

Sources for Historical Photographs of the Middle East: Holdings at Selected Repositories

Introduction

For those interested in historical photographs of the Middle East, the following list provides a selection of institutions and organizations with significant collections. This list was prepared for the session “Documenting the Middle East: A Look at Photograph Collections in the United States” presented at the Society of American Archivists Annual Meeting, New Orleans, Louisiana, August 20, 2005. It was prepared by Robert Burton (North Carolina State University Libraries), Ruth Thomasian (Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, Inc.), Jeff Spurr (Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, Harvard University), Susan Woodland (Hadassah Archives), and Arden Alexander (Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs).

Repositories

Al Mashriq.

<http://almashriq.hiof.no/base/photography.html>

Digital repository, hosted by Østfold College in Halden, Norway, focusing on Lebanon and the Levant. It includes historical photographs of Lebanon from the late 1800s to the early 1900s, along with other Middle East image collections.

Arab Image Foundation, Beirut, Lebanon.

<http://www.fai.org.lb/>

Collection of more than 75,000 images created by Arab photographers or residents of the Arab world from the early 19th century to the present. The collection is being digitized and made available online.

Aramco Services Company, Public Affairs Digital Image Archive, New York, N.Y.

<http://www.photoarchive.saudiaramcoworld.com/>

Photographic collection of over 30,000 published and unpublished color images from *Saudi Aramco World* magazine depicting the Middle East and Islamic world from 1964 to the present. Available online.

ArchNet Digital Library.

<http://archnet.org/library/images/>

Online repository established at MIT in cooperation with the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture. Includes more than 40,000 images from various institutions, notably the Ernst Cohn-Weiner Photographic Archive at the British Museum and the collection of K.A.C. Creswell photographs at the Fine Arts Library, Harvard University.

Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal, Canada.

http://www.cca.qc.ca/pages/Niveau3.asp?page=coll_photo&lang=eng

Photograph collection includes expedition and travel albums, notably a series of six albums with over 200 photographs by Louis De Clerq, as well as individual prints by various archaeologist-photographers who traveled throughout the Middle East from 1840 to 1860. Also includes views taken by photographers in the service of the British army.

George Eastman House, Rochester, N.Y.

<http://www.geh.org/>

Various collections include views of the Middle East available in Photography Collections Online, notably the Francis Frith, American Colony, and Jericho collections; and the Van Voorhis Collection of 19th Century Travel Views. Most images date from the late 1800s to the early 1900s.

Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Ca.

http://www.getty.edu/research/conducting_research/library/index.html

Middle Eastern collections include over 6,000 photographs of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey (Pierre de Gigord Collection), stereographs, postcards, and others. Catalog records available through online catalog.

Griffith Institute, Oxford, England.

<http://www.ashmol.ox.ac.uk/Griffith.html>

Includes Egyptian and Levantine Mirage, online collections containing more than 1,300 19th-century studio photographs of Egypt and the Levant. Félix Bonfils, L. Fiorillo, and Francis Frith are among the photographers represented.

The Archives of Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc., New York, N.Y.

<http://www.hadassah.org/pageframe.asp?section=about&page=archives.html&h>

Housed at the at the American Jewish Historical Society in the Center for Jewish History, the archives documents the Hadassah programs in Palestine and Israel from 1913 to the present. It includes primarily images of the Hadassah Medical Organization, including clinics and welfare stations, the Rothschild Hospital, Immigrant Medical Services, and the Hadassah Hospital on Mount Scopus in East Jerusalem.

Harvard University, Fine Arts Library, Cambridge, Mass.

http://hcl.harvard.edu/finearts/semitic_photo.html

Circa 180,000 photographs and slides documenting Islamic architecture and art, chiefly in the Middle East. Other holdings include about 55,000 historical photographs of the Middle East and adjacent regions, including the Josephine Powell Archive and many other special collections, ranging from the 1850s through the 1950s. The most notable is the Harvard Semitic Museum Photographic Archives, which contains the Baroness Marie-Thérèse Ullens de Schooten Archive and the Karl Twitchell Collection. As yet, only the HSM Photographic Archives are represented online.

Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pp/pphome.html>

Collection includes over 50,000 images related to the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia mostly from the 1840s to the present. About 20,000 are available online, most with digitized images. Includes the Matson Negatives depicting Middle East countries between 1898 and 1946, the Abdul Hamid II albums of the Ottoman Empire, and the Turkestanskii albums portraying Central Asia.

New York Public Library, New York, N.Y.

<http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/explore/dgexplore.cfm?topic=culture>

The NYPL Digital Gallery includes several online collections related to Middle East, especially:

The Middle East in Early Prints and Photographs: More than 1,100 prints and photographs from books and albums dating from the 17th century to the beginning of the 20th century.

Newcastle University Library, Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle, England.

<http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/>

Includes about 7,000 photographs taken by British traveler and administrator Gertrude Bell between 1900 and 1918 of locations in Turkey, Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine and other locations.

Palestine Exploration Fund, London, England.

<http://www.pef.org.uk/Pages/Photos.htm>

Among the oldest and most extensive collections of Middle East photographs. Includes images of Palestine, Israel, Syria, Trans-Jordan, and Lebanon dating from 1850 to the present, with a primary focus on the latter half of the 19th century and the early half of the 20th century. Of special note, photographs from excavations and the *Survey of Western Palestine* (1871-1877). No online access.

Princeton University Library, Rare Books Special Collections, Princeton, N.J.

<http://www.princeton.edu/~rbsc/>

From the Félix Bonfils Photographs Collection and the Rudolph-Ernst Brunnow Papers, over 850 photographs of the eastern Mediterranean by French photographer Félix Bonfils, taken during the second half of the 19th century and published by his Maison Bonfils studio in Beirut, Lebanon. Online finding aids.

Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, Inc., Watertown, Mass.

<http://www.projectsavet.org>

Collections of 25,000 vintage and contemporary photographs of which about 8,000 are pre-1930 images of Armenians and their neighbors living in the Middle East, mostly in the Ottoman Empire. The archives maintains a catalog of item-level documentation and is working on plans for digitization.

Royal Geographical Society Picture Library, London, England.

<http://www.rgs.org/category.php?Page=mainarchives>

Holdings include about 3,000 photographs of Iran, images from the Society's sponsored research expeditions to the Middle East, and special collections related to Arabia, including the photographs of Captain W.H.I. Shakespear, photographs by Harry St John Philby, documenting his 1932 crossing of the Empty Quarter, and early images of Mecca. A selection of about 800 photographs of the Middle East is available online.

State of Israel, National Photo Collection, Jerusalem, Israel.

<http://147.237.72.31/topsrch/defaulte.htm>

Collection of 500,000 images, most taken by the Government Press Office of Israel starting in 1948. Includes some older donated images. "Tens of thousands" of images are available online.

University of Chicago, Oriental Institute, Chicago, Ill.

http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/MUS/PA/OI_PA.html

Archives include over 100,000 negatives documenting the Institute's archaeological activities and daily life in the Middle East from 1892 to the present. A sample of over 2,000 negatives, including images of Iran, Egypt, Iraq, and Sudan, are available online.

University of Chicago Library, Middle East Photograph Archive, Chicago, Ill.

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/su/mideast/PhotoArchive.html>

Over 400 photographs from the second half of the 19th century, chiefly of Egypt. Available online.

University of Oxford, St. Anthony's College, Middle East Centre Archive, Oxford, England.

<http://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/mec/mecaphotos.shtml>

Over 70,000 images of the Middle East, most dating from the 1850s to the mid-20th century, including the Freya Stark Collection and Harry St. John Philby Collection. Currently no online access.

University of Washington Libraries, Ancient Near East Photograph Collection, Seattle, Wash.

<http://content.lib.washington.edu/neareastweb/index.html>

Digital collection of over 350 images documenting artifacts and archaeological sites of the ancient Near East, specifically Egypt and Israel. The images were collected over a ten year period by University of Washington scholars. Plans exist to eventually add images from Anatolia, Syria, Iraq, and Iran.

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, American Geographical Society Library, Milwaukee, Wis.

<http://www.uwm.edu/Libraries/AGSL/phot.html>

Collections with Middle East photographs include the George C. Roeming Collection (1958-1984) and the Harrison Forman Collection (1920s-1970s). The Forman Collection includes 733 slides of daily life, historic sites, and architecture in Afghanistan in the late 1960s, 195 of which are available online.