In 2006 an article by Bert M. Zuckerman was published in *Stereo World*: “British Army Survey Views of the Sinai Peninsula 1868-1869.”1 It was one of many that Dr. Zuckerman wrote about 19th century stereo photographs of the Middle East after retiring in 1995 from the University of Massachusetts Amherst where he had been professor for 40 years. His professional specialty was Plant Pathology and he was a world renowned expert on the biology of nematodes. However, as a regular attendee at NSA conventions we knew him as Bert Zuckerman, a prolific collector and historian of stereos of the Middle East, especially those of Palestine.

My interest in early photography of the Middle East did not begin until after I became fascinated by the lithographs of David Roberts, a Scottish painter who toured the Middle East from 1838-1840. Unfortunately this new interest occurred after Bert Zuckerman passed away in 2011 and thus I was unable to discuss it with him. However it compelled me to go back and re-read his articles. It also pointed out the influence that Roberts had on photographers such as Francis Frith. However, of all Bert’s articles the one on “British Army Survey Views of the Sinai Peninsula 1868-1869” stood out. He obtained the five stereo photographs of the expedition used as illustrations from me in an early exchange. I still remember his excitement in being able to add them to his collection.

Since then I have been able to re-acquire two of those views and add others, in addition to some larger format prints by McDonald that were also made from the expedition. In doing so I also have been able to compile a list for the group of thirty-six stereo photographs mentioned by Dr. Zuckerman in his article. The list is being provided here in his memory.

It should be mentioned that there still remains some confusion about how many stereo photographs by James McDonald of the Sinai Survey were issued by the Ordinance Survey Office in Southampton. In Kathleen Stewart Howe’s essay for the 1997 exhibition, *Revealing The Holy Land, The Photographic Exploration Of Palestine*, she states “The stereo views were offered as a set of seventy-five cards…”2,3 It is possible that a smaller set of thirty-six views was also made available by the Palestine Exploration Fund, a British society that provided support for the Survey. In his article Dr. Zuckerman mentions that the Scottish National Library has all the volumes produced as a result of the Sinai Survey as well as a set of thirty-six stereoviews and he had not seen a view labeled higher than number thirty-six. To date I have not either.

The stereo photographs are on square corner yellow mounts with the logo of the War Office Topographical Department printed on the backside along with the view title and view number in the upper right corner (Figures 1 & 2). Stereo photograph No. 2 (Figure 3) shows the non-commissioned officers of the Royal Engineers including McDonald plus the cook, servant and Arab guide. Over 300 photographs were reportedly made during the expedition4 including larger format albumen prints that were part of a three volume published report. A number of the larger photographs were taken at the same place and approximate time as the stereo photographs (Figure 4). However, their coverage of the expedition appears to be more extensive, including a number of photographs that are part of panoramas5, and they have printed numbers that go well beyond thirty-six.

Although members of expedition were included in the photographs taken by McDonald, such as the view of the Royal Engineers Camp (Figures 5 & 6), the majority of the images were topographical as shown in stereo No. 18 - Ravine behind Convent, leading up to Jebel Musa (Figures 7 & 8). A key mission of the Survey for the army was to determine a safe land route to India, which was England’s most valuable colonial possession.

Leonard A. Walle
August 17, 2020
Endnotes:


3. In his article on page 31, Bert Zuckerman mentions that Darrah states there were more than 150 stereos from the Ordinance Survey and references one view of the series illustrated in *The World Of Stereograph* (William C. Darrah, 1977), p. 245. The view is No. 4 – Bedawin Encampment, Men sitting round the wood fire.

4. Howe, p. 41.

5. Howe, pp. 84, 86-87.

Stereo Photographs:

1. Members of the Sinai Expedition and guides at Wady Feiran.
2. The Non-commissioned Officers of the Royal Engineers, on the Sinai Expedition, with cook, servant, and Arab guide, at Wady Feiran.
3. Group of Natives, with women grinding corn.
4. Bedawin Encampment, Men sitting round the wood fire.
6. Palm Grove, Wady Feiran.
7. Well and Shaduf in Palm Grove, Wady Feiran.
8. Gardens near Camp in Wady Feiran.
9. Shittim Tree, dedicated to patron Saint.
10. The Palm Grove, Wady Feiran, with distant view of Jebel Serbal.
11. Wady Aleyat and Jebel Serbal, from Jebel Tabunch, North of Wady Fairan.
12. Wady Feiran, and ancient tombs on the North side.
14. Wady Aleyat and Jebel Serbal.
15. Wady Aleyat, looking North.
16. From the Model of Jebel Musea.
17. Inscription on Rocks near the base of Serbal.
18. Royal Engineers’ camp in Wady ed Deir, and Jebel Sona.
19. Ras Sufsafeh from the watershed of the Plain Er Rabah.
20. Summit of Jebel Musa.
22. Ravine behind Convent, leading up to Jebel Musa.
23. The lower Arch on Steps leading up to Jebel Musa.
24. Cyprus Tree, top of Jebel Musa.
25. Plain of Er Rahah from the Cleft on Ras Sufsafeh.
26. From the summit of Jebel Musa, looking South-west.
27. From the summit of Jebel Musa, looking North.
29. Hejgar Musa (Moses’ Rock), Wady Leja.
30. Well in Wady Haramee.
31. Part of Jebel ed Deir near the Convent of St. Katherine.
32. Convent of St. Katherine, and Steps leading up the Jebel Musa.
33. Priests and Servants of the Convent of St. Katherine.
34. Corridor in the Convent of St. Katherine.
35. Interior of the Chapel, Convent of St. Katherine.
36. Egyptian Tablet, Wady Magharah.
Figure 1 - War Office Topographical Department logo

Figure 2 – View No. 2 verso

ORDNANCE SURVEY OF SINAI.
1869.

The Non-commissioned officers of the Royal Engineers, on the Sinai Expedition, with cook, servant, and Arab guide, at Wady Feiran.
Figure 3 – Stereo photograph No. 2 with Sergeant James McDonald standing next to a surveyor’s scope

Figure 4 – Albumen photograph 6½ x 8½ inches of Non-commissioned Officers of the Survey. Color Sergeant J. McDonald, R.E. shown standing, fourth from the left
Figure 5 – Stereo photograph No. 18: Royal Engineer’s Camp in Wady ed Deir, and Jebel Sona.

Figure 6 – View No. 18 verso
Figure 7 - Stereo Photograph No. 22: Ravine behind Convent, leading up to Jebel Musa.

Figure 8 – View No. 22 verso