



# Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard  
La Jolla, CA 92037

[www.raremaps.com](http://www.raremaps.com)

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**(California Photographs) [Album of 112 original photographs: San Diego and Los Angeles area, including La Jolla - Coronado - Sunset Cliffs - Lake Cuyamaca - Cuyamaca Dam & Valley -- Tia Juana (San Ysidro) -- Raymond Hotel in Pasadena - Shasta - Lick Observatory - Seattle]**

**Stock#:** 98892  
**Map Maker:** Anonymous / Taber  
**Date:** 1891  
**Place:** San Diego, La Jolla, Tia Juana, Coronado  
**Color:** Uncolored  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 15 x 11.5 inches  
**Price:** \$ 6,400.00



**Description:**

***Fine Vernacular Photograph Album of (Mostly) Southern California***

***La Jolla - Coronado - Sunset Cliffs - Pasadena***

***Rare Photographs of Flooded Tia Juana (San Ysidro) in 1891***

A wonderful album of high-quality original photographs made in the early 1890s, including rare early San Diego views of La Jolla, Coronado, Sunset Cliffs, and most notably the American town of Tia Juana on the Mexican border (current day San Ysidro). Most of the images in the album are the work of an unidentified but skilled amateur who traveled through Southern California circa 1891. The compositions of the photographs are of a high order and go far beyond the typical amateur productions often seen in albums from this time. A few of the photographs (mainly those related to northern California, especially the Lick Observatory), are cabinet card-size prints from the famed San Francisco photographic establishment of Isaiah West Taber.

**San Diego Floods of 1891**

Some of the San Diego photos were almost certainly taken either in February or the summer of 1891, when major storms flooded towns throughout the county. During the summer of 1891, a thunderstorm inundated parts of the San Diego Mountains with 11.5 inches of rain in 80 minutes. In February, 1891, San Diego County experienced what many call the most violent storm in its history. It started to rain on



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February 19 and continued for a solid week: 30 inches in 37 hours in Escondido to the north; 18 inches in 48 at Cuyamaca to the east. By the 23rd, every road in the county had been damaged; a flash flood twisted the California Southern railroad line from Temecula station to Fallbrook so far beyond recognition it had to be abandoned.

#### **Rare Tia Juana (San Ysidro) Views**

A flooded town scene photograph in the present album shows the offices of Messinger & Lane, a mercantile business operating on the San Diego side of the Mexico Border, within in the community now known as San Ysidro. At the time there were only 34 residents in Tia Juana. The firm's name is listed in the Tia Juana section of the 1889-90 edition of *Monteith's Directory of San Diego and Vicinity*, as are the two partners, Joseph Messinger and William Lane. In 1866, William Lane, a native of Wales, purchased 160 acres at the border crossing and also entered into a general merchandise business. Messinger & Lane also appear 3 times in the *National City Record* in the 1890s. Intriguingly, in April 1890, the proprietors were reportedly arrested and taken to Los Angeles on charges of smuggling Mexican cigars and liquor. The *San Diego Union* reported on April 29, 1890: "Mr. Lane was discharged and Mr. Messenger [sic] was released under bonds to await the action of the Grand Jury." By September 24, 1891, the firm was noted as in the process of moving its store to "the new townsite" in Tia Juana (perhaps following the flooding shown in the photograph).

The five or six original photographs of Tia Juana, especially the image showing the flooding of business and shops, stand as among the earliest extant photographs of the border section of San Diego. Although an early townsite for the town of Tia Juana was mapped advertised in 1887, the area languished for decades while the Mexican town of Tijuana grew steadily. Mexican Tijuana cultivated an economy based mostly on tourism, which exploded during the Prohibition era. Pioneering merchants such as Joseph Messenger, Alejandro Savín and Felipe Crosthwaite contributed to the early development of a border trade by offering horse races and bullfights in the Mexican town of Tijuana.

A utopian community of "Little Landers" was established in the San Ysidro area around 1909. The brainchild of William W. Smythe, this small scale farm cooperative seemed to flourish for a few years, but was abandoned by 1925.

Here follows a breakdown of the subject matter depicted in the photographs:



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- Hotel del Coronado, exterior and interior.
- Ostrich farm scenes, 3 photographs, possibly in Coronado or Mission Cliff Park, San Diego.
- Sunset Cliffs and/or La Jolla. Includes an image of Alligator Head arch, which collapsed during a storm in January 1978.
- Mexican border area images, including flooded street in Tia Juana. Approximately 6 images.
- Sweetwater Dam.
- Scenes on the road north of San Diego.
- Santa Barbara Mission.
- Raymond Hotel, Pasadena: horse carriage, hotel building, agave gardens.
- Vendome Saloon, likely in Montague, California, near Shasta.
- Taber photographs relating to the Lick Observatory:
  - The Moon, August 14, 1888- From negatives made with the Great Telescope of the Lick Observatory
  - The Moon, August 21, 1888
  - The Moon, August 12, 1888
  - The Moon, August 18, 1888
  - On the road to the Lick Observatory near San Jose, Cal. Sharp curves of this winding road. Photo by H. E. Mathews.
  - The Lick Observatory near San Jose, Cal. from a point on San Jose road, distant one and one-half hours' ride.
  - [View of the Lick Observatory]
  - On the road to the Like Observatory near San Jose, Cal. Across Hall's Valley.
  - Lick Observatory, Mount Hamilton, near San Jose, Cal. View southward over the fog. Photo by H. E. Mathews.
- Docks at Seattle. Several business signs visible: Risdon Cahn Co.
- Approximately 15 views in the Northwest: trees, snowy forrest scenes.
- Unidentified "Badlands" with the roof a small house labeled "Badlands."

In sum, a very special photographic record of pre-automobile travel in California, compiled by a well-to-do tourist who knew how to use a camera. The images of Southern California locales, paticularly those made in the San Diego area (La Jolla, Coronado, Sweetwater, and Tia Juana) are standouts.

#### **Detailed Condition:**



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Oblong quarto. Contemporary pebbled burgundy cloth photo album (Howard Album, patented 1889). With 112 original photograph prints, mounted on card album leaves. Photographs range in size up to 7 3/4 x 5 3/4 inches, with most 3 1/2 x 4 1/2 inches or 4 x 6 inches. A bit of foxing to the first couple of album leaves, images not affected. The photographs are all excellent, sharp prints in fine condition.