A GUIDE TO
THE PHOTOGRAPHIC
COLLECTIONS

Fenimore Art Museum &
The Farmers’ Museum

Cooperstown, New York
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Cooperstown, New York

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Foreword

Fenimore Art Museum is dedicated to welcoming and connecting people to our shared cultural heritage through exhibitions and programs that engage, delight, and inspire. The Farmers’ Museum strives to cultivate an understanding of the rural heritage that has shaped our land, communities and American culture. The photograph collections of the Fenimore Art Museum & The Farmers’ Museum, numbering more than 100,000 images are among its most important holdings.

As far back as 1889, The British Journal of Photography discussed ways the true history of society could be handed down. They urged the taking, and preserving of photographs, concluding that photographs would be “most valuable documents a century hence”.1 Painter Henri Matisse stated in 1908 that “photography can provide the most precious documents existing, and no one can contest its value from that point of view”.2 In 1935 even the American government directed a vast photographic project to document American rural life in depth; a collection that is both individual and cohesive, using artistic faculties to give “vivification to fact”.3

In the original publication of the guide in 1997, Milo V. Stewart, then Curator of Prints & Photographs wrote of the collections, “They represent the history and technology of photography and provide a rich visual documentation of times past; the shared experiences of, for the most part, ordinary people engaged in everyday activities. Here we find what we wore, how we fixed our hair, parades, construction, disasters, and all matter of people, places, and events; often pictured artfully with grace and sensitivity.”

The Guide to the Photographic Collections provides an overview of what is in these holdings, their forms, and the subjects they portray.

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Introduction

This guide to the Photographic Collections of the Fenimore Art Museum provides a brief description of each of the bodies of photographic works held by the museum.

The format of the Guide is as follows:

Each collection carries a specific name, Usually the photographers, when known. (e.g., The Leonard Dakin Collection) In other instances, the collection is referenced by the donor’s name (e.g., The Parrillo Collection) while others reflect the form in which the images exist (e.g., The Daguerreotype Collection). Along with the name of the collections is the time span represented by the photographs (e.g., 1853-1953). Beneath the time span the number of images in that collection is indicated.

The heart of the guide is the narrative description, accompanied by representative images in each collection. These descriptions have been compiled through the years from writings of CGP students, staff photographers, and museum Photography Collection Managers.
The A. Leo Stevens Collection
1907-1938
5 Photographic Prints

This collection contains five photographic prints.

Albert Leo Stevens was pioneering balloonist and played a key role in the development of safety features for parachutes. He participated in the Gordon Bennett Cup balloon races and flew one of the first dirigibles in the United States in 1906. He opened the first private airfield in the nation in 1909. During World War I he was a US Army instructor. He created the Beasley School in Fly Creek, New York.

Related Materials: Additional items in N0005.2021, four membership cards, & one leather trifold wallet belonging to A. Leo Stevens. Images of A. Leo Stevens' Beasley School, Fly Creek, N.Y. in Smith & Telfer Glass Plate Collection (N0266.1951). Balloon basket & netting (F0659.1947), 9 ballasts (F0148.1947), anchor (F0660.1947) belonging to A. Leo Stevens, all donated by Mrs. Stevens.
The Album Collection  
c. 1850-1920  
30 Albums

This collection includes 30 albums. The earlier albums contain Cartes de Visite, Cabinet Cards, and Tintypes portraits of individuals from Cooperstown and other areas of New York State. The early twentieth-century albums have snapshots, original prints, and postcards. Albums of special interest include a series of photographs documenting the construction of the Ashokan Reservoir. Albums contain images taken by Smith & Telfer, Delong & Robie and Luzerne M. Bolles. As well as images of the several families, Camp Chenango and Otsego Lake, Fort Plain & Herkimer area residents, and other subjects.

See also: 88 Additional albums can be found in the Carriage & Harness Museum, “Cap” Smith, Smith & Telfer, Zabriskie, Steiner, Plowline, and Railroad Album Collections.


The Ansel Adams Collection
1942-1958
4 Silver Gelatin Prints

Ansel Adams was a landscape photographer and environmentalist known for his black and white images of the American West. He helped found a group of photographers that advocated "pure" photography with sharp focus and full tonal range. He was a life-long advocate for environmental conservation with which his photography was deeply entwined. He was a member of the Sierra Club. He was hired by the government to make photographs of national parks. For his work he was awarded the presidential Medal of Freedom in 1980. He was a key advisor in establishing the photography department at the Museum of Modern Art.

This collection includes Four of Adams' silver gelatin prints.

The Grand Tetons and Snake River, 1942, Gelatin silver print, H: 15.8 x W: 19 in., Gift of the Thaw Charitable Trust.


The Ambrotype Collection
1850-1900
54 Ambrotypes

James Ambrose Cutting patented the ambrotype process in 1854. Ambrotypes were most popular in the mid-1850s to mid-1860s. An ambrotype is comprised of an underexposed glass negative placed against a dark background. The dark backing material creates a positive image. Photographers often applied pigments to the surface of the plate to add color, often tinting cheeks and lips red and adding gold highlights to jewelry, buttons, and belt buckles. Ambrotypes were sold in either cases or ornate frames to provide an attractive product and also to protect the negative with a cover glass and brass mat.

The Fenimore Art Museum & The Farmers' Museum hold a collection of 54 Ambrotypes by unidentified Photographers. Most are unidentified subjects; however, some are identified as George Baily, James Washington Fahnstock, Richard Ensey Fahnstock, Abram Fonda, Mary Jane Potter Fonda, Ida Bell Fonda, Susan Delancey Fenimore Cooper, Sylvinia VanDeusen, Mary Allwood, Joseph Richard Mahnon Miller, Mrs. William Lovelace, Joshua Dewey, James Chase, Jennie Noble, and Actor George Jordan.

See also: 16 Additional Ambrotypes can be found in the Blodgett, Charles T. Berry, Cooper Family and Plowline Collections.
The Barnes Collection
1895-1920
948 images

Lantern Slides made or collected by amateur photographer Willis G. Barnes (1863-1931). Barnes' interest in photograph was concerned exclusively with lantern sides and he is not known to have done any work with paper prints.

This collection of Lantern slides, most of which depict New York City and State, include street scenes, images of bridges, buildings, aerial views, and events such as the Triangle Shirt Waist Fire of 1911. Also included are slides produced by the Edison Company of various appliances, machinery, and brightly lit buildings and streets; a series showing the operation of the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City; views of Niagara Falls, the Catskills, New England, Washington D.C., California, and several other western states.

American businessman Edward Severin Clark built a fully equipped 100-bed fieldstone hospital building. Named "The Mary Imogene Bassett Hospital," it was meant as a living memorial to Dr. Bassett, a physician who devoted herself generously for many years to the sick and unfortunate of Cooperstown and the surrounding region. Starting in 1947 under the leadership of Dr. James Bordley III, Bassett's education programs expanded to include nurses, and in response to nationwide nursing shortages, Bassett initiated undergraduate nursing education and affiliations.

This collection includes five loose photographs, one dated 1992. Two framed photographs dated 1990 and 1991 and 54 photographs on scrapbook pages with no date.
The Blodgett Collection
1878-1915
336 images

This collection was made, printed, or collected by George L. Blodgett, a life-long resident of Cooperstown, and the son of a Cooperstown physician. He was born July 20, 1865, and died January 16, 1938, in the same house at 14 Lake Street, Cooperstown.

The bulk of the collection consists of informal photographs of friends and family, and local scenery, including Lake Otsego and the Susquehanna River. Also included are photos of circuses, domestic interiors, horse racing, farm work, and actors in the 1913 film The Deerslayer.

The Cabinet Card Collection
1866-1914
309 images

This collection includes over 300 of these larger offshoots of the Cartes de Visite. Paper prints measuring about 5.5 x 4 inches were pasted to standard sized cardboard mounts usually measuring 6.5 x 4.25 inches, dating from the late 1860s, they feature likenesses of a range of persons, many unidentified, as well as those well-known. Most are the work of New York State photographers.

See also: Additional Cabinet Cards can be found in the Cilella., Charles T. Berry, John Marsh, J.C Perry, Suffragist, Cooper Family and Plowline Collections.
The “Cap” Smith Collection
1914-1940
18 Albums

These albums contain nearly 6,000 prints made or collected by George N. “Cap” Smith of Cooperstown and are largely of the snapshot genre. Most of the photographs were taken on winter hikes organized by Smith for the community. They include shots of people trekking through snowdrifts in snowshoes, sledding, skiing, and cooking out. The other photographs feature Cooperstown residents, views of Otsego Lake and the Susquehanna River, and images of people participating in recreational activities.


The Carriage & Harness Museum Collection
Mid/Late 19th to Early/Mid 20th Century
115 images & 3 albums

The Carriage & Harness Museum, operated by the New York Historical Association, was closed in 1978. The museum housed items once owned by F. Ambrose Clark.

The images in this collection include coaches, horses, stables, cabs & wagonettes, including those of F. A. Clark & Iroquois Stables.


Jockey and Racehorse, c. 1925-35, Unidentified Photographer, print, N0202.1978
The Brute c. 1920, Unidentified Photographer, print, Gift of Elizabeth Curran. N0283.1978
The Cartes de Visite Collection
1855-1910
597 images

The Cartes de Visite collection is an excellent sampling of this photographic form. Mounted on a piece of card the size of a formal visiting card—hence the name, the format was patented by the French photographer Andre Adolphe Eugene Disdéri (1819–89) in 1854. Collecting celebrity Cartes de Visite in albums reached its peak during the 1860s, but the format remained popular until the beginning of the 20th century. Cartes were small paper prints—about 3.5 x 2 inches pasted onto standard sized cardboard mounts, about 4 x 2.5 inches. This size remained unchanged throughout the carte’s history.

This collection contains images created by photographers in New York State and elsewhere. The collection includes images of landscapes, religious subjects, artworks, and genre scenes, as well as photographs of individuals and groups. Celebrity portraits cover everyone from small-town luminaries to nationally known politicians, educators, soldiers, artists and circus people, among others.

See also: Additional Cartes can be found in the Cilella, Charles T. Berry, John Marsh, J.C Perry, Suffragist, Cooper Family, PH Subject Files and Plowline Collections.
The Cilella Collection
1862-1889
26 images

Salvatore G. Cilella Jr. was the former president & CEO of the Atlanta Historical Society. A member of the Atlanta Civil War Round Table, served as consultant to several museums and published on American Prints and the Civil War.

This collection includes 26 images including Cartes de Visite, Tintypes, Photographic Prints and Cabinet Cards, pertaining to the 121st Regiment of New York State Volunteers in the Civil War, donated by Mr. Cilella


The Cooper Collection
1839-1900
100 images

Judge William Cooper founded the Village of Cooperstown at the foot of the lake in 1786, Husband of Elizabeth Fenimore Cooper, Father of Richard Fenimore Cooper; Hannah Cooper; Ann Cooper; Abraham Cooper; Isaac Cooper; Ann B. Cooper; Elizabeth Cooper; William Yeardley Cooper; Samuel Cooper; James Fenimore Cooper and Henry Frey Wager Cooper.

The most well-known being author, James Fenimore Cooper- married to Susan Augusta Delancey- Father to 7 children, including Susan Augusta Fenimore Cooper.

The collection includes, an album, Cartes de Visite, Cabinet cards, postcards, photographs, Daguerreotypes, Tintypes, and an Ambrotype of individuals from the Cooper Family.

Related Material: The Cooper Collection of the Fenimore Art Museum Research Library Coll. No. 123
The Covid 19 Collection
2020-2021
21 digital images

This collection includes 20 digital images of statues in Cooperstown New York, including James Fenimore Cooper, The Sandlot Kid, The Indian Hunter and The WWI soldier and 1 image of All-American Girls Professional Baseball League statue at NBHOF, with masks covering their mouths and noses in reference to the mask mandate policy due to the Coronavirus pandemic of 2019.

Related Material: N0004.2021(02) Mask found on the AAGPBL statue. N0007.2020(01-10) Neoprene masks by Sam Ross

Masked Indian Hunter Statue, 2020, Abby Rodd, digital photograph, N0009:2020(04).

AAGPBL Masked Statue, 2021, Milo Stewart Jr., digital photograph, Gift of the National Baseball Hall of Fame, N0004:2021(01).
Joseph Constantino was born and raised in Manhattan. Although Constantino worked at times as a sports and nature photographer, street photography interested him most. Street photographers set out with their camera to capture images in public places. Rather than pose their subjects, they photograph people and moments that they happen to encounter. “Street photography is usually when a photographer takes a picture of the subject, and the subject is not aware that the photo is being taken,” Constantino also photographed Long Island. His images of the region make use of solarization and infrared photography to create moody, ethereal images of buildings and landscapes. This Collection highlights solarized black-and-white photographs by Joseph Constantino who explores the architectural wonders of New York City, the Tampa Bay area, and Long Island, New York.
The Daguerreotype Collection
1850-1900
110 images

Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre invented the daguerreotype process in France in 1839. American photographers quickly capitalized on this invention, which was capable of capturing a "truthful likeness." Daguerreotypists invited celebrities and political figures to their studios in the hopes of obtaining a likeness for display in their windows and reception areas. They encouraged the public to visit their galleries, which were like museums, in the hope that they would desire to be photographed as well. Popularity of the daguerreotype began to decline in the late 1850s.

The Collection includes Daguerreotypes dating as early as 1850's. Portraits of individuals and groups, some who have been identified as Robert Henry Van Rensselaer, "Prince" John Van Buren, Brigadier General T. Ellery Lord, Along with last names of: Berenholts, Graves, Moors, Meeks, Morris, Lake, Crafts, Truslow, Clarke, Galpin, Sawyer, Burnham, Filer, McNamee, Stone, Chase, Shaw, and Olendorf.

Related Materials: includes items from the following collections: Zabriskie, Charles T. Berry, Cooper Family, The Farmers' Museum, and Plowline.
The Leonard Dakin Collection
1885-1900
421 images

This is a collection of 331 glass plate negatives and 90 lantern slides dating primarily from the late 1880s, much of this collection was taken in and around Cherry Valley New York where the Dakin estate “Uplawn” was located. Included are photographs of people, portraying life among the wealthy and genteel during the late Victorian Period. Also among the pictures are early examples of "instantaneous" or stop-action photography. Dakin archived a rapid shutter release by adapting rubber bands to the drop shutter of his camera.

Dakin’s work conveys a positive, up-beat mood. We see laughter and gaiety; men in bowlers and tight-corseted women in cumbersome skirts leaping fences. Dakin’s photographs are a rich source of information about a wealthy Victorian family and their community, relationships, diversions, dress, household décor, and architecture.

Related Material:
- Taft, Pauline (Dakin) The Happy Valley: The Elegant Eighties in Upstate New York LHR 974.774 12 T124 c.1


The Doubleday Collection
1894-1917
271 images

William H. Doubleday Jr. became an amateur photographer with the coming of the dry plate. He was not representative of any particular style, but simply took photographs of things which interested him or touched his life in some way.

This collection consists of 266 dry plate glass negatives and five prints made from flexible nitrate film negatives. Most of the images are people, places the photographer visited, various festive occasions and major events in Cooperstown and surrounding areas, most interesting being photographs concerning a dramatic robbery in the history of Cooperstown.
The Hansi Durlach Collection
1960-1970
187 images

Hansi Durlash was born in Vienna, Austria in 1930 and experienced the early stages of the German Anschluss. She immigrated to the U.S when she was eight years old. In the mid 1950s she began to study photography independently and with noted photographers such as Berenice Abbott and Minor White. Her career included documentaries on Merida, Mexico, Israeli Palestinians, and Vietnam Veterans.

This collection of 187 photographic prints & negatives of Sharon Springs, New York reflects the style of Humanist Photography.

The Ellsworth Collection
1875-1920
150 images

Edward Ellsworth was more interested in photography as a pleasurable pastime than as a serious artistic pursuit. Although the majority of his pictures were taken in Poughkeepsie, New York, (where he was once mayor) a significant number were taken during vacations at Watch Hill, Rhode Island, Martha’s Vineyard, and along the Schroon and Chateauguay Rivers in the Adirondacks. Other photographs feature people sailing, picnicking, camping, working, or simply relaxing. A series of intriguing plates document the Poughkeepsie Bridge while it was under construction. The bridge was the second largest in the world when it was initially built in 1886-1888.

The Ellsworth Collection is an interesting source of information about sights and events in the Poughkeepsie area and about upper-class life during the late Victorian period. In addition, the collection reveals the interests, working habits, and technical concerns of a representative amateur photographer of the period.
Irene Fay (1914-1986) In the 1930s Gotthard Schuh was advertising in the newspaper for a darkroom assistant. He was Switzerland's pre-eminent photojournalist. Irene won the job and worked with him over the next three years. Concurrently, she took up a year-long study with photographer Hans Finsler, who taught her the art of photographic chemistry. By the end of the Second World War, Fay was working in Zurich as an independent portrait photographer and there she remained, until 1948. Fay's next move was to The United States where she met friends Andre Kertesz, Lisette Model and Diane Arbus at the famed New York camera club. Becoming naturalized in 1954, she worked primarily as a freelance photographer. In 1973, Fay began a ten-year relationship with the Witkin Gallery who acted as her agent. The images she produced during her years in the U.S. proved to be her most famous.

This collection includes 137 of her silver gelatin prints relating to the family farm in New Kingston, New York. They include family, neighbors, and the surrounding Catskill landscape. Of special interest are the everyday objects, which her eye and camera transform into unique images.
The Germann Collection
1982-2007
216 images

Ray Germann is a professional musician, became interested in photography in 1977 and began visiting photography galleries during afternoon breaks from playing in the pit orchestra. He enrolled in adult education classes in photography; took a course on “Making the Fine Print” from George Ice at the New School for Social Research; and moved from 35mm and 2 ¼ square formats to a 4x5 field camera, his preference.

Ray Germann’s photographs have been exhibited on Long Island and in New York City, as well as at the Fenimore Art Museum.

The images in this collection- all black and white 11x14 inch prints, include work he has done in the Finger Lakes Region and New York City. The Finger Lakes images feature the natural landscape, farms, roadside signs and structures, and abandoned machinery and buildings. The New York City material, all in Manhattan, features people on the streets, festivals, storefronts, signs, notable landmarks, and well-known buildings. Further acquisitions include images from the Adirondacks and eastern Long Island.
The Glass Plate Collection
C. 1850-1920
500+ images

Using glass and not paper as a foundation, allowed for a sharper, more stable and detailed negative, and several prints could be produced from one negative. There are two basic types of glass plate negatives: collodion wet plate and gelatin dry plate. Wet plate negatives were in use from the early 1850s until the 1880s. The wet plate process, including exposure and processing, had to happen before the collodion emulsion dried. Collodion wet plate negatives characteristically have uneven emulsion coatings, and thick glass with rough edges. Silver gelatin-coated dry plate negatives, on the other hand, were usable when dry and thus more easily transported, and required less exposure to light than the wet plates. Dry plate negatives are typically on thinner glass plates, with a more evenly coated emulsion. Dry plate glass negatives were in common use between the 1880s and the late 1920s.

This collection includes several gifts of glass plates created by collectors Joseph Mitchell, Ruth Chase-Bly, Eleanor & Kurt Langel, John Jackson, Harry Cotterell Jr., Newton Gilmore, and Grace Root. These images include local and New York State landmarks and people. In addition, amateur photographer Frank Martin’s dry-plate negatives document the Cooperstown area at the turn of the century.


The Gray Collection
C. 1948-2002
156 images

The Gray Collection consists of works of Milton Rogovin and Todd Webb. Rogovin is arguably the most important 20th century black-and-white photographer who plied his craft in Upstate NY; his five-decade career was grounded in his studio on Buffalo’s Lower West Side. His portraits of the world’s working-class men and women have a quiet dignity that have inspired a dozen books and major museum retrospectives. Todd Webb photographed the streets and architecture of New York, Paris and beyond in the 1940’s. The Gray collection is also rich in vintage press prints and wire photos of the Civil Rights movement and the Vietnam War.


The Halsey Collection
1896-1901
235 images

Charles Bryant Halsey (1880-1944) an amateur photographer, vacationed at Avon-by-the-Sea, New Jersey, which seemed to have created his interest in photographing sailboats and yachts.

This collection includes 223 dry plates, and 12 lantern slides taken by Charles Bryant Halsey between 1896 and 1901. Approximately half of this collection of dry plates and lantern slides depict scenes of New York City, including streets, landmarks, parades, buildings, portraits, and boats. There are also intriguing pictures of the dedication of Grant's Tomb. The other photographs were taken during Halsey Family vacations in Bermuda, the Adirondacks, and at the Jersey Shore.

New York City Street Scene, c. 1900, Charles Bryant Halsey, glass plate negative, Gift of Agnes Halsey Jones. N0074.1976(002).


Young Man Reclining, c. 1900, Charles Bryant Halsey, glass plate negative, Gift of Agnes Halsey Jones. N0074.1976(003).
The Hobart Morris Collection

c. 1900-1920
152 images

There is some evidence to suggest that these glass plate negatives were the work of a professional photographer named Blackwell, who had a picture business in Edmeston, N.Y at the time of World War I. The collection carries the name of the donor, Hobart Morris.

The collection includes portraits of people, street scenes, businesses, and houses, primarily from Edmeston, N.Y. and the surrounding area.
The Johnson Collection

C. 1900

650 images

Alexander E. Johnson was an electrician and a skilled amateur photographer from Hudson, New York.

This collection features Columbia County, New York, and includes portraits of family and friends, firemen, and railroad and factory workers. Images of storefronts, factories, hotels, and residential structures round out the collection. There are also photographs of trolleys and railroads, views of the Hudson Valley, shots of power plants, electrical switching stations, and machinery.


The Karp Collection
1875-1925
379 images

Donor Ivan Karp was an American Art Dealer instrumental in the emergence of Pop Art and development of Manhattan's So-Ho Gallery District in the 1960's. He was the first art critic of the Village Voice in 1955 and opened OK Harris Gallery in So-Ho in 1969. Marilynn Karp was a sculptor, Professor Emerita at N.Y.U, and a collector & historian of extraordinary objects and ephemera.

This collection includes 379 Photographic Prints of varied local and subjects spanning from Late 19th to early 20th Centuries. (c. 1875-1925)
The Knapp Collection  
c. 1900  
102 images

The collection is attributed to the family of Loren B. Knapp of Cooperstown, with Loren’s son, William P. probably the chief photographer. Loren B. Knapp worked for the Clark Estates as supervisor of the Knox School, now the Otesaga Hotel.

This collection of dry glass plate negatives records people, landscapes, and events in and around Cooperstown. There are views of Main Street in winter, hop yards and pickers, Otsego Lake, and scenes of Waterville, Sangerfield, and Index. A hot air balloon ascension, parades, and the construction of the YMCA (now Cooperstown Village Office Building) are also recorded. Some artistic images, including still-life, nudes, and a rare night photograph of Lake Street round out this interesting collection.


The Lantern Slide Collection

c. 1850-1940
160+ images

Lantern slides are small glass transparencies, typically 3.25 x 4 inches, designed for use in a projector that casts an enlarged image on a screen or other flat surface. This technology dates back as early as the 1600s when candles and then lamps and lanterns were used to project scenes drawn by hand on glass plates to tell stories for entertainment and education. By 1850, not long after the invention of photography, lantern slides were also used for photographic images.

We have several collections of lantern slides, including but not limited to, The Unadilla Lantern Slide Collection, a collection of images of Cooperstown, Unadilla, Gilbertsville and other surrounding areas. The Joseph McCosker collection contains seven stereographic lantern slides dating from the 1850s of New York State landmarks. The Gilmore Collection includes fourteen color lantern slides used for advertising purposes. In addition we hold an Earnst Warrin, c.. 1890 cartoon series.


The Parrillo Collection
c. 1925
106 images

George H. White was a banker, his wife Minnie was a teacher living in Cooperstown, NY. The collection carries the name of the donor, Louis Parrillo.

The collection is made up of prints from 106 Nitrate negatives taken by & for Minnie Marsh White and George White on their trip around the world, particularly the Near and Far East.
The John Calvin Perry Collection
1837-1894
23 images

John Calvin Perry (1837-1894) was a farmer in rural Central New York who devoted most of his life painting for his community and teaching classes in area seminaries and surrounding towns. His interest in art began at a young age and he learned about painting much on his own. Over the years Perry continued his painting of portraits (whenever possible working from a photograph), as well as doing coloring work on Cartes de Visites between 1864 and 1866 and painting scenery for backdrops in photography studios in and around Cazenovia N.Y. One significant area of his portrait work, due to the high rate of infant mortality, were posthumous portraits of children.

This collection includes three tintypes, four cartes de visite, and sixteen photos/cabinet cards donated by Miles Pease.
The Photograph Collections
1850-present
3500+ Images

Our Photograph Collections include many small collections of images from professional & amateur photographers, and many collectors. Included (but not limited to) in this large portion of our collection are the following:

The PH Subject Collection
The “PH” designation refers to the collection of “Original” photographs (to distinguish them from the modern prints made from vintage negatives- as with the Smith & Telfer materials) It is a substantial collection of more than 3000 images, c. 1850-present, which constantly grows with new acquisitions. It contains most forms in which the photographic image has been made. The file is readily accessible and easily used, since it is arranged alphabetically by subject. The photographs relate primarily to New York State and pertain to everything from people, weddings, and schools to poultry, statuary and acrobats.

The Bernice Mason Collection
Donated by Bernice Mason, in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Henry J. Durgin of San Jose, California, this collection is comprised of 66 commercially produced stereographs, mostly of western New York subjects; and 137 remarkable images of Rochester, Pittsford, and the Genesee Valley, c. 1870-1900.

The September 11th Collection
Set of 12 stereoview photographs documenting the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center towers.

The Spaulding Collection
158 images taken and/or collected by Harry Spaulding, of Cooperstown and surrounding area, c.1897-1940.

The Myers Collection
45 images of men, women and children as well as landscapes, c. 1900.

The Sapienza Collection

The Scholl Collection
3 images of Southampton N.Y
**The H. Smith Collection**
55 photographs of various subjects - portraits, animals, farm scenes, Cooperstown Centennial 1907, church group, train wreck.

**The Grimm Collection**
22 images of the properties of the Clark family and others in Cooperstown, NY c. 1927-1931.

**The Curtis Collection**
Goldtone photograph, “Rush Gatherer” by Edward S. Curtis

**The Clifford Oliver Collection**

**The Tucker Collection**
2 images by Toba Tucker; “Tohadahoh Chief Leon Shenandoah, Eel Clan” and “Anthony L. Durand”.

**The Denis Defibaugh Collection**
2 images from the 2022 exhibit North by Nuuk; Greenland After Rockwell Kent our holdings include two images of the beaches of Greenland c. 2016-17.

**The Stephens Collection**
3 images from the exhibit of “Peter Stephens Photography” 1998

**The Sonneman Collection**
2 images c.1989 from the 2000 exhibit “French Gardens: Fresson Photographs by Eve Sonneman”

**The Pfahl Collection**
3 images from the 1998 “Niagara Falls” exhibit by photographer John Pfahl c. 1995-96.

**The Faller Collection**
6 Documentary photographs by Marion Faller from the 1999 exhibit “Marion Faller Photography”, of cultural traditions and public displays celebrating seasonal events, folklore, popular religious customs, and displays of patriotism c. 1988-1998.

**The Mark Zeek Collection**
16 images of Cooperstown and its residents by Mark Zeek c. 1969-1978.
The Stephen Wilkes Collection
Fuji Crystal Archival Photograph, “Pont de la Tournelle, Paris, Day to Night” 2013

The Georgia O’Keeffe Collection
Image of Georgia O’Keeffe’s Studio by Todd Webb
Portrait of Georgia O’Keeffe by Yousuf Karsh


The Plowline Collection, a Project of The Farmers’ Museum
19th century-Present
18,000 + Images

Since 2010 the Plowline collection has grown to over 18,000 images which include daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, tintypes, lantern slides from the Cornell University Dairy Department, and other early photography formats, real photo post cards, aerial photographs, negatives, photographic prints, photojournalism prints, artistic photography, digital works by contemporary photographers, family snapshots, and albums all documenting citizens of rural towns, their homes, farms, businesses and lives.

The collection has come from a variety of sources including antique photography shows, as well as donations from local photographers, families, and collectors who share our passion for preserving our past, present, and future through images.
The Porcelain Print Collection
1870-1880
9 images

A porcelain print, or Opalotype is an early technique of photography. Opalotypes were printed on sheets of opaque, translucent white glass. Early opalotypes were sometimes hand-tinted with colors to enhance their effect. The basic opalotype technique, involving wet collodion and silver gelatin, was patented in 1857. Opalotypes exploited two basic techniques, using either the transfer of a carbon print onto glass, or the exposure of light-sensitive emulsion on the glass surface to the negative. Opalotype photography, never common, was practiced in various forms until it waned and disappeared in the 1930s. "Milk glass positive" is another alternative term for an opalotype.

This collection includes five cased, one framed, one pin, and two uncased, loose portraits on porcelain milk glass.
The Postcard Collection
1900
350 images

The postcard collection contains a great many images generated by a photographic process and are an important part of the visual resources of the institution.

Those that are in the Fenimore Art Museum photograph collection include Real Photo Postcards of the Cooperstown area scenes.

Re- Fenimore Art Museum Library Postcard Collection


The Railroad Album Collection
c. 1910
10 albums

These large (20 x 28 inch) volumes are the result of a photographic inventory of structures along the proposed New York State route for the Buffalo, Rochester and Eastern R.R. Co., which was surveyed about 1910. There are nearly 500 photographs of structures: mills, factories, hotels, churches, stores, homes, barns, wagon and blacksmith shops, schools, foundries, post offices, and a variety of manufacturing operations. The photographs are organized in a west to east manner, beginning in Buffalo and Tonawanda and concluding with Guilderland and Fullers, on the outskirts of Albany. Places along the way include Spencerport, Greece, South Sodus, Wayne, Rose, Cato, Lysander, Cicero, Oneida, New York Mills, Frankfort, Little Falls, Carlisle, and Esperance, among others. With few exceptions, each photograph is numbered, and its subject identified.
The Herb Ritts Collection
c. 1985-2002
36 images

Herbert Ritts Jr. (1952–2002) was an American fashion photographer and director known for his photographs of celebrities, models, and other cultural figures throughout the 1980s and 1990s. His work concentrated on black and white photography and portraits, often in the style of classical Greek sculpture, which emphasized the human shape.

This collection consists of portraits including that of Gianni Versace, Juliet Man Ray, Keith Haring, Nelson Mandela, Merce Cunningham, and Ru Paul, among others.
The Rollins Collection
1950-2005
1,600 + Images

Franklyn Rollins (1917-2013) was a music teacher by profession, but photography was his lifelong passion. Though never formally trained as a photographer, Frank used his self-taught knowledge to document village life. Preferring not to stage posed shots, Frank tried to catch the spirit of the moment and flurry of activity in his photographs.

This collection includes photos, negatives, and proofs documenting the lives, events, landscape, and daily activities of the Village of Cooperstown, New York; over much of the second half of the 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries.
The Smith & Telfer Collection
1853-1953
53,838 Glass Plates, 1260 images, & 3 albums

In this stunning collection, Washington G. Smith and Arthur J. Telfer provided a comprehensive view of the small village of Cooperstown and the surrounding countryside.

While the bulk of Smith’s work consists of portraits, he photographed scenic attractions, street scenes, parades, and many other local events. By the late 1860s Smith was producing stereographs portraying Otsego Lake as well as scenes depicting places in James Fenimore Cooper’s novels. In the late 1880s Arthur J. (Putt) Telfer joined Smith in his business, and the partnership lasted until Smith’s death in 1893. Telfer continued with the business until his retirement in 1953, at which time he was probably America’s oldest working photographer. Like Smith, Telfer derived most of his income from portrait work, but he also photographed village activities. While most of his photographs were taken in Cooperstown, he made frequent trips to other areas of New York State, including New York City.

This collection over 53,000 glass plate negatives, and hundreds of prints. The Smith and Telfer Collection is of particular value because of the large number of photographs which were identified, dated and otherwise annotated. In addition, many of the photographs were made in sequence, often showing the same subjects from a variety of vantage points, or providing close-up details, or contextual views of the area. Many of the scenes and subjects were also photographed on a number of occasions, often years apart, so as well as within space. With an unusual eye for details and a straightforward, unselfconscious approach to their craft, Smith and Telfer have provided a striking portrait of nearly a century of small-town life.

Also in this collection are two albums assembled by Arthur J. Telfer featuring a selection of his pictures from the twenties and thirties, and his images of Oneonta, Cooperstown, and Richfield Springs Railway, including its construction. An especially important album is one assembled by Washington G. Smith, whose studio in Cooperstown was active from 1852-1890. The Album contains contact prints of 643 of his photographs, carefully placed in the album, numbered and identified.
Related Material:

- The Florence P. Ward Collection contains many Smith & Telfer prints.
- Turdean, Cristina, Sitting for Smith: A Photographer and his Clients in the 1860s, Thesis T843.
- The Smith & Telfer Photographic Collection, New York State Historical Association, 1978, Fenimore Library call number: 779.09747 Sm68 c.1
The Pete Souza Collection
1986-2011
6 images

Peter Joseph Souza (born December 31, 1954) is a best-selling author, speaker and freelance photographer based in Madison, Wisconsin. Souza was the Chief Official White House Photographer for Presidents Reagan and Obama and the Director of the White House photo office.

This collection consists of six images from the exhibit *Two Presidents, One Photographer* that showcased 56 of Pete Souza’s photographs of two presidents from opposite ends of the political spectrum. This exhibit includes Souza’s favorite images of Presidents Obama and Reagan, providing us with candid moments that are windows into their humanity. What we see in Souza’s photographs are two Presidents who clearly respected the office they held, and genuinely respected the people they interacted with, no matter the circumstance.
The Gottlieb Steiner Collection
1915-1920
108 Glass Plates, & 2 Albums

Gottlieb Adam Steiner (1844-1916), traveled the western United States and Canada, collecting Native-American woven baskets. “Beacon Lights” basket, acquired by Steiner in about 1905, is considered one of the most well-known and valuable baskets of all time. When the decision was made to sell of the Steiner collection, William S. Huff acquired the four most valuable baskets to honor his grandfather’s achievements. Eventually, two of those, including Dat-so-la-lee’s “Beacon Lights”, went to the Fenimore Art Museum in Cooperstown NY, while the other two went to the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh.

This collection includes 108 Glass-plates negatives of baskets that were formerly in the Gottlieb Steiner Basket Collection and two black screw-post bound scrapbook albums filled with 55/53 printed images (respectively) of the Gottlieb Steiner Basket Collection.
The Stereograph Collection  
1850-1910  
1060 images

Stereographs, a popular form of photography in the 18th century, consist of two nearly identical photographs paired to produce the illusion of a single three-dimensional image, usually when viewed through a set of special lenses called a stereoscope. The earliest stereoscopes were invented in the late 1830s, but it wasn’t until the Great Exhibition of 1851 that a practical method of publishing stereo images was introduced to the public. Throughout the 1850s the popularity of stereographic images grew, and before long many thousands of cards printed with side-by-side images were being sold. The popularity of stereoview cards was fading by 1900.

The collection contains over 1,000 views of celebrations, wartime events, disasters, still-life, work and leisure activities, architecture, sports, and illustrations of popular Victorian poetry and novels. The stereograph collection also includes. A boxed set of images from countries around the world, commemorating the 1900 Expositions Universalle International.


The Milo Stewart Collection
1974-1990
3 Images

Born August 31, 1928, in Sharon, Pennsylvania. Milo Stewart taught English and Social Studies at Orchard Park Central School and quickly gained recognition. In 1961 Dr. Louis C. Jones, then Director of the New York State Historical Association and the Farmers' Museum, invited him to come to Cooperstown to lead their education programs. Over the next 36 years, he served as the Director of Education, Assistant Director, Associate Director, and Vice President of both organizations. Milo's passion for photography began when he was in high school and continued throughout his life resulting in a substantial legacy of work, much of which features New York State, as well as the Village of Cooperstown. His photographic books include: "Main Street, New York State", "The Historic Courthouses of New York State", "Wood and Stone: Landmarks of the Upper Mohawk", "The Monuments of Gettysburg", and "Main Street, Cooperstown: A Mile of Memories".
The Suffrage Collection

c. 1854-1919
21 Images

Beginning in the mid-19th century, several generations of woman suffrage supporters lectured, wrote, marched, lobbied, and practiced civil disobedience to achieve what many Americans considered a radical change in the Constitution – guaranteeing women the right to vote.

This collection has 21 images, including photographic prints, Cartes de Visite, Stereographs & Cabinet Cards of women’s suffrage activists: including Elizabeth Smith Miller, Anne Fitzhugh Miller, Anna Dickinson, Francis Willard, Julia Ward Howe, Harriet Burton Laidlaw and Mary Garrett Hay.


Women Suffrage Group; Binghamton, NY, 1913, Unidentified Photographer, photographic print. Museum purchase. N0020.2021
The Sullivan Collection
1945-2017
33 images

33 gelatin silver and archival pigment photographic prints. Consisting of works of 20th century black-and-white photographer, Milton Rogovin, Street and architecture photographer, Todd Webb, documentary work by Leonard Freed and Danny Lyon, a French Modernist photograph by Ilse Bing, as well as color work by Joel Meyerowitz and Abelardo Morell.
The Tintype Collection

c. 1856-1870
200 + images

Tintypes, originally known as or ferrotypes or melainotypes, they were used from the
1850s to the 1870s, being especially popular during the Civil War, due to the durability
of the metal base. Tintypes were first created by a Frenchman, Adolphe-Alexandre
Martin in 1853, and the tintype process was first patented in 1856 in the United States by
Hamilton Smith. Tintypes were often hand colored. Customers purchased cases, frames,
or paper envelopes to protect and display their images.

The collection includes cased and uncased images, some identified, many unidentified.
Those identified include Henry Luce, Ellen Hoag, Caleb Perry, J. Fox, Jane Carr-Fischer,
Jessie Dakin, Lena Vosburgh, Jennie Noble, Seneca Ray Stoddard, and Edgar Holcomb
among others.
The Thomason Collection
1932-1980
48 Images

48 gelatin silver photographic prints. The Thomason collection features mid-century American Modernist photography by Nathan Lerner and Edward Quigley. Also included are photographs by Bill Owens, George Rodger, Lou Stoumen, Ray Mortenson and Jacques Lowe.


The Townsend Collection
1904-1918
75 glass plates

75 glass-plate negatives including images of the Townsend and Hurlburt families, scenes in Cooperstown, Oneonta, Portlandville, Shavertown taken by Lester E. Townsend.


The Tranquille Collection
1950-1960
198 images

Dante O. Tranquille (1905-1981) of Utica, NY. Dante Tranquille was a central New York photographer who also worked for many years as staff photographer at the Utica Observer-Dispatch. He received many awards during his career. He was honored when two of his photos were selected for 'The Exact Instant,' a show of 100 of the best news photographs of the century at The Museum of Modern Art in New York.

This collection includes 60 color transparencies of the Henry DiSpirito Sculptures and process. 3 color transparencies of Placido Tabasso; a local Folk Artist, 5 images of the Otsego Sailing Club c. 1968, 130 black & white negatives of 1950-1960 Cooperstown, New York; images include Fenimore House, Farmers' Museum, Woodlands Museum, Baseball Hall of Fame, scenic landscapes, events and aerial photography taken by Dante O. Tranquille.
The Turnbull Collection
1890-1910
118 glass plates

William Turnbull (1872-1959) was a farmer at Stone House Farm in North Kortright, New York at the time he took these photographs. An accomplished amateur, Turnbull was adept at using light and composition.

This collection concentrates on daily life, including farm and small-town scenes of Delaware and Otsego Counties, recreational activities, family, and individual portraits. There are also copies of old photographs of Turnbull’s relatives.
The collection includes 191 glass plate negatives and 125 prints of the Hudson River and nearby towns, created by William Wait of Peekskill, New York. Other subjects include the Erie Canal, Niagara Falls, the Catskill Mountains, boats and bridges.
The Florence P. Ward Collection
1850-present
12,000 images

The Ward Collection is a unique body of photographic material related to the village of Cooperstown, New York. It consists of stereographs, cabinet cards, postcards, and photographs assembled by former NYSHA registrar, Florence P. “Flip” Ward whose lifelong passion was to collect the pictorial and historical information on the town and its buildings, social groups, businesses, recreational activities, people and events. The collection is housed in the Fenimore Research Library and is a vivid record of over 100 years of life in a small town.

The collection has been organized into two sections. The first, arranged by street names and numbers, focuses on local buildings and the people associated with them, and includes images of almost every building in town.

The second is a miscellaneous group of some 5,000 photographs of local people, places and events. Organized by various topics, these photographs pertain to virtually every facet of small-town life. Many of the photographs have been dated, identified for subject matter and photographic format, and cross-referenced to local people wherever possible.

Main Street Cooperstown, c. 1909,

Cooperstown & Charlotte Valley Rail Road, c. 1900,

Clintonville Knitting Mill, c. 1875, Charles Zabriskie, print,
Gift of Florence Ward. N0478.1972(PH1410z)
The Wyeth Collection
1993-1999
3 images

Donated by Victoria Browning Wyeth, the only grandchild of iconic artist Andrew Wyeth. She was guest curator at the 2017 Fenimore Art Museum exhibit of Andrew Wyeth at 100: A Family Remembrance, organized to celebrate Wyeth’s 100th birthday, consisting of Ms. Wyeth’s personal collection and 19 photographs of Andrew Wyeth that she had taken of him since she was in 7th grade.

This collection consists of three images that were included in this exhibition.

Andy Painting Only Child, c. 1999,
Victoria Wyeth Browning, print, Gift of Victoria Browning Wyeth, in Memory of Andrew Wyeth. N0010.2018(01)

Andy and Jamie on Monhegan Island, c. 1997,
Victoria Wyeth Browning, print, Gift of Victoria Browning Wyeth, in Memory of Andrew Wyeth. N0010.2018(03)

My First Photo of Andy, c. 1993,
Victoria Wyeth Browning, print, Gift of Victoria Browning Wyeth, in Memory of Andrew Wyeth. N0010.2018(02)
The J.W. Young Collection
1898-1918
254 images

This collection of 254 glass plate negatives is the work of James W. Young, who had a studio in Young’s Corners, near Sidney, NY. In addition to studio portraits, there are less formal photographs of people, the rural landscape, and various structures. Most of the images were made in the Sidney/Unadilla areas, where Otsego and Delaware Counties meet. The plates were a gift from the photographer’s grandson, Sheldon Young.
The Zabriskie Collection
1893-1913
9,000+ images

Charles Frederic Zabriskie (1848-1914) was an amateur photographer who, with his family, summered in Cooperstown from 1893 to 1913. On these summer holidays he took several thousand photographs of his family, friends, the grounds of his estate, “Glimmerview”, and social gatherings. Buggy rides in the countryside produced compelling images of the rural landscape, farmers, children, and remnants and ruins of Otsego County industries. The collection also includes a series done in Central Park near the family’s New York winter apartment.

Zabriskie’s work reflected the then new period of amateurism in photography. Beginning a serious interest in photography in 1890, he sought to produce pictorial images; to treat photography as a fine art - an issue much discussed in photographic circles around the world.

Zabriskie made many different kinds of portraits. His patient wife, Minnie, posed again and again; young daughter Anita is also photographed repeatedly; his son Lemaire is recorded as he grows up. The household staff and Cooperstown friends and residents were also fair game for his camera. His sensitivity to the changing character of the countryside resulted in some of his most important photographs.

The majority of the prints in the Zabriskie collection reside in albums assembled by Zabriskie himself. Virtually all of the photographs are identified and dated.

Related Material:
- Zabriskie Family Papers (1790-1976), Fenimore Museum Library, Collection No. 064
- Sachs, Charles L., The Charles Zabriskie Photo Collection, Thesis Sa 14
- Ward Collection, Fenimore Museum Library, N0478.1972
