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CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE

## Traveling through Stereographs



*C. Crocker's Residence, San Francisco, c. 1900, California Stereographs (2009-221), Miscellaneous Photographs, California State Archives, a division of the California Secretary of State's Office.*

A learning resource from the California State Archives, a division of the California Secretary of State's Office



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**Description**

This learning resource introduces students to the Victorian-era novelty of stereoscopes and stereographs. It explores how they are both different and similar to the virtual reality technology used to remotely experience other places today. Reading, writing, drawing, and reflection activities within the resource are supported by state and national curriculum standards for the Arts, History, English, and Social Sciences.

**Grade Level**

6-8

**Approx. Time**

1.5 hours

**Curriculum Standards****California Arts Content Standards (Grade 6)**

Visual Arts: Relate Artistic Ideas and Works with Societal, Cultural, and Historical Context to Deepen Understanding, 6. VA:Cn11

**History and Social Science Content Standards (Grades 6-8)**

Analysis Skills: Chronological and Spatial Thinking, 1; Research, Evidence, and Point of View, 1; Historical Interpretation, 1.

**California Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (Grade 6)**

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, 7; Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity, 10.

**College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards (By end of Grade 8)**

Dimension 2 (History)

Change, Continuity, and Context: D2.His.2.6-8; D2.His.3.6-8.

## **Introduction**

**Directions:** Read the introductory text below to learn about stereographs. You will use this information to complete the following activities.



*An example of a 19<sup>th</sup> century stereoscope. The form, materials, and prices for stereoscopes could vary widely.*

Have you ever experienced a world outside of your everyday life while watching a movie or YouTube video? 150 years ago, before moving pictures, do you think that people had the technology to virtually escape to faraway places? They did, in fact, although you may have never heard of it before.

The technology which made this possible is a device called a stereoscope (pictured above). Charles Wheatstone invented the stereoscope in 1832. The invention was an optical (visual) device, kind of like binoculars, made to look at images close up. Stereoscopes hold special photographic cards with two images known as stereographic cards, or stereographs. The two images appear as one three-dimensional (3D) image when viewed through the stereoscope.

How is the 3D effect of the stereograph made? Stereographs place two similar images side-by-side that were photographed or drawn from slightly different perspectives. When viewed through a stereoscope, it mimics the way that our eyes create depth from two different views.

Using stereoscopes to view three-dimensional images was a popular pastime in the later decades of the 1800s up until the 1920s. Stereographs were used to transport viewers to interesting sites such as distant travel destinations, historic buildings, and events such as the Civil War. In this guide, you will explore some of the stereographs held at the California State Archives – including those located at the Crocker Mansion in San Francisco, CA, the Joss House in Weaverville, CA, and Yosemite National Park.

**[Watch animations from the Royal Trust Collection website to see what a stereograph looks like when viewed through a stereoscope!](#)**

## Stereographs from the California State Archives



*C. Crocker's Residence, San Francisco, c. 1900, California Stereographs (2009-221), Miscellaneous Photographs, California State Archives, a division of the California Secretary of State's Office.*

Charles Crocker was one of the founders of the Central Pacific Railroad, which would become the western part of the first transcontinental railroad in the United States. He constructed grand private residences for his family in both Sacramento, CA and San Francisco, CA. Crocker's mansion in Sacramento, CA still stands today as the Crocker Art Museum. The 1906 fire and earthquake destroyed his house in San Francisco, CA but this stereograph captures his grand San Francisco mansion as it once stood.



*The Joss House, San Francisco, c. 1900, California Stereographs (2009-221), Miscellaneous Photographs, California State Archives, a division of the California Secretary of State's Office.*

The Joss House in Weaverville, CA was built in 1874. It is the oldest continuously used Chinese temple in the Golden State. It is still used today as a place of worship. Now part of the California State Parks system, it is open to the public for visits. The stereograph above shows us what the altar used to look like inside the temple.



*Cascade Falls, Yosemite, c. 1900, California Stereographs (2009-221), Miscellaneous Photographs, California State Archives, a division of the California Secretary of State's Office.*

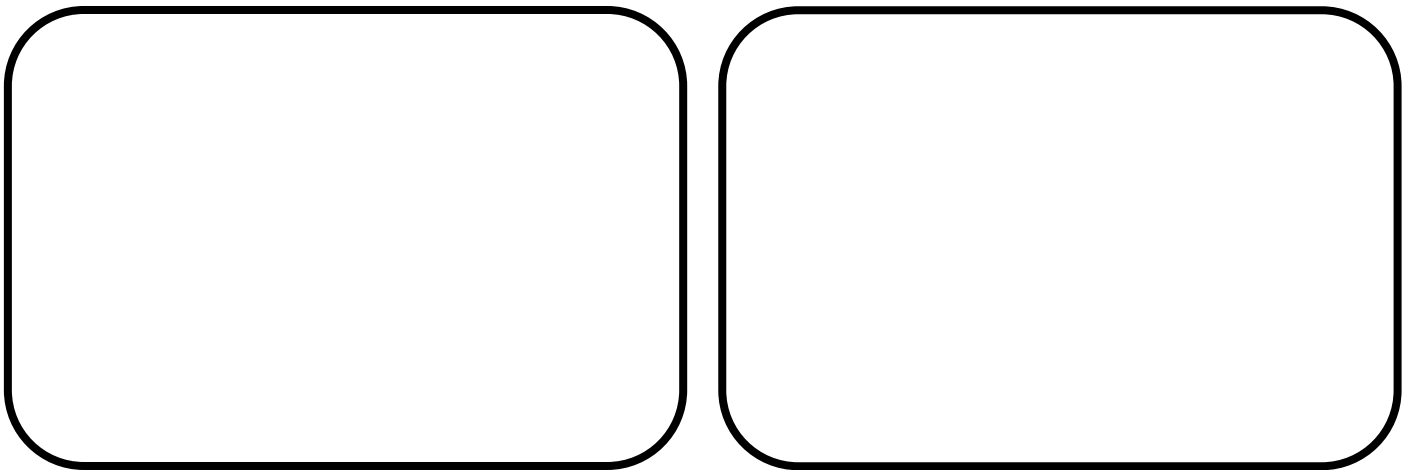
Yosemite National Park was California's first state and national park. It was a popular tourist destination in the last decades of the nineteenth century and remains a popular vacation spot today. This stereograph depicts Cascade Falls located near an entrance to the park. Explore our [online exhibit for more information on Yosemite National Park](#).

## Drawing Activity

***Did you know that the earliest stereographs were drawn, not photographed?***

**Directions:** Imagine that you work for a company that makes stereographs in the late 1800s. Think of a place that you think people would want to see in three dimensions through a stereoscope. It could be something like beautiful scenery in a park, fountains or statues, or historic buildings you have seen in your neighborhood or on vacation. It could even be somewhere you have never been before! Then, either from a photograph you take or an online image you find, draw your picture from two slightly different angles in the stereograph card below.

**Hint:** Look at the stereograph cards above to understand how to draw the two perspectives – there is only a small difference!



**Writing Activity: Compare and Contrast**

Think about the technology you use today (for example, 3D movie glasses to watch a movie in theaters, online videos, video games, etc.) to virtually travel to other places. Next, think about what you've learned about stereographs. Name two similarities and two differences between today's technology and stereographs.

**Reflection Questions**

Name one thing you learned about stereographs. What did you find interesting about them?

Take a moment to read the text on the sides of the stereographs (Note: A transcription of this text has been provided at the end of the document to comply with digital accessibility standards for students who need it.) Why do you think the names of those places are there?

How is looking at a stereograph **without** a stereoscope different than viewing one **with** a stereoscope?

Why were stereographs so popular?

What did you choose to draw in your stereograph scenes and why?

What is one question you still have about stereographs and/or stereoscopes?



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**Stereograph Side Bar Transcript**

Left side

Stereo Views of New York City, Central Park, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Chicago, St. Louis, San Francisco, Cincinnati, Buffalo, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Hartford, Montreal, Quebec, West Point, Hudson River, Niagara Falls

Right side

Stereo Views of comics and groups, statuary, Watkins Glen, Lake George, Saratoga, Newport, Coney Island, Yosemite, California, Virginia, Florida, Minnesota/Switzerland, Ireland, Italy, Holy Land, London, Paris, Rome, etc. etc.