

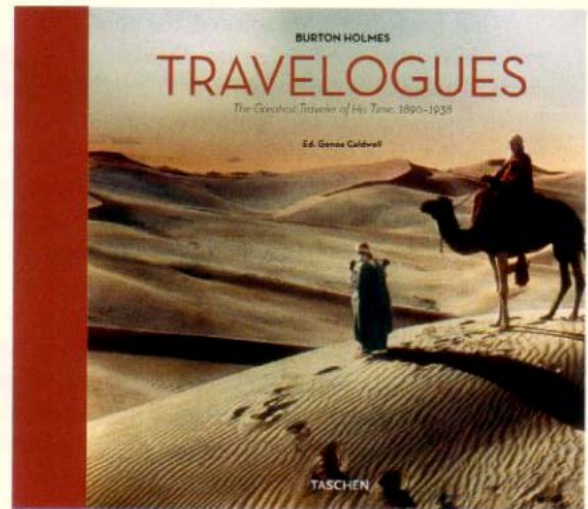
*travelogues* At the turn of the last century, before air travel, radio and the ubiquity of the automobile, American photographer Burton Holmes astonished audiences with pictures from around the globe. Nearly 100 years later, these images are no less striking, not because they reveal civilizations from four corners of the earth, but because this visual tour de force illustrates how markedly our world has changed.

This compilation, *Burton Holmes Travelogues, The Greatest Traveler of His Time*, showcases cream-of-the-crop snapshots from Holmes' treks across four continents, as well as brief, insightful writings about each stop. Editor Genoa Caldwell, private archivist for Holmes' collection, selected the writings from "travelogues," a term he coined in 1904 to describe the

"multimedia" lectures—stories illustrated by hand-painted glass slides and moving pictures—he delivered across the US. She also has done a tremendous job of selecting the best from among 30,000 photos that Holmes, who died in 1958 at the age of 88, snapped over a six-decade career.

The photographs, most of them in color, manage to project an intimacy no matter how foreign the subject. Arranged alphabetically by country, the book opens with Australia, the sun's rays piercing the stained glass archway of Melbourne's Flinders Street Railway Station, illuminating pedestrians clad in 1917 fashions. The golden beams radiate warmth, but don't be fooled: Australia during its winter months is quite frosty. "As I entered the huge concert auditorium, I thought that the entire audience was smoking. It was not. It was merely breathing!" relates Holmes, a Chicago native who resided in New York and LA, but considered himself a citizen of the world.

While his writings are spirited, the photographs often evoke bitterness, some intentionally, others not. Sinking ships, battlefields and soldiers' funerals during the Russo-Japanese War and World War I reveal his distaste for conflict and suffering. His picture of Cambodian women performing a traditional dance at Angkor Wat in 1925 evokes a sense of foreboding at the carnage to come 50 years later. In another, huge coils of rope made of human hair piled beside a temple in Kyoto in 1908 represent the destitution of Japanese women, who, with nothing else to give, offered their tresses to be used to haul timber for the temple's construction. A sea of uniformed children saluting before a flag bearing a swastika in 1938 sparks a desperate wish for history to change its course.



Meanwhile, the candid, and often witty, observations make *Travelogues* a page-turner, for while many of the images are recognizable or unsurprising—Mount Fuji and Central Park's southern skyline, for example—Holmes' remarks depict how different his world is from ours, and how differently he perceived it. "London is the most important place on earth," he calls the helm of the British Empire, mother of "the English-speaking, peace-loving, fair-fighting, and unconquerable race that has extended its dominion around the world." Of his first visit to Japan in 1892, Holmes writes, "I liked the funny, pretty food." And waxing poetic on Burma, he observes, "To the traveler, stunned by the overwhelming splendors and oppressed by the equally overwhelming squalor of India itself, a little ramble in this land of lightheartedness, among peoples of a gentler faith and even quainter customs serves as a delightful 'after cure.'"

Part of the pleasure—and angst—of reading this book is reflecting on how the places Holmes depicts have turned out, like knowing the end of a movie even before watching it, or reading the last page of a book before opening the front cover. Knowing how the story ends can make an experience especially harrowing or fun, and the best part about *Travelogues* is that it deftly combines both ■ Jennifer Fishbein ~ *Burton Holmes Travelogues, The Greatest Traveler of His Time*, Genoa Caldwell, 368 pages, \$49.99/hardcover, Taschen