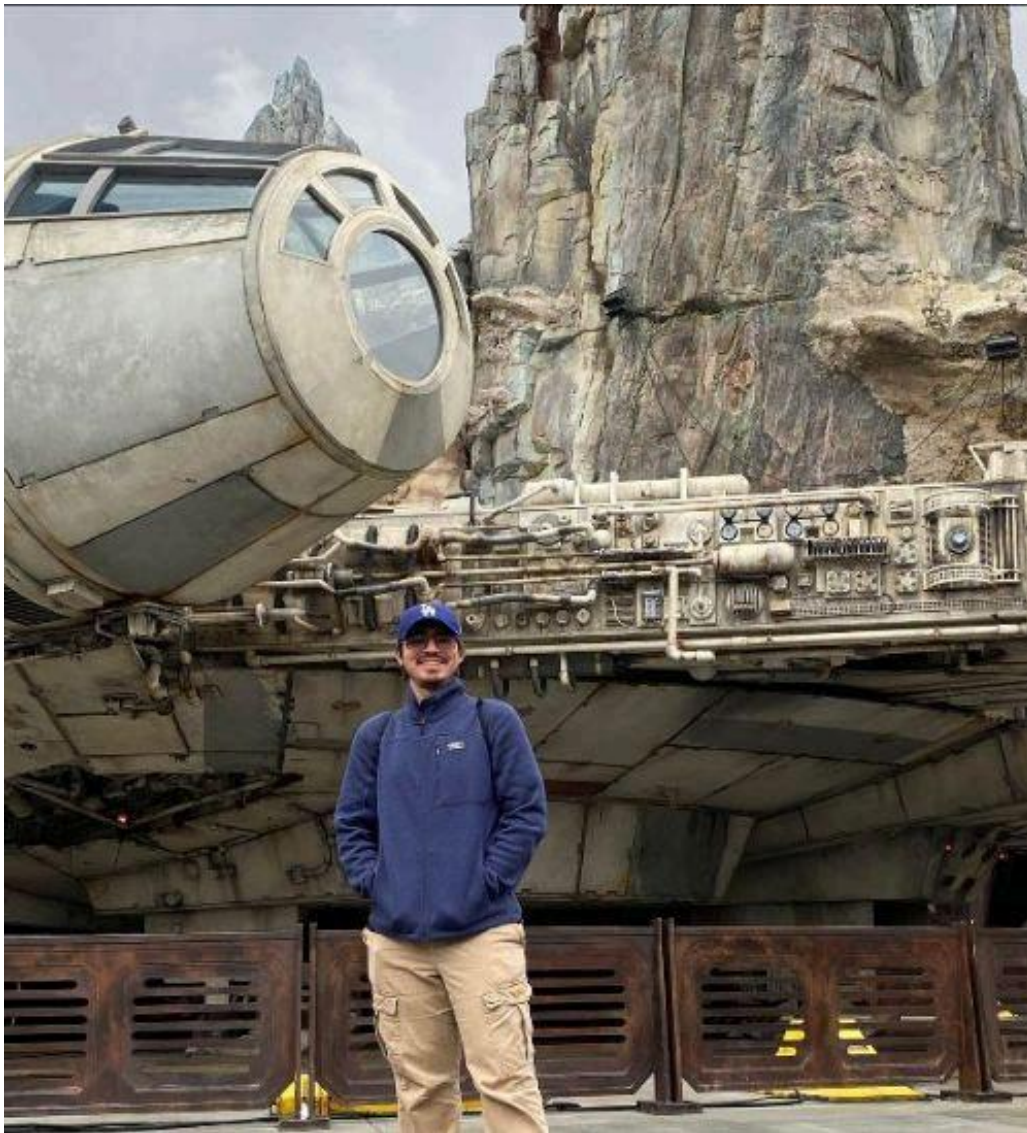




Shown above the book is opened to a photo on the right from the Seaver Center collection along with a contemporary re-photograph on the left

Archives Internship Highlight

Our student intern is on board until the end of March - with a self-introduction below.



Duncan at Disneyland

I am Duncan Hodur Scharpf and am currently interning at the Seaver Center, working towards a master's degree for Management in Library and Information Science at USC. My project is organizing pictures in the Arthur C. Goebel Collection and creating a finding guide for it. I also work full time at the museum in the Guest Relations Department.

I graduated from UCLA in 2019 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History. My focus on 19th and 20th century American and European history has become useful since many items in the Seaver Center are from this period. Going to rival colleges is definitely weird, especially when you have family that went to one or the other. I hope to one day work at an archive (particularly the Disney Archives or the Baseball Hall of Fame) or at an academic library helping college students find what they need for their assignments. Helping others is one of the main reasons I decided to become a librarian.

In my free time, which I have very little of at the moment, I enjoy watching baseball games (go Dodgers), baking, playing video games and board games with friends, going to Disneyland, and shooting pool. These activities keep me sane as I work full time, attend school full time, go to my internship, and write nonstop for my classes. As the old saying goes “all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.” I am looking forward to my time at the Seaver Center and learning as much as I can.



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Open by Appointment

Wednesdays & Thursdays

10 - noon; 1 - 4 p.m.

The Collections

Over 400 general collections | Over 295 photographic collections

[Search the Online Archive of California](#)

Digitized Collections

The collections are a part of the History Department of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

[Search over 34,000 images](#)

The Seaver Center opened in 1986 through a generous grant from the Seaver Institute.



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