

THREE LANTERN SLIDES FROM THE 1883 VOYAGE TO CAROLINE ISLAND TO RECORD THE TOTAL ECLIPSE OF THE SUN

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Amongst a box of slides I bought recently, sight unseen, were three labelled 'Charles Ray Woods'. As he is not yet listed on the Lucerna database, some time was spent researching him on the internet with the following result.

Charles Ray Woods was born in Islington, Greater London, on 23 December 1859.¹ He is described as an 'astronomical photographer', not referring to his size but to the fact that his interest was in the field of astronomy and taking photographs of heavenly objects. He became a member of the Royal Photographic Society in 1882 and in 1883 was one of the English participants in the joint American-English expedition to Caroline Island in the mid-Pacific to observe the total eclipse of the sun on 6 May. Listed in the reports as being from the Science and Arts Department, South Kensington,² he joined the expedition at Colon, on the Atlantic end of the Panama Canal, and the group spent some nineteen days on the island from 21 April to 9 May.³ A French expedition was also present on the island and the English and French were the only ones to photograph the eclipse.⁴

Returning to England, Woods had three exhibits in the Royal Photographic Society exhibition in October of that year:⁵

- Exhibit #118 A Country Lane, Kingston, Jamaica
- Exhibit # 183 The Lagoon, Caroline Island, Mid Pacific
- Exhibit # 453 Street in Cairo

One must assume that at least the first two of these photographs would have been taken during his voyage to Caroline Island.

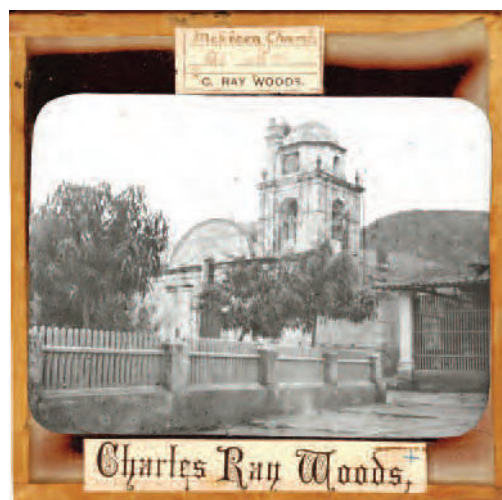
The three slides I have were presumably taken on the same voyage:

- Near the Halfway Tree, Kingston, Jamaica
- Pandanus Tree, Caroline Island
- Mexican Church (indecipherable location)

In early 1885 Woods was employed, as an experienced astronomical photographer, by the Royal Observatory in Cape Town, South Africa, to participate in photographing the southern skies. He arrived on 18 February 1885 on a yearly salary of £250 per annum.⁶ Woods chaired the first meeting of the Cape Town Photographic Club in 1891 and remained in Cape Town until his death on 9 January 1920.⁷

NOTES

1. Information regarding Woods' birth and death from <http://www.geni.com/people/Charles-Ray-Woods/6000000022833711527>
2. John Hannavy, ed., *Encyclopedia of 19th Century Photography*, (New York: Routledge) 2008: 18.
3. E. Lastronica 'The Lighter Side of the Solar Eclipse Expedition to the Caroline Islands, 1883', *Monthly Notes of the Astronomical Society Southern Africa* 49, 1990: 7-11.
4. *New Zealand Herald*, 7 July 1883, available at <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&t=NZH18830707.2.55>.
5. http://erps.dmu.ac.uk/exhibition_details.php?enid=1883.
6. I. S. Glass, 'The Beginnings of Astronomical Photography at the Cape', *Monthly Notes of the Astronomical Society Southern Africa* 48, 1989:117-122.
7. http://www.s2a3.org.za/bio/Biograph_final.php?serial=3185.



Mexican Church (indecipherable location)



Near the Halfway Tree, Kingston, Jamaica



Pandanus Tree, Caroline Island

All photos by Charles Ray Woods