

Burton Holmes Travelogues: The Greatest Traveller of His Time, 1892-1952

Edited by Genoa Caldwell

Taschen, \$49.99

This is a delightful book about Burton Holmes, a 19th and 20th century adventurer credited with coining the word "travelogue." It is as stylish as its subject, an elegant man who affected white suits and pith helmets as he traversed the world, camera in hand.

Holmes, who died in 1958 at age 88, and his wife, Margaret, split their later years between New York and their Hollywood Hills home, Topside. He made travel shorts for MGM, and the couple hobnobbed with such stars and star-makers as Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford, Jean Harlow, Sam Goldwyn and Jack Warner.

Summing up his 60 years of globe-trotting, Holmes wrote: "The only things I own which are still worth what they have cost me are my travel memories, the mind-pictures of places which I have been hoarding like a happy miser for more than half a century."

The book, with its images of places now almost unrecognizably changed, is both history and biography. Among those images: a vintage motorcar pursuing a kangaroo in the Australian outback in 1917, women in Gibson Girl gowns promenading in 1907 Vienna, and Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee procession in London in 1897.

Japan and Italy remained Holmes' favorite foreign countries, but in the United States he found "an exhaustless wealth of charm and wonder." He photographed Calamity Jane in a long calico dress at Yosemite, and the Santa Monica Pier when the La Monica Ballroom hosted many a dance marathon.

Of Hollywood, he once observed: "One of these days someone will say, 'Strike the set' and this whole town will fall down."