

**Bigger Picture**

**WESTMINSTER BRIDGE, LONDON, 1897**

Marvelling at the skill of cab drivers (left) who drove their hansom cabs through London streets with no lane system, Holmes wrote: "Nothing I have seen in any other portion of the world can equal the ability thus displayed"

**OUTSIDE AN EAST END PUB, LONDON, 1895**

In the East End (below) he found people so downtrodden they had given up begging even for the customary penny. "So I astonished them by offering sixpence. They would look up and say, 'Good God, guv'nor — thank you!'"



# HUES OF THE WORLD

A century ago, long before cheap flights and TV cameras shrank the globe, the American adventurer Burton Holmes faced hazardous journeys and warfare to produce extraordinary hand-coloured photographs of distant lands. By Susannah Price

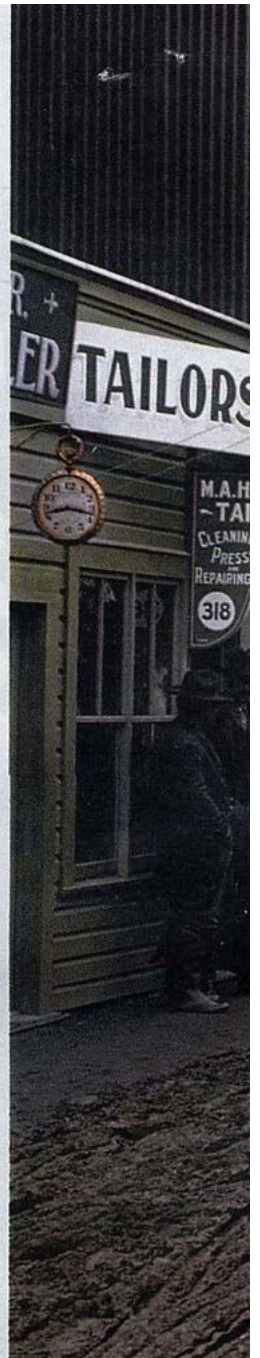
A STREET SCENE,  
TOKYO, c1932

Japan, wrote Holmes, was "more civilised than any country I had ever seen". He first visited in 1892 and went back many times, but he later grew disillusioned with its adoption of western culture



DAWSON CITY, YUKON,  
CANADA, 1903

Of this Klondike gold-rush town, Holmes wrote: "Though Dawson was a busy place, I found a large leisure class. Its members sit or stand there all day idle, nor do they seek that any man should hire them"



**T**ravelling six times round the world, visiting every continent and taking extraordinary pictures of people in remote lands would be an impressive enough occupation today. But Burton Holmes, the American photographer, lecturer and film-maker, did this more than a century ago, when venturing abroad was a privilege for the few.

"To travel is to possess the world," Holmes liked to write in the autograph books of his fans, who queued to hear him talk about his worldwide adventures. He illustrated his lectures with slide shows and moving pictures, a process he termed the "travelogue", and he thrilled his fellow Americans with previously unseen shots of people from Bavaria to Burma and from Java to Japan. One newspaper called him "an institution in American life".

For 14 years from 1908, Paramount paid him to show his films in their theatres. Burton Holmes more or less ➡➡➡



**Holmes (right) with one of his cameramen, taking pictures at Lake Beiva in 1917 for a new season of his lectures on Japan**







THE CORONATION OF  
HAILE SELASSIE,  
ADDIS ABABA, 1930

Dressed in high hat, tails and "impeccable spats", Holmes entered the royal enclosure unchallenged – and was the only photographer to attend the Selassie's coronation (above)

HINDU TEMPLES,  
ANGKOR WAT,  
CAMBODIA, 1925

The photographer described Angkor's 12th-century temples as "the apotheosis of a forgotten art" and "the crowning creation of the Golden Age of the Khmers"



the images. His audiences loved it and, encouraged by his success, Holmes gathered the funds to go on the first of his many journeys – to the little-known interior of Japan.

Over the next 20 or so years, with the help of skilled cameramen, and often accompanied by his wife, Margaret Oliver, Holmes travelled the world taking photographs, often going to dangerous extremes to bring back the pictorial booty. He was shot at in Morocco for being "an infidel dog", stood knee-deep in volcanic ash to capture Mount Vesuvius erupting, and documented German air raids from the rooftops of Paris during the first world war.

His work also earned him privileges; for example, he was the only photographer at the coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie in Ethiopia in 1930. Back at home, he would edit his photographs, make the glass "lantern slides", ➤➤➤



**PORT ARTHUR,  
MANCHURIA, 1905**

Holmes illustrated one of his lectures with this shot, by another photographer, of Japanese men watching as the Russian fleet was sunk during this long siege (above)

**PUNTING AT HENLEY-ON-THAMES, 1897**

Henley regatta was "one of the most delightful doings of the season" and a "fluvial fete", wrote Holmes. It made the river resemble "an astounding motion picture"

many of which artists coloured by hand, and write his accompanying lectures. By the 1930s he had become a star, and he and his wife settled in the hills above Hollywood, where they socialised with a glittering crowd, including Douglas Fairbanks, Jean Harlow and Pola Negri.

Holmes may have led an exotic life, been awarded a raft of prizes and a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, but still he treasured the benefits of travel above all. Shortly before his death he wrote: "The only things I own which are still worth what they cost me are my travel memories, the mind pictures of places I've been hoarding like a happy miser for more than half a century." ■

*Burton Holmes Travelogues: The Greatest Traveller of His Time, 1892-1952, edited by Genoa Caldwell, is published by Taschen, price £29.99. It is available from The Sunday Times BooksFirst for £26.99, including postage and packing. Tel: 0870 165 8585*

