

The Filson

A Publication of The Filson Historical Society, Kentucky's Oldest and Largest Independent Historical Society



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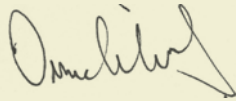
From the President

Since our founding 125 years ago, The Filson has depended heavily on the generosity of our members and contributors. Your donations have enabled The Filson to collect, preserve and tell the significant stories of Kentucky and the Ohio Valley's history and culture. Each year our Annual Fund drive helps generate essential financial resources that make it possible for us to pursue our mission. As you consider giving to our Annual Fund, I would like to highlight a few of the reasons our extraordinary historical society is worthy of your support.

The Filson:

- Relies entirely on private support and receives no tax dollars.
- Houses unique collections of vital importance to the history of our region.
- Makes its collections accessible to students, scholars and the general public.
- Serves as a center of historical education, research and scholarship.
- Offers countless top-quality lectures, seminars and other programs.
- Welcomes thousands of visitors and program participants each year.

In essence, your contributions to The Filson are really investments, investments that pay dividends as our collections grow and as we continue to offer outstanding programs. *Many thanks* for your support of The Filson and for your generous donations to our Annual Fund.



Orme Wilson, III
President

From the Director

The Filson's mission to tell the significant stories of Kentucky and the Ohio Valley region carried our fall Filson Institute audience on an intellectual exploration of Appalachia. If you missed "The Changing Faces of Appalachia: Problems, Promises and Perspectives" held November 12 – 14 at The Filson, you missed excellent lectures, though-provoking films and enjoyable music from the region.

Professor Ronald Eller's keynote address - "Is Appalachia a Reflection of Modern America?" - set the stage for two days of programming that followed. Many of the problems we associate with Appalachia are the problems of the nation at large. Environmental degradation, the exploitation of natural resources and labor and the search for sustainability are not unique to the mountains. Sessions examined the environment vs. economic development, film, photography, oral history, music, and drug abuse, among other issues. Students from the Appalachia Media Institute and filmmakers from Appalshop helped the audience explore stereotypes through screenings and the discussions that followed.

The Filson Institute public conferences are held twice each year and are made possible in part by the Thomas Walker Bullitt Perpetual Trust. If you are interested in learning more about this well attended Institute, you may view a DVD of the programs by contacting The Filson at (502) 635-5083.



Mark V. Wetherington, Ph.D.
Director

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COVER PHOTO:

Central High School student
dance, 25 February, 1944,
Al Blunk

The Filson Civil War Field Institute

October 22 - 24, 2009 / Atlanta Campaign

PHOTOS BY LEONARD GROSS

COMMENTARY BY SCOTT SCARBORO

The Filson Civil War Field Institute once again headed out onto the battlefields to study the War Between the States. This time we investigated two separate events that took place essentially in the same region along the Western & Atlantic Railroad line, but at separate times during the course of the Civil War. Our trip, led by Georgia Battlefields Association President Charlie Crawford, mainly focused on the battles of the Atlanta Campaign, but we also acknowledged the events and landmarks surrounding The Great Locomotive Chase.



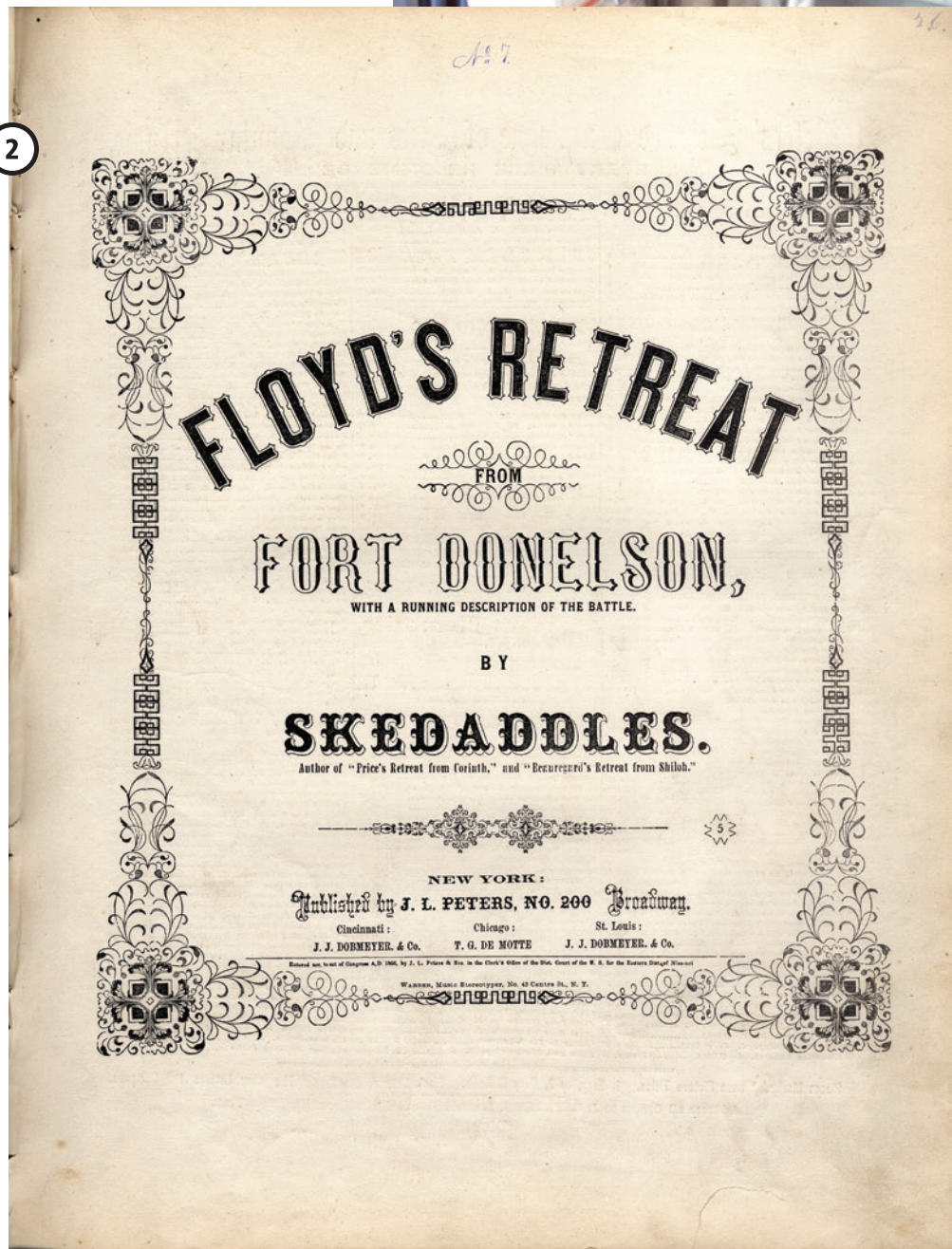
1. Participants of the Filson Civil War Field Institute of Fall 2009 standing in front of the newly erected (October 3, 2009) bronze statue commemorating Gen. Patrick Cleburne in Ringgold Gap, GA. It is the first statue of a Confederate general to be erected in Georgia in 75 years.
2. The importance of control over the railroads was recognized early on in the Civil War as a resource for troop movement and supplies. Tunnel Hill was a major target for James J. Andrews and his raiders during the Great Locomotive Chase as well as a site for one of the first skirmishes starting the Atlanta Campaign.
3. Participants of the Civil War Field Institute gather around a memorial marker erected at the site on Pine Mountain, where General Leonidas Polk was killed by Union artillery.
4. Some amazing fortified earthen emplacements on which Van Den Corput's four Napoleon artillery pieces were positioned still remain thanks to the hard work of Friends of Resaca battlefields. The four guns became trapped between the two armies, both of which fought heavily for ownership.
5. Tour Guide Charlie Crawford retells the story of how Mary Green and her younger sister, Pyatt, found two soldiers who lay dying from wounds they suffered during the battle fought nearby. Along with two former slaves, the girls buried the bodies of the soldiers in their flower garden, starting the Resaca Confederate Cemetery. Their father, Col. John Green, donated land to bury 450 other soldiers who had died during the battle.
6. Cheatham Hill and the Dead Angle at Keenesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park
7. Charlie Crawford points out the headboard that goes on top of these reproduction Union earthworks at Gilgal Church Battlefield.
8. Mr. Dale Black, a member of the Cassville Historical Society met us at the oldest continuous post office in Georgia, which is on the National Register of Landmarks. It now functions as the Cassville Museum. At the time of the Civil War, Cassville was the most prominent town in north Georgia, but was burned at the hands of Sherman's troops in November 1864.
9. The Texas, a type 4-4-0 steam locomotive is preserved at the Atlanta Cyclorama building in Atlanta. It entered history when it pursued the fleeing General, another locomotive stolen by Union saboteurs more than 50 miles to Ringgold, Georgia during The Great Locomotive Chase.

Recent Acquisitions at The Filson

The Filson has an excellent sheet music collection, with 19th century pieces forming the bulk of the collection. Some are famous compositions and some beyond obscure. Additions are always welcome, and the collection continues to grow. It recently received a significant boost when Walter Barney donated his collection. Mr. Barney began collecting Kentucky related sheet music in the mid-1990s. It's an excellent collection, and a particularly good addition for us because many of the titles date from the first half of the 20th century, a period in which the existing collection was not as strong. The finding aid compiled by Mr. and Mrs. Barney can be accessed under "research tools" and "sheet music" (as can the entire sheet music collection) on our website. Another addition to the sheet music collection was donated by Gregory Barton; a volume of mid-19th century sheet music owned by Miss Weme Smith of Owensboro. Although rather eclectic in nature, some of the titles are Kentucky related and good additions to The Filson's collection.

Not all acquisitions were musically related, of course. A large collection of Kentucky Council of Churches (KCC) records were received. Dating from approximately 1972 to 2005, this group is an addition to KCC records given to The Filson in the late 1970s. The records will be of interest to researchers regarding a variety of 20th century topics. Our thanks to the Kentucky Council of Churches board and executive director, the Rev. Dr. Marian McClure Taylor, for placing these records with us.

1. The Rev. Dr. Marian McClure Taylor, executive director of the Kentucky Council of Churches, and Filson curator of special collections Jim Holmberg with the seventeen boxes of KCC records given to Filson.
2. "Floyd's Retreat from Fort Donelson" by Skedaddles, 1866, from the Weme Smith collection of sheet music. Gift of Gregory Barton.
3. A selection of sheet music from the Walter Barney Collection. From the 1852 "Eliza's Flight," inspired by Uncle Tom's Cabin to "In the Hills of Old Kentucky" (1914) and the African American themed "Slumber On Kentucky Babe" (1918) the Barney Collection is a significant addition to The Filson's sheet music holdings.



*All images from the collections of
The Filson Historical Society.*

ELIZA'S FLIGHT.



"God helping me, I crossed the river on the ice; for they were behind me - right behind - and there was no other way." *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Vol. I. p. 126.

A SCENE FROM

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN.

WRITTEN BY
Miss M.A. COLLIER Music by E.J. LODER.

BOSTON.

Published by OLIVER DITSON, 115 Washington St.

COULD & BERRY. S. BRAINARD & CO. H.D. HEWITT. C.W. BRAINARD & CO. C.C. CLAPP & CO.
New York. Cleveland. N. Orleans. Louisville. Boston.

Entered according to act of Congress in the year 1852 by Oliver Ditson in the Clerk's office of the District Court of Massachusetts.

Price 25 cts. net.

Bufford's Lith. Boston.

IN THE HILLS OF OLD KENTUCKY



Lyrics by
J.R. Shannon
Music by
Chas. L. Johnson

F.J.A. FORSTER Music Publisher CHICAGO, ILL.

SLUMBER ON KENTUCKY BARE



LYRIC AND MUSIC BY
HAROLD FREEMAN AND J. EDWIN ALLEMONG
"DING ON SWEET ANGELUS"

PUBLISHED BY IMPERIAL MUSIC CO. ROANOKE, VA.

3

Browsing in Our Archives

The Taft Decision

BY MIKE VEACH | ASSOCIATE CURATOR OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

By the end of the 19th century, Kentucky was famous for its production of fine bourbon whiskey. With this success came imitation as rectifiers would set up shop in Kentucky, making a product that they would call “Kentucky Bourbon” using neutral spirits, flavoring agents and artificial coloring with only some aged whiskey in the product. Needless to say, the traditional distillers who aged every drop of their product in the time-proven method resented these imitators who not only undersold their “bourbon,” but over-produced causing prices for whiskey to fall. This competition led to resentment from Kentucky’s bourbon distillers and the eventual passage of the Bottled-in-Bond Act of 1897. This Act of Congress helped set straight whiskey above the common blended product that was being produced by the rectifiers, but the legislation that really brought the differences to a head was the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906.

**WITH THE PASSAGE OF
THE PURE FOOD AND DRUG ACT
CAME THE QUESTION:
“WHAT IS
WHISKEY?”**



William H. Taft

With the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act came the question - “What is Whiskey?” In order to define what pure whiskey was, this question had to be answered. The chief chemist for the United States under Theodore Roosevelt was a man named Harvey W. Wiley. He stated that only straight whiskey unadulterated by anything other than pure water was whiskey and everything else was “imitation whiskey.” This would force all of the rectified whiskey into this category of “imitation whiskey,” including whiskey being imported from Canada, Scotland and Ireland. The ruling was sent into the court system and worked its way through the courts until 1909. William Howard Taft had been elected President of the United States in November of 1908, replacing Theodore Roosevelt. He decided to solve this “whiskey problem” himself. He spent months listening to both sides of the argument. Finally on 27 December 1909 he made his decision and defined “What is Whiskey?” This decision defines the types of whiskey known today – straight, blended and imitation. It was a good decision, but it made nobody happy. The rectifiers thought Taft went too far in his restrictions and the distillers thought he did not go far enough.

President Taft received complaints from both sides of the issue. However, Governor Augustus E. Willson of Kentucky supported his decision, prompting Taft to write the following letter:

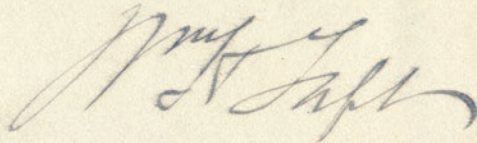
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

January 13, 1910.

My dear Governor Willson:

I have yours of January 8th and I am delighted to know that you approve of my opinion in the matter of whisky. It seemed to me the proper solution, and yet there has been so much discussion and feeling about it that I am anxious to have the reasonableness of the opinion understood, and I am delighted to know that the Governor of the State in which the matter is so important takes my view.

Sincerely yours,



Hon. Augustus E. Willson,
Governor of Kentucky.



27 Dec 1909

WHAT IS WHISKY?

PRESIDENT TAFT'S DECISION.

750

PURE FOOD ACT.

What Is the Meaning of the Term "Whisky" Under the Pure Food Act, and the Proper Regulations for Branding Various Kinds of Whisky Under the Internal Revenue Act?

SENT TO MEMBERS OF THE
NATIONAL WHOLESALE LIQUOR DEALERS ASSOCIATION

— BY —
THE NATIONAL BULLETIN

OFFICE: 1401 UNION TRUST BUILDING, CINCINNATI, O.



The White House
Washington

January 13, 1910.

My dear Governor Willson ,

I Have yours of January 8th and I am delighted to know that you approve of my opinion in the matter of whisky. It seemed to me the proper solution, and yet there has been so much discussion and feeling about it that I am anxious to have the reasonableness of the opinion understood, and I am delighted to know that the Governor of the State in which the matter is so important takes my view.

Sincerely yours,
Wm. H. Taft

Hon. Augustus E. Willson,
Governor of Kentucky.

p. 4 - William Howard Taft / p. 5 - Letter to Kentucky Governor Augustus E. Willson from President William Howard Taft / p. 5 - Governor Augustus E. Willson / p. 5 - Cover of "President Taft's Decision on Whisky"

HISTORY OF LOUISVILLE PHOTOGRAPHY

ROBIN WALLACE | ASSOCIATE CURATOR OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS



LOUISVILLE'S PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY IS RICH AND VARIED.

Almost immediately after its inception, photography began to flourish as both a business trade and a form of art. Entrepreneurs opened studios across the United States, including Louisville. The city's growing population provided abundant subjects for photographers, and the cost of a photograph versus a painted portrait greatly improved the affordability of having one's image preserved for posterity. Comprised of some 50,000 images, The Filson's photograph collection documents Louisville photography in all its myriad forms from the mid-19th century to today.

The city's earliest photographer John Hewitt began plying his trade circa 1840. Hewitt's National Daguerrian Gallery was a large and luxurious establishment with several photographers and finishers, and was considered one of the finest in the country. These early galleries were ornate by design and contained every fine convenience a patron could desire, even a pianoforte. The Encyclopedia of Louisville informs us that by 1852 there were at least 23 photographic artists in Louisville working in as many as eight Daguerrian studios, some of which were in business until the end of the 19th century.



Webster and Brother, Theodore Harris, and Daniel Stuber all had studios in Louisville during the mid-19th century. The Daguerreotype, the earliest marketable form of photography, enjoyed a short-lived run of popularity, approximately ten years, as other photographic methods were introduced which were more economical and easier to employ.

The Filson Historical Society's photograph collection contains more than 50 Daguerreotypes, including an early view of Main Street, circa 1858, and several persons of note. Found in our collection are Daguerreotypes of Amos Kendall, a member of Andrew Jackson's cabinet and Postmaster General in 1835, and eight Daguerreotypes taken by John Hewitt that were found in a box placed in the cornerstone of the old Masonic Temple at 4th and Liberty Streets. The box con-

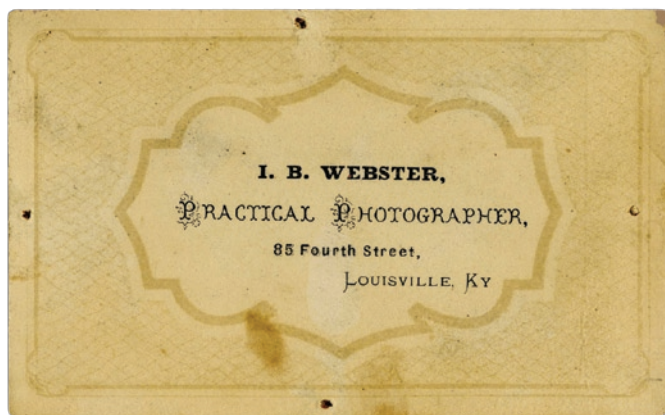
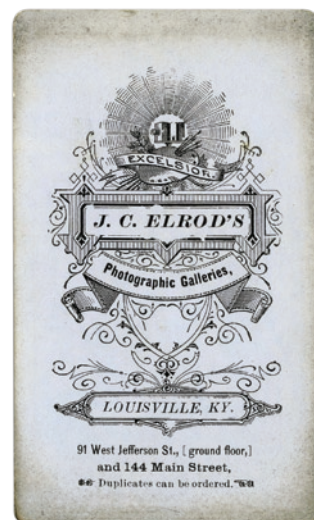
tained likenesses of Willis Stewart, the Masonic High Priest of the Grand Chapter of Kentucky, as well as other high-ranking Masons.

Shortly after the development of the Daguerreotype, Frederick Archer invented the wet plate or collodion process, which was used to produce ambrotypes, tintypes and wet plate negatives, as well as other types of images. While ambrotypes and tintypes were, like the Daguerreotype, one-off, positive images, wet plate negatives were the first widely used photographic means to produce a negative image on a transparent photographic medium, from which the photographer could make an unlimited number of prints; this was typically done on albumen paper. Several examples of the emerging photographic processes of the 19th century can be seen in one rich collection here in our archives. The Owens-Hume collection contains daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, tintypes, an opaltype and hand-painted carte de visites.

Yet another photographic medium that has preserved our city's history is the lantern slide. While hand-drawn and painted lantern slides had been used for decades, the introduction of photographic lantern slides in 1849 (created from wet plate negatives printed on glass) allowed photographs to be viewed in an entirely new format, expanding the utility of photography and changing it from an intimate medium to one that was appropriate for entertainment and educational purposes. Lantern slide shows were popular public events into the mid-20th century. The Louisville YWCA used lantern slides to document and advertise their programs, and The Filson has a sizeable collection of these slides, as well as the lantern used to project them.

Photography as a business continued to grow and prosper, and a number of Louisville's 19th century and early 20th century photographers were natives of Germany. One of these photographers was Edward Klauber, who settled in Louisville and opened a studio in the 1850s, and remained in business into the early 1900s. Klauber did not limit himself to the studio. Government agencies and companies retained his services to document projects, such as the first bridge over the Ohio River at Louisville, and the expansion of the Louisville and Portland Canal.

Many of Louisville's photographers are represented in The Filson's stereograph collection, including Klauber, Israel B. Webster, Frank Wybrandt, and several others. Stereograph cards, introduced in the mid-19th century, were widely produced and quite popular by



1870. The exact image mounted side by side with only a slight differentiation in cropping allowed people a three-dimensional view of the scene when viewed through a stereopticon.

The invention of the gelatin dry plate negative, introduced in the 1870s and in general use by 1885, was an improvement on the wet, messy and somewhat dangerous collodion process. The dry plates were factory-made, came in a box, and could be stored for months either before or after exposure with little loss of image quality. Hobbyists and dabblers flocked to the new material in record numbers, and amateur photography as we know it was born. The photographic collection of Judge Arthur Earle Hopkins, (1881-1944) contains hundreds of glass plate negatives and their corresponding prints, and reflects the Judge's life-long love of steamboats and river travel.

Another native German Louisville Photographer was Paul Gunter (1857-1936). Gunter was born in Hanover in 1857 into a family of successful photographers. He immigrated to the United States and settled in Louisville in 1878. Gunter worked in Louisville over the next 30 years, beginning his practice in the studios of other local

PHOTOGRAPHY AS A BUSINESS CONTINUED TO GROW AND PROSPER...

photographers, and eventually opening his own shop. Gunter not only excelled in studio photography, but also in fine art photography, experimenting with lighting and focusing techniques, and color-toning his prints.

It is important to mention that photography as a profession was not solely a man's realm; women quickly joined the ranks of professional photographers. One such woman was Sally Garrity, who operated a studio under her own name in Louisville in the late 1880s. Julia Brown, Lillian Richardson, Caroline Bergman, the Sisters Maltby, and Ella Crosby were other female photographers working in Louisville in the latter part of the 19th century. The Filson has several cabinet cards in its collection from the studio of Miss Garrity.

KATE MATTHEWS

IS THE BEST KNOWN OF THE LOUISVILLE-AREA WOMEN PHOTOGRAPHERS

Kate Matthews (1870-1956) is the best known of the Louisville-area women photographers. She lived most of her life in Pewee Valley. Taking up photography first as a hobby, she began working professionally by the early 1890s. The publication of her work in several national magazines brought her great prominence. Her photography featuring characters of the popular Little Colonel series by Annie Fellows Johnston increased her fame. Like Gunter, Matthew's photographs evince a sensitivity and creativity that transcend mere mechanical process.

When roll film was first developed in 1881 by David Houston, and subsequently marked to the public as Kodak by George Eastman, amateur photographers pursued the medium in droves. Their efforts are a boon to historical societies and researchers alike as they preserve images of our city and state that enable us to catch a glimpse of history as it unfolds. Former Filson president Rogers Clark Ballard Thruston was an excellent amateur photographer who traveled the world with his camera. Thruston applied science and a meticulous eye to his photography. He purchased one of the first Kodak cameras and for some 60 years he documented Louisville sites and people, as well as during his travels in the U. S. and abroad, with his "Kodaking," as he called it. His photos are particularly useful to researchers as he always recorded the date, place and subject on each of his negatives. The Rogers Clark Ballard Thruston Collection, by far The Filson's largest collection of photographs, contains some 20,000 items and spans the period from 1880-1942.

Louisville's early to mid-20th century photo milieu was dominated by large photographic studios like The Royal Photo Company,





THE LOUISVILLE PHOTOGRAPHY SOCIETY WAS FOUNDED IN 1941 TO PROMOTE INTEREST IN PHOTOGRAPHY AS A HOBBY, AND THE GROUP IS STILL ACTIVE TODAY.

the Caufield and Shook Studio, and John C. Reiger. Within their bodies of work one finds a seamless blending of art, science and documentary photography. It was also during the early 20th century that newspapers first used photography in their daily publications. By the 1920s, the Courier-Journal had begun to publish photographs with its news stories and went on to win several awards in photographic journalism. The Filson has an extensive collection of the works of Courier-Journal Photographer Al Blunk. Blunk worked for the Courier-Journal from the 1940s to the 1960s, recording the people, events and every day places of the River City. Represented in this collection are images of war-time Louisville, local celebrities, neighborhoods, regional festivals and sports events, and Louisville's manufacturing industry.

Louisville also had its own photographic society during this period. The Louisville Photographic Society was founded in 1941 to promote interest in photography as a hobby, and the group is still active today. The society fosters photographic discussion, holds competitions and exhibitions, and sponsors photographic field trips. The society's archives are at The Filson, and includes both photographs and documents.

After World War II, museums and art schools opened their doors to photography. Since the 1960s, photography has become an increasingly dominant medium within the visual arts, and it was during this time that photographers began to break free of the strictures of the straight aesthetic and documentary modes of expression. In 1970, C. J. Pressma founded The Center for Pho-



240 LOUISVILLE BUSINESS MIRROR.

THEODORE HARRIS. N. HALL.
(Late of the firm of Dobyns & Hall.)

HARRIS' GALLERY,
MAIN STREET, BET. FOURTH AND FIFTH.

Those who have lost a fond parent, a loved sister or brother, or a cherished wife or child, of whom they have a small Ambrotype, or Daguerreotype that might be lost, broken, or accidentally destroyed, will be glad to learn that we can copy that valued picture by the Daguerreotype or Photographic process, and deliver it to them on paper or canvas, in any size, from that of a dime up to full life-size, with the true color of the eyes, hair, and complexion, with any arrangement of hair, and any alteration of dress, they may desire. Few persons know this, and to those who are interested, we say come to the Gallery and see our specimens.

HARRIS & HALL.

AMBROTYPES, MELAINOTYPES,
AND ALL STYLES OF PICTURES TAKEN.

This Gallery is never open on the Sabbath. See pages 229 and 243.



tographic Studies in Louisville. The Center provided a learning experience for those seeking to explore photography as creative expression. During its eight-year existence the center attracted full-time students from more than 35 states and foreign countries, provided part-time instruction and darkroom access for hundreds of traditional and non-traditional students in the Louisville metropolitan area, and hosted lectures by well-known photographers of the day. In the spring of 2009, John Setzer, a Center for Photographic Studies alum, donated his collection of student work and Center for Photographic Studies memorabilia to The Filson. Represented in the collection is a selection of Setzer's work, exhibiting a variety of techniques in which he experimented while at the Center: silver gelatin prints, c-prints, Van Dyke prints on paper and cloth, cyanotypes, gumbichromate prints, solarization, prints from infrared film, contact sheets, and hand-coloring.

As our photograph collection grows, we expect to add to our twentieth and twenty-first century holdings, preserving the visual legacy of our city and state, and the visionaries who create these images.

p. 7 - Jefferson Street, Louisville, KY, ca. 1870, stereograph card

p. 8 - Photograph back marks from Louisville photographers
I. B. Webster, J. C. Elrod and Edward Klauber, ca. 1855-1865

p. 9 - Waterfall, Paul Gunter, ca. 1900

p. 10 - Election day, Louisville, KY, 8 November, 1921,
Rogers Clark Ballard Thruston

p. 11 - Central High School student dance,
25 February, 1944, Al Blunk

p. 11 - Advertisement for Theodor Harris' Gallery from the
1858-1859 Louisville City Directory

p. 11 - Charles F. Willis, Knight Templar and past High Priest of
the Louisville Chapter of the Knights Templar, ca. 1843-1851,
Daguerreotype

p. 11 - Cora Owens Hume, ca. 1860, ambrotype

All images from the collections of The Filson Historical Society.

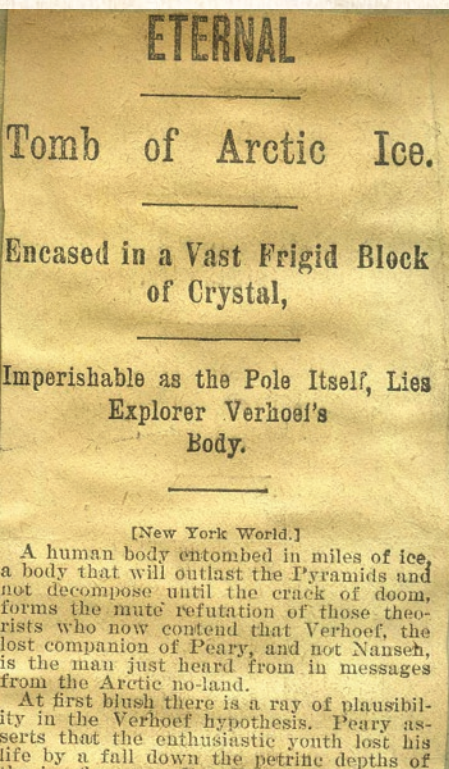
the mysterious disappearance

SARAH-JANE POINDEXTER | ASSOCIATE CURATOR OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS



In 1891, Louisville mineralogist John Verhoeff joined Lieutenant Robert Peary on his expedition to Greenland and the North Pole. After a year in the arctic, Verhoeff mysteriously vanished and was never again heard from or seen. Peary's account of Verhoeff's disappearance was never satisfactory to Verhoeff's sister, Mattie Verhoeff Fortune, nor did it quell others' speculation. What's more, when the missing explorer's diary surfaced years later, there were pages mysteriously omitted from around the time of his disappearance. To this day many questions remain surrounding the unusual circumstances of Verhoeff's death. Did he meet death by foul play? Or fall into an icy crevasse? Was Verhoeff abandoned by Peary? Did he desert the expedition in an attempt to reach the North Pole first? Or did he choose to live among the Inuit?

John Verhoeff was born in 1866 to wealthy parents who died prematurely and left their children a substantial inheritance. From a young age, Verhoeff dreamed of exploring the arctic. In fact, he constantly trained and disciplined himself expecting that one day he would participate in an expedition. To toughen himself, he tramped through snow barefoot, biked to the Niagara Falls and back, and even swam across the Willamette River in Portland, Oregon in the middle of winter. Finally, at the age of 25, Verhoeff had his opportunity. As a graduate of the Sheffield Scientific School at Yale, he offered his services to Peary's expedition, paying \$2,000 to both contribute to funding the expedition and to secure his place on the expedition team as the official mineralogist and meteorologist.



The seven-member expedition set out from New York to Greenland in June of 1891 aboard the ship *The Kite*. Peary's wife Josephine joined the expedition as the first white woman to go to the Arctic Circle. Josephine's presence was generally unwelcomed by the expedition members, particularly Verhoeff, who saw her as a hindrance to the party's mission and argued with Peary regarding her inclusion.

Upon reaching McCormick's Bay, Greenland, *The Kite* dropped off the party, intending to return the following August. The party erected a small pre-fabricated, two-room cottage in which the seven adults wintered. Relationships soon became contentious. Perhaps it was a combination of light deprivation and intense personality clash, possibly exacerbated by the party's tight quarters. Numerous accounts reveal that Peary was insensitive to his subordinates. Verhoeff became argumentative and critical of the food,

verhoeff became argumentative and critical of the food...

the Inuit guides, and his colleagues. He gloated in his diary of beating the sled dogs or of making them fight each other and at times was so contrary that arguments with other party members ended in wrestling matches.

Throughout the winter, Peary sent out short-range exploring parties, until the spring when he organized a major exploring mission toward the Northern Coast of Greenland and the North Pole. In what was a devastating disappointment to Verhoeff, Peary ordered him to stay behind at the base camp and provide security for Mrs. Peary. Verhoeff deeply resented this decision, particularly since he had made a financial contribution to the expedition with the understanding that he would accompany Peary to the Pole.

In August 1892, shortly before the scheduled return of *The Kite*, Verhoeff went off on what was supposed to be a two to three day mineral collecting excursion. Contrary to the usual protocol, yet with Peary's permission, Verhoeff trekked alone on August 11, 1892. When Verhoeff did not return at the expected time, excursion member Langdon Gibson notified Peary. Peary waited three days, then set out with a search party. Near a large glacier, the party followed Verhoeff's footprints to a small pile of stones. In this same area, they identified bits of paper from a meat tin label, pieces of string, and what seemed like rock specimens placed on a boulder. The party searched the glacier, noting the presence of Verhoeff's footprints and marks indicating he may have slipped. The party came to an immense crevasse and could no longer proceed.



WHERE IS MY BROTHER?"
Miss Verhoeff Demands an Explan-
ation from Lieut. Peary.
SHE MEETS THE KITE AS IT LANDS AT
PHILADELPHIA,

On September 12th, from St. Johns Newfoundland, Peary sent a telegram to Verhoeff's family in Louisville, notifying them of Verhoeff's disappearance which he speculated occurred while crossing a glacier on August 12th. When the expedition returned to Philadelphia, Mattie Verhoeff, John's sister was waiting at the dock. She boarded the steamer and she

publically confronted Peary, demanding to know what had happened to her brother. Peary coldly replied, "It is impossible for me to explain all the circumstances surrounding your brother's disappearance." The two continued a combative dialogue for years through correspondence and

occasional meetings.

A trunk containing Verhoeff's belongings was brought back from Greenland and inventoried. The process revealed that Verhoeff had worn an extra layer under his outer arctic gear although it was customary to wear only Inuit-style arctic clothing. Taking his most valuable items with him, led to speculation that Verhoeff had deserted to live among the Inuit and to pursue the North Pole on his own. Considering Verhoeff's familiarity with native survival habits and his unquestionable ambition, the captain of The Kite said that if anyone could reach the North Pole, it would be Verhoeff.

A year later, Peary returned to Greenland on a second exploring trip. He dedicated part of his time to search again for Verhoeff and he questioned the local Inuit but discovered no new information or evidence. Peary returned to the Arctic Circle seven times, until he finally, and contestably, reached the North Pole in 1909. Peary memorialized Verhoeff by naming a large ice bay in Northern Newfoundland, Verhoeffland, and named the glacier where the Louisvillian might have met his death the Verhoeff Glacier. The scant information acquired by Peary during his second Arctic trip did little to dispel the theory that Verhoeff deserted and was still alive somewhere in the northern region. In fact, the Verhoeff family refused to believe he had died.

The sensational story of Peary's expedition and Verhoeff's mysterious disappearance inspired ordinary citizens from around the nation to write Mattie Verhoeff and volunteer to search for her brother if a rescue expedition

could be funded. One such citizen was Americus Symmes. In a letter from the Mattie Verhoeff Fortune papers, dated Dec. 19th 1892, he wrote, "I have the names of some 30 or more volunteers to go in search of your Brother . . . What I want now is to bring all the influence we can command upon the members of Congress & the Senate to aid us in getting to Greenland. My plan is to get the members to make Lieut. Peary take our party with him as

**...mysterious disappearance inspired
ordinary citizens from
around the nation...**

far as Greenland & then they will look up your Brother. Get all your friends to write to some member or anyone else in Washington.” Despite the many offers of help, the Verhoeff family never sanctioned an expedition nor gave financial backing.

Evidence and accounts from expedition party members point to Verhoeff being dead by the time their boat left Greenland, but how did he die?

During the last months of John Verhoeff’s life, July and August of 1892, he decided to dig a hole in the ground to take mineral observations and samples. He notes his discoveries in his diary as well as the increasing depth of the hole, which extended deeper than five feet. When the diary ends abruptly, correlating to his disappearance and the missing final pages, the hole had never been back filled. Could John Verhoeff have been killed, in anger or by accident, and buried in his hole?

Interestingly, Peary fails to mention Verhoeff’s disappearance in his journal until nearly a week later. He explained this oversight by writing later that he was in such a hurry to launch the search party that he forgot to bring his notebook, pencil and camera. Yet he had waited at least three days to commence a search. Dr. Frederick Cook, a party member on this expedition and future competitor against Peary in the race to the North Pole, believed that Peary was hostile to Verhoeff and considered Peary responsible for whatever misfortune befell Verhoeff. Reports of conflict in John’s letters home led Mattie to suspect he had died as a result of foul play or neglect. Ultimately, Peary’s version of the story was accepted as the truth, that John M. Verhoeff met his death in one of the crevasses of the glacier at the head of Robertson’s Bay, and Verhoeff . . . he vanished without a trace.

Further reading: *Mattie Verhoeff Fortune Papers*, *The Filson Historical Society*; *Arthur H. Keeney Papers*, *The Filson Historical Society*; *Arthur H. Keeney and Virginia T. Keeney*, “From Louisville to the North Pole: Did Peary Leave Verhoeff to Die?” *The Filson Club History Quarterly* 70 (April 1996): 130-142.

p.12 - John M. Verhoeff, from The Filson Photograph Collection

p.13 - Newspaper clipping, from the Mattie Verhoeff Fortune Papers

p.14 - Mattie Verhoeff Fortune, from the Frederick Herman Verhoeff Collection

p.14 - Newspaper clipping, from the Mattie Verhoeff Fortune Papers

p.15 - *The Kite* returns without Verhoeff to Philadelphia, 1892

p.15 - Lieut. Robert E. Peary in Greenland, 1891, from the Frederick Herman Verhoeff Collection



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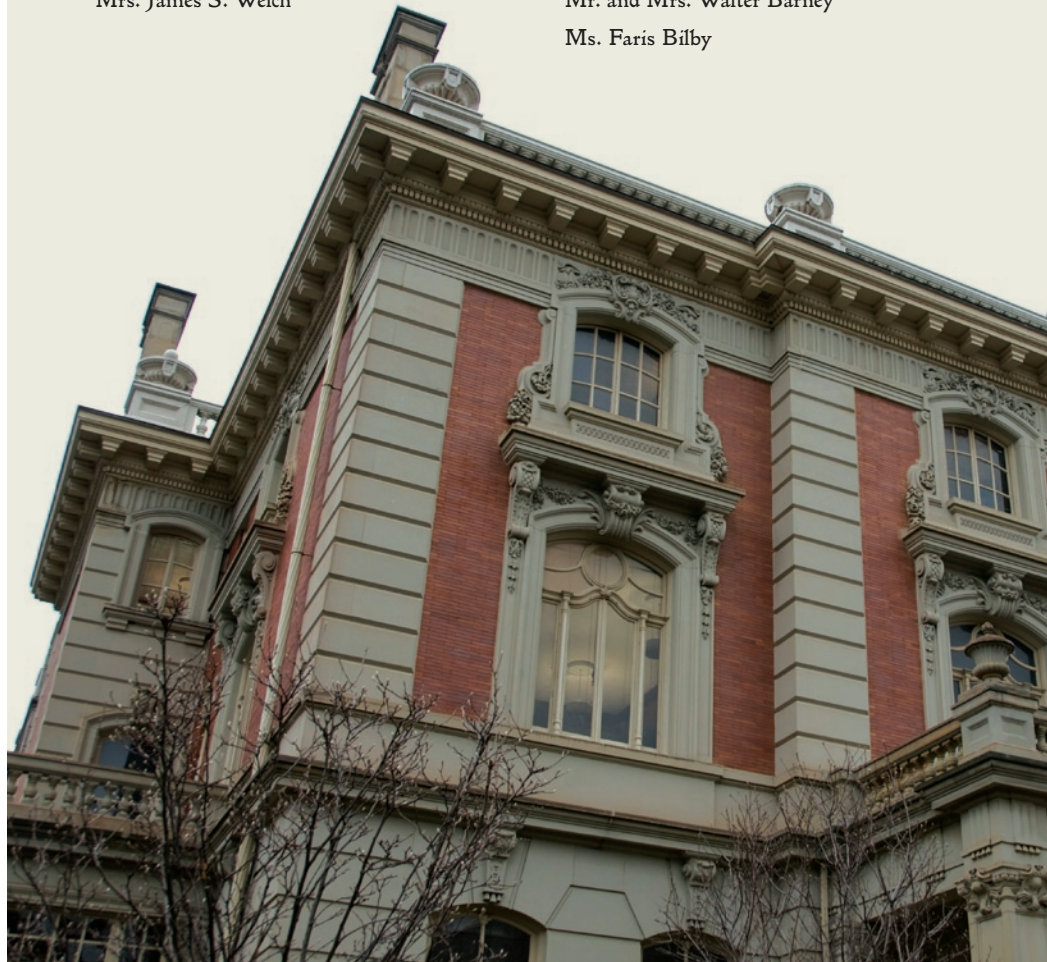
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