

GUIDE TO THE ANTELOPE VALLEY INDIAN MUSEUM STATE HISTORIC PARK  
PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION

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Finding Guide written and encoded by  
Sam Skow

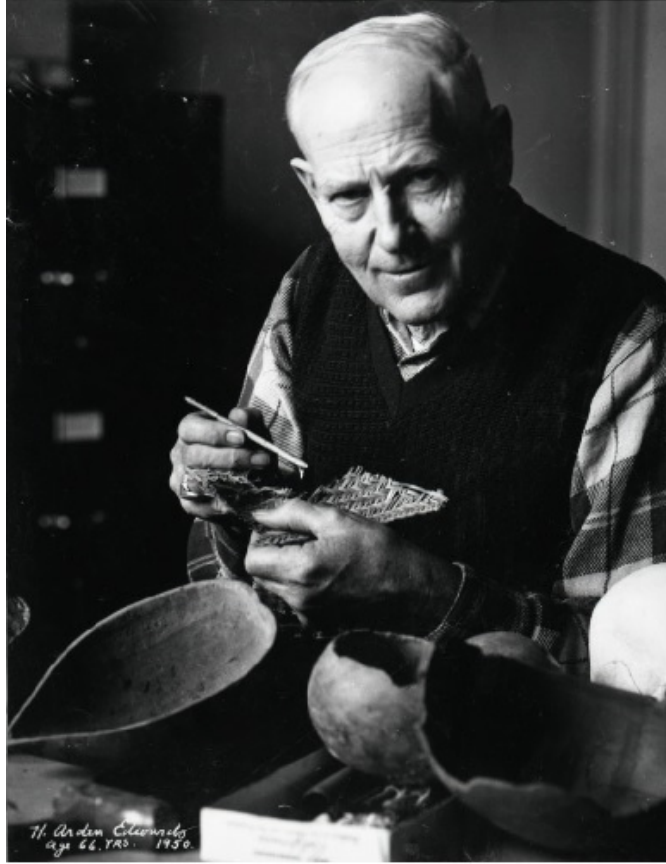
## ANTELOPE VALLEY INDIAN MUSEUM STATE HISTORIC PARK PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION

### Park History

Antelope Valley Indian Museum State Historic Park contains roughly 157 acres of natural, cultural, and historical resources. Located in Los Angeles County, the park is bounded by the Tehachapi and San Gabriel mountain ranges in Antelope Valley and is roughly 18 miles southeast of the city of Lancaster. The park is accessible by car via East Avenue "M."

The area containing the present-day park was occupied by the Kitanemuk tribe, a Shoshone band, for 2,000 to 3,000 years before Europeans arrived. The Kitanemuk people formed small settlements and used the area for hunting antelope, as a work site, and as a travel route. The Spanish first encountered and traveled through the area in the late eighteenth century. Under Mexican rule, the valley was used for seasonal sheep grazing and as an antelope hunting preserve. With the completion of the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1876, American farmers and developers began entering—and altering—the desert region. Antelope Valley farmers thrived for a period, growing wheat and grazing cattle before a 10-year drought and economic depression plagued the area in 1895. Although many farmers lost their properties and left the valley, those who stayed were soon rewarded. Construction of the Los Angeles Aqueduct, crop diversification, the introduction of electricity, and the construction of a paved state freeway after the turn of the twentieth century all helped Antelope Valley's economic recovery.

In 1928, Howard Arden Edwards purchased 160 acres where the park currently resides (**Figure 1**). The next year, he began building his folk-vernacular Swiss-chalet revival-style house against a rocky outcropping of Piute Butte's southern slopes. Beyond scenery, Edwards wanted a place to store and showcase his collection of Native American artifacts, to establish the Antelope Valley Indian Research Museum, and to premiere his own Native-American-inspired artwork and theater pieces. Completing the house within five years, Edwards soon began to suffer ill health. In 1938, he sold the house to fellow artifact-collector Mrs. Grace Marie Wilcox Fear. Mrs. Fear grew the artifact collection and developed the facilities throughout the 1940s. She commissioned the construction of cottages and a swimming pool to make the location more hospitable to visitors; she even hired Edwards back on as custodian from 1944 to 1952. In 1979, Mrs. Fear (who had since been divorced, remarried to Joseph Oliver, and become Mrs. Grace Oliver) sold the museum to the State of California in order that it—and its collection—might be better preserved as a state park unit. In 2002, California State Parks classified the property a state historic park.



**Figure 1.** H. Arden Edwards, 1950. Catalog # 090-P58808.

California State Parks, coordinating with the Friends of the Antelope Valley Indian Museum, maintains natural, cultural, and historical resources at Antelope Valley Indian Museum State Historic Park. Set against towering Piute Butte and surrounded by Joshua trees, Edwards' idiosyncratic house museum serves as the park's centerpiece and houses the collection of pottery, baskets, food preparation and work tools, hunting and fishing equipment, clothing, textiles, paintings, and kachina dolls of Southwest, California, and Great Basin tribes (**Figures 2 and 3**). Also interpreted are H. Arden Edwards and Grace Oliver themselves, whose artifact collection, interpretation, and preservation methods—frowned upon today as amateurish and culturally insensitive—were nonetheless emblematic of the attitudes held toward Native Americans and their objects in the first half of the twentieth century. The park is only open on weekends except for prearranged group guided tours.



**Figure 2.** Antelope Valley Indian Museum, February 13, 2012. Catalog # 090-P75833.



**Figure 3.** Antelope Valley Indian Museum (interior), February 13, 2012. Catalog # 090-P75858.

## Scope and Content

The Antelope Valley Indian Museum State Historic Park Photographic Collection spans the years 1928-2012, with the bulk of the collection covering the years 1970-1984, 1991, and 2012. There is a total of 215 cataloged images, including 83 photographic prints, scans, and negatives, 70 35mm slides, and 62 born-digital images. Photographs originated primarily from California State Parks staff.

The collection mainly documents the interior and exterior of the Antelope Valley Indian Museum building. Exterior imagery depicts the building's ornate, hand-painted detailing as well as surrounding dirt paths, Joshua trees, wagon wheels, historic cottages, signage, fencing, a flag pole, a commemorative plaque, and Piute Butte.

Interior imagery documents the artifact collection and includes Native American whale bones, antelope hides, mortar, stone bowls, pottery, basketry, textiles, kachina dolls, log benches, antlers, bows and arrows, interpretive panels, and H. Arden Edwards' paintings and dioramas.

The collection also includes aerial views of the park unit. Features include the museum and cottage buildings, roads, trees, dunes, and Piute Butte.

### **Related Collections**

Antelope Valley Indian Museum State Historic Park Collection, California State Parks Archives.

Antelope Valley, Lancaster, Kern County Scrapbook, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County: Seaver Center for Western History Research.

### **Catalog Subject Search Terms**

Aerial view

Antelope Valley Indian Museum

Basket(s)

Basketry

Cottage(s)

Diorama

Exterior

H. Arden Edwards

Hide

Interior

Joshua tree(s)

Kachina

Mortar

Native American

Painting(s)

Piute Butte

Pottery

Swimming pool

Textile(s)

Wagon wheel(s)