



Picturing West Virginia

Early Photography in the Mountain State, 1840-1915

West Virginia and Regional History Center

WVU Libraries

2019

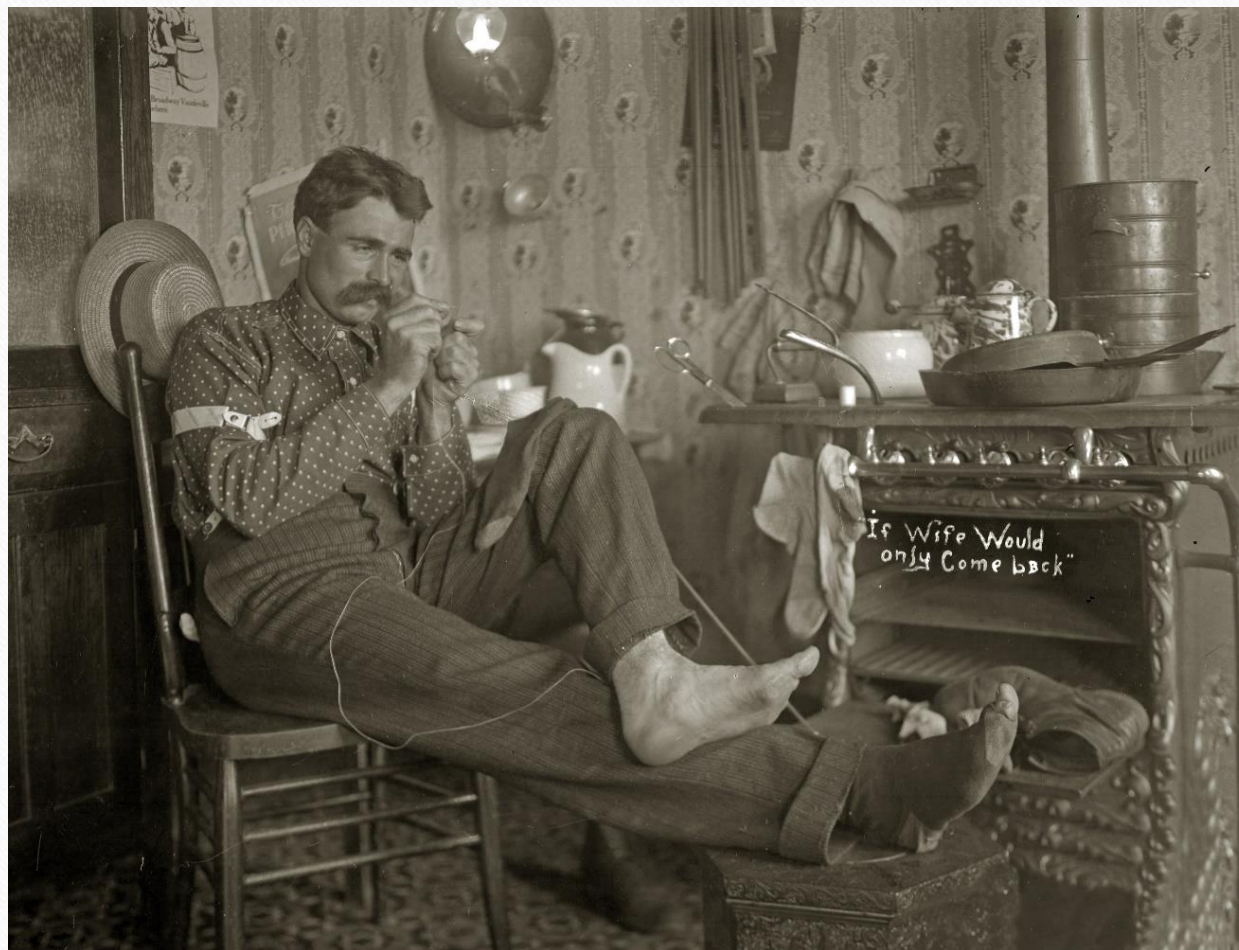
Gallery 2



The First West Virginia Selfie? Self-Portrait by James Green, 1909

The practice of taking one's own picture is so prevalent today that in 2013 the Oxford English Dictionary chose "selfie" as the new word of the year. Like portrait painters, however, photographers have been taking self-portraits since photography came into existence.

Photographer James Green who was active in St Marys, Pleasants County, and in Foxburg, PA took this "selfie" using a piece of yarn. One end is attached to the camera's shutter and the other end is tied to his toe to trigger the shutter. The photo shows James trying to darn his socks while missing his wife, Edith, who was recovering from the birth of their daughter. Edith was not only handy with a needle but was James' photography assistant. The print is from a glass plate negative in the James Green Collection, A&M 3460, WVRHC.

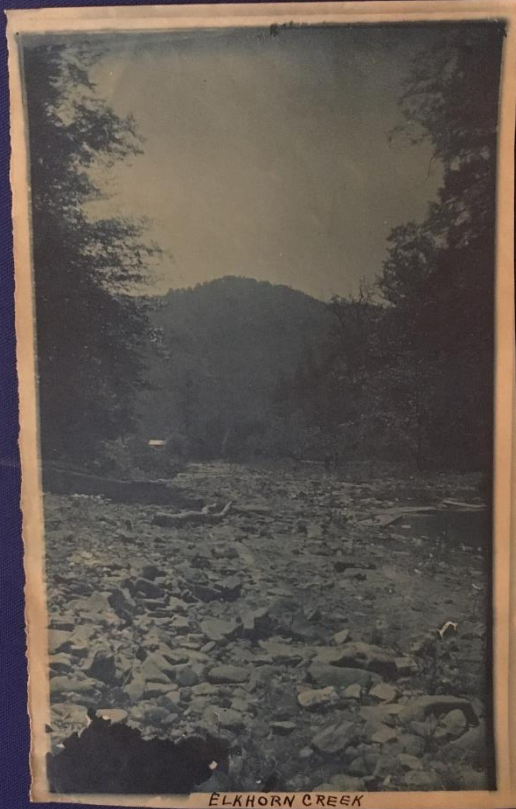
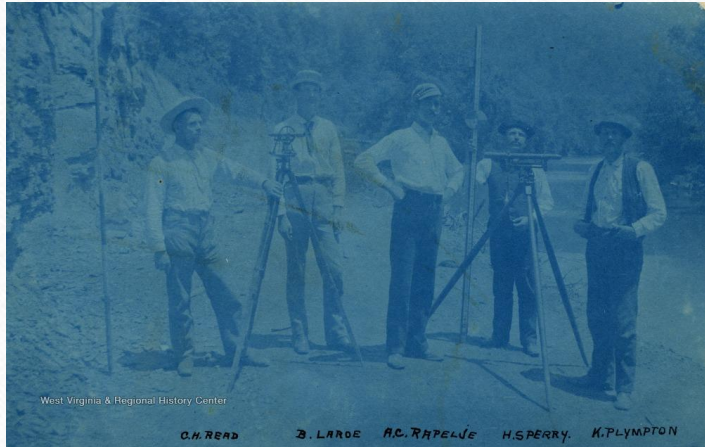


Cyanotypes

Cyanotypes are paper prints immediately recognizable by their blue color. The cyanotype process was in use as early as the 1840s but didn't reach popularity until the 1880s. Inexpensive and easy to process, they were favored by amateur photographers while professional photographers often used them as proofs to decide which images they would select for printing. The cyanotype is the forerunner of the modern blueprint.



Cyanotypes



Panoramic Photography

While the ability to take a panoramic photograph is standard on digital cameras today, the roots of panoramic photography date back to the beginning of photography. The earliest panoramic views were created by shooting scenery in sections and then placing the resulting photographs next to each other to get the desired effects. By the end of the 19th century, special cameras were developed to take panoramic views. These included the swing-lens cameras in which the lens rotated while the film remained stationary, and the 360-degree rotation camera in which both the camera and the film rotated. The mass produced panoramic Al-Vista camera, introduced in 1898, and the Kodak #4 which came out a year later, were both swing-lens cameras. They used roll film and didn't need a tripod.

Shown here are panoramic views of the Copley Heirs Well #1 in Sand Fork District, Lewis County (top); the Potomac River at Shepherdstown (middle), and the coal community of Price Hill, W. Va. (bottom).



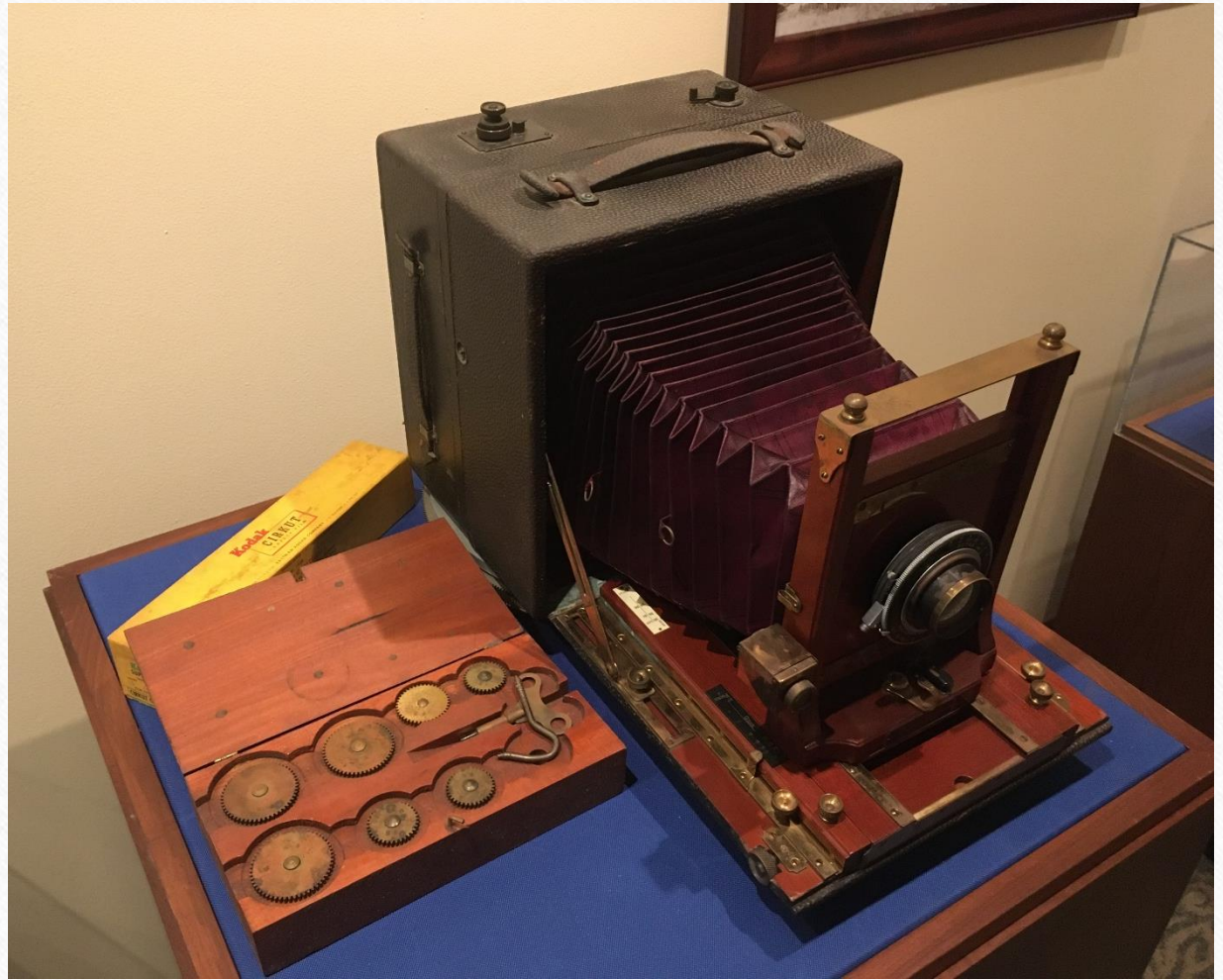


Panoramic Photography

Cirkut Camera

The Cirkut camera was patented in 1904 and began production a few years later. Primarily used by professional photographers, the Cirkut was a 360 degree rotation camera with both the camera and the film rotating on a special tripod.

The Cirkut camera was capable of making a twenty foot long 360 degree photograph. This No. 8 Cirkut Outfit was owned by the Johnston Studio in Fairmont. For this type of Cirkut, gears were cut specifically for each camera.



A Significant Development: Gelatin Emulsion

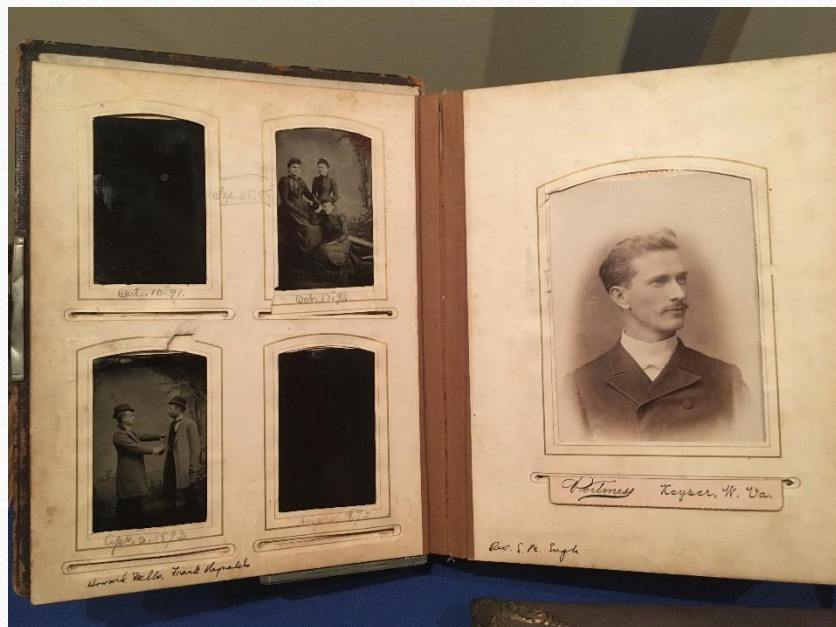
The introduction of gelatin emulsion in the late 1870s significantly changed photography and is still the most commonly used emulsion today. Gelatin emulsion is a dry process that is used to create both negatives and positives. The medium was bulk manufactured enabling photographers to purchase paper, glass, and later film that was ready for use. Unlike the cumbersome and complex wet collodion process, gelatin emulsions worked quickly and were more portable, making it simpler for amateur photographers to take up the hobby.

Gelatin printing paper came in two varieties, printing out paper and developing out paper. The printing out paper was placed in contact with a negative and exposed to light until the image appeared as desired, just as with the albumen printing paper. Gelatin developing out paper held a latent image that was unseen until it was placed in chemicals and developed. At the end of the 19th century, gelatin printing and developing papers along with collodion paper competed with albumen prints. Gelatin developing out paper eventually surpassed all others and has been the leading paper since 1910.



The development of the dry plate negative likely made it possible for brothers Thomas and Walter Biscoe to photograph their journey to Civil War battlefields in 1884. The Biscoes and family members traveled by buggy from Marietta, Ohio, through West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania taking over 200 photographs along the way.

Victorian Photo Albums



The advent of photography brought about the invention of the photograph album. The first commercially produced photo album was developed in 1860. A decade later hundreds of styles of albums were available to consumers. Made with cloth and wood, they were filled with photos of family and friends as well as pictures of leading celebrities.



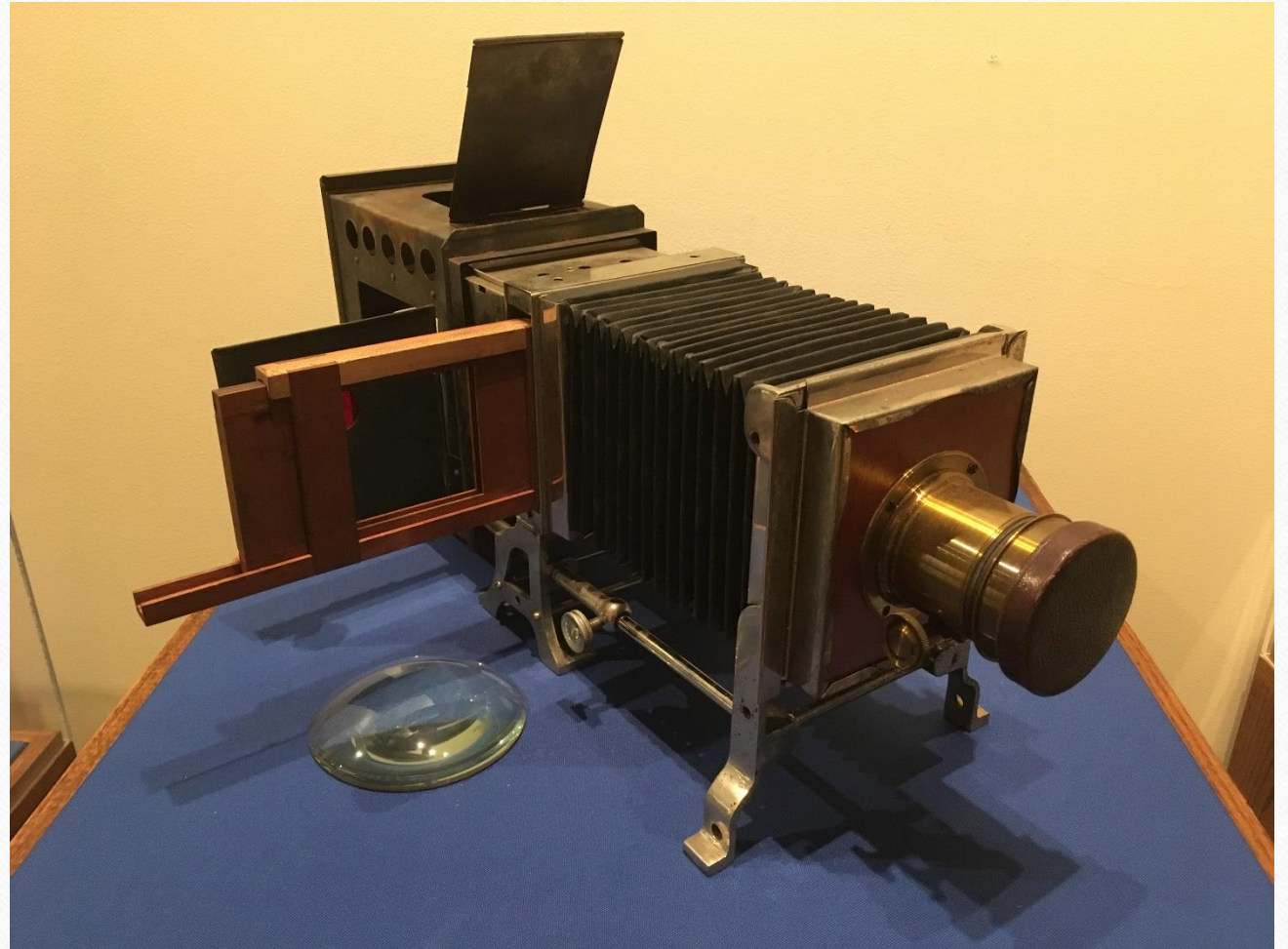
Victorian Photo Albums

This album, fitted with a music box, includes images of people from Elkins and Grafton and was created circa 1890.



“Magic Lantern,” or Early Slide Projector, circa 1910

The 1600s witnessed the invention of the first lantern projectors which, illuminated by candles, cast images on walls if by “magic.” As the lantern projector evolved, the power for the light source improved, changing from candlelight, to oil lamp, to gas, to kerosene and finally electricity. The “Magic Lantern” shown here was gas powered with a thick lens to magnify the glass slide image onto a screen. Lantern slides during this era were generally black and white positives, sometimes colored by hand. They were used for presentations in lecture halls and theaters and also in the home. The Magic Lantern was the precursor of the modern 35 mm slide projector which was pervasive in American homes until the onset of digital photography.



A Selection of Magic Lantern Slides

The images depict homes and gardens in Wheeling, Pittsburgh, and possibly other locations.



Photography for the Masses: Eastman Negatives

While the gelatin dry plate glass negative was a great advance in simplifying the photographic process, glass plates were easy to break. George Eastman addressed this issue by introducing gelatin paper stripping negatives in 1886. Made of paper coated in gelatin, the negative strips were placed on rolls and loaded on a roll holder inside a camera. In addition to solving the problem of fragile glass plates, the negative rolls eliminated the cumbersome need to change plates for each exposure. The photographer could simply advance the roll after each shot. These negatives produced round shaped prints that were mounted on a square. Eastman improved his invention the following year by introducing cellulose nitrate (rather than paper) film. Though this film would prove to have stability issues over time, the introduction of photographic negative film revolutionized the industry.

Eastman's film along with the Kodak No. 1 and No. 2 cameras opened up photography to the masses. The slogan "you push the button, we do the rest" describes the ease of the whole process. When a person bought a camera, it came loaded with film. After the photographer took the pictures, advancing through the roll, the camera was sent back to the Eastman Kodak company to have the photos developed. The prints and the camera, reloaded with film, were returned to the photographer who was ready to start all over again.



These prints from Eastman Paper Stripping Negatives show the coal mining community of Stone Cliff, WV, where the Beury Coal and Coke Company operated, circa 1880-1900.

Photography for the Masses: Kodak Cameras



Expo Watch Camera, ca. 1905

This is a sub-miniature camera shaped like a pocket watch that used a special 25 cent film cassette for easy loading. Pictures were taken through the stem where the lens is located. The camera produced $5/8 \times 7/8$ inch pictures that could be enlarged to $3\ 1/2 \times 5\ 1/2$ inches in size.



The Kombi Camera, Patented in 1892

This all brass, box camera made 25 exposures in $1\ 1/8 \times 1\ 1/8$ square format on one roll of film. The name "Kombi" was short for "combination." The camera's film magazine could be reloaded in the factory with developed film and then used as film viewer, a graphoscope, combining a camera and a viewer.

Photography for the Masses: Kodak Cameras

Brownie Box Camera No. 3 Model B, Patented in 1914

The Brownie was an inexpensive camera made by Eastman Kodak that introduced the “snapshot” to the masses.



No. 2 Autographic Brownie Bellows Camera, Patented in 1908

Made by Eastman Kodak, this camera included a metal pencil to add written information regarding the image on the film at the time of exposure.



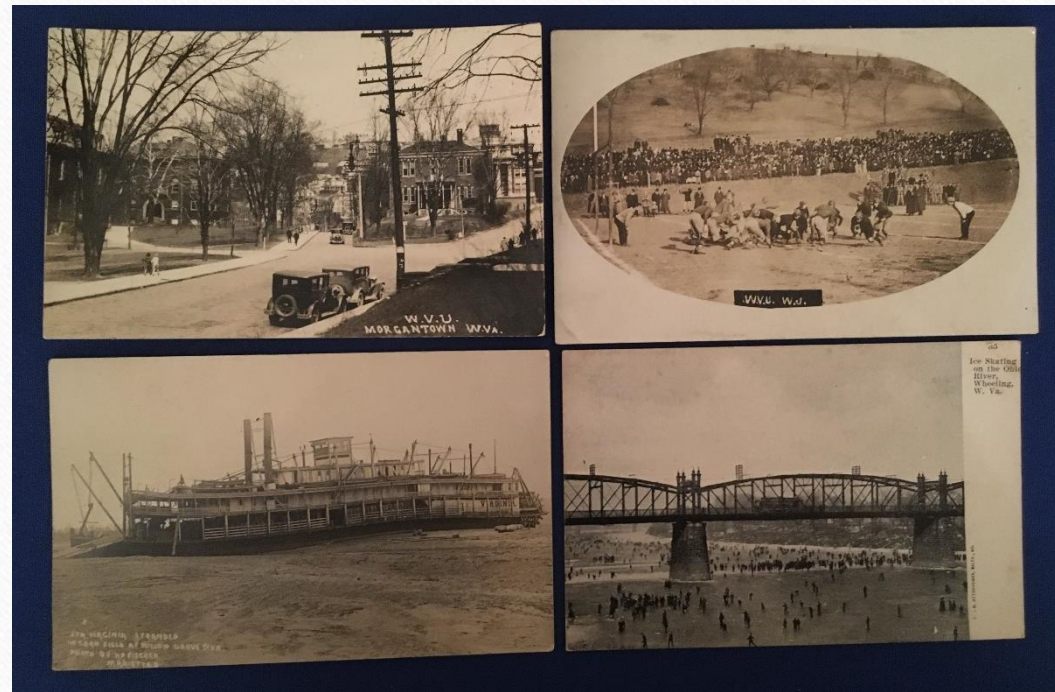
Woman Holding Camera near Pineville, WV circa 1915

The camera appears to be a Brownie
Bellows, as seen in the previous slide.



Postcards

The history of the postcard dates back to 1861 when the U.S. Government passed legislation that permitted cards weighing one ounce or less to be sent through the U.S. mail. That year John Charlton copyrighted the first American postcard. Early postcards did not initially bear pictorial images. One side was reserved for the sender's message while the other was generally marked "This side for address only." Images were introduced gradually at the end of the 19th century. The modern postcard, with an illustrated cover and a reverse side divided into message and address sections, was introduced in 1907. The ensuing decades are now considered to be the "Golden Age of Postcards," with millions of postcards printed. During this period photography enthusiasts could create their own postcards using a special Kodak camera that produced postcard size negatives that could be printed on postcard paper.



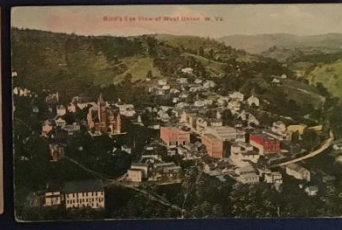
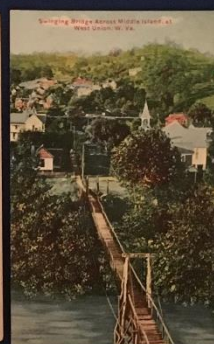
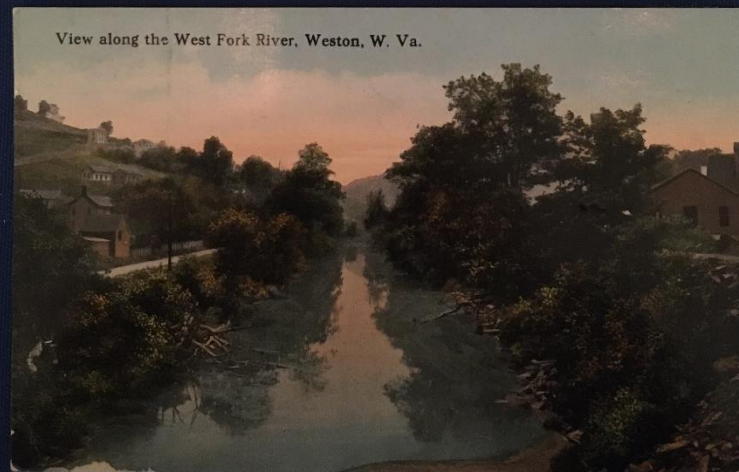
Postcards

The postcards seen here are just a tiny selection of postcards in the West Virginia & Regional History Center, which run well into the thousands.



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Mourning Portraits

Post mortem portraits, painted or photographed, were part of the culture of grieving during the 19th century. Since dying usually occurred in the home followed by a vigil of mourning and remembering, having a last photograph of the deceased surrounded by family and friends was common. This was especially true when the lost loved one was an infant or a child. Photographing a dead child seems macabre today, but in many cases such a portrait would have been the only image of the child, alive or deceased, that a heartbroken family would have to cherish the memory of their baby.



Mourning Portraits



WVRHC Staff Favorites



Picnic group near Morgantown, circa 1910



State Institute Building on Main Street,
Clarksburg, 1895

WVRHC Staff Favorites



Grafton baseball team, circa 1890



Glass blower and mold boy, Grafton, 1908

WVRHC Staff Favorites



Storer College band members, Harper's Ferry,
circa 1914



Trolley on High Street near Pleasant Street,
Morgantown, circa 1900

WVRHC Staff Favorites

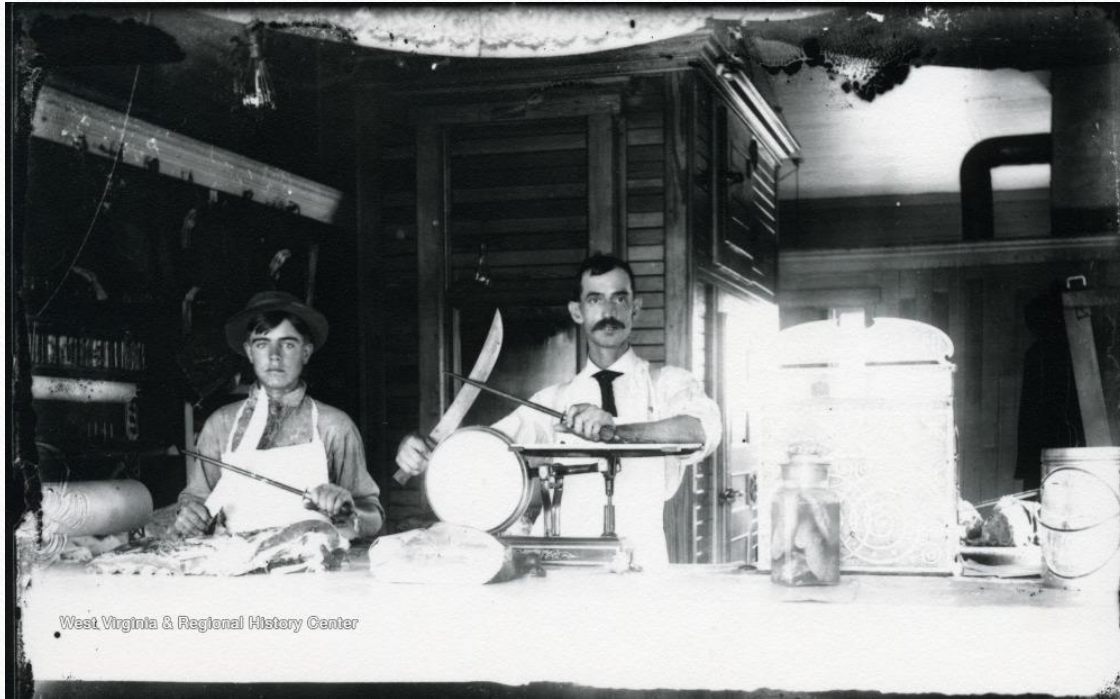


Boycotting Schwab Clothing Company, circa 1912



Fishing on the Cheat River, Tucker County, circa 1900

WVRHC Staff Favorites

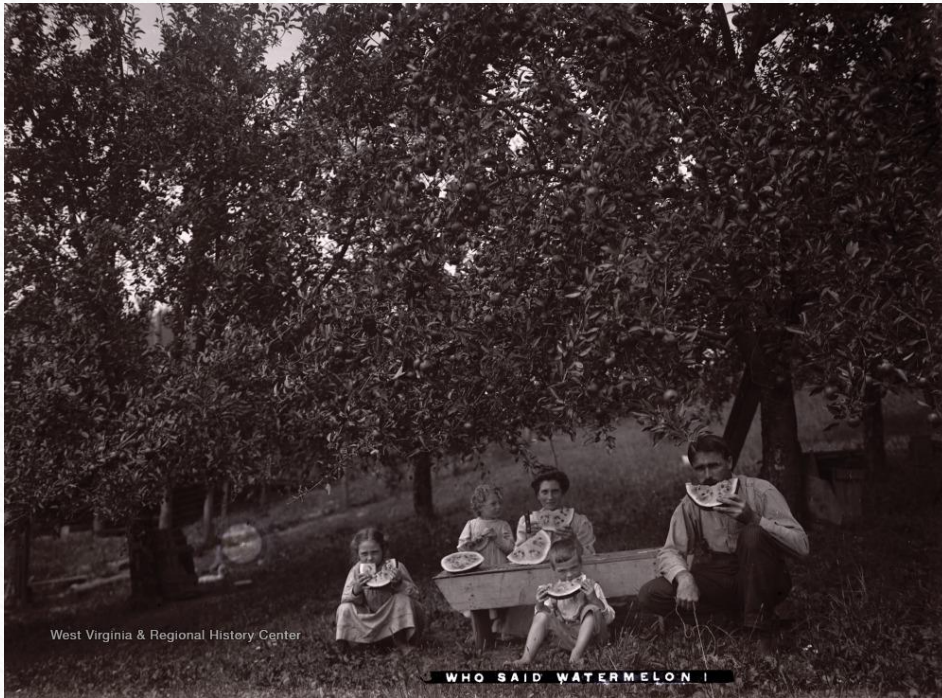


Butchers in their shop, Morgantown, circa 1910



Charley Watts and Charley Summers at barbershop, Gladys, circa 1910

WVRHC Staff Favorites



Green family eating watermelon on Orchards
View Farm, Pleasants County



Aesthetic dance group, West Virginia
University, circa 1900

WVRHC Staff Favorites

Left: Interior of Jacob Zumbach Store,
Helvetia

Right: Mary Clifford, Storer College,
Harper's Ferry, 1906



WVRHC Staff Favorites

Magician with his assistant, Grafton, circa
1915



West Virginia & Regional History Center

WVRHC Staff Favorites

Gottfried and Marianne Aegerter with a turkey, Helvetia



WVRHC Staff Favorites



Section crew at William, Tucker County, 1903



Labor Day parade, Morgantown, 1908

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Scenic view of Shay locomotive and fully loaded log carts crossing bridge over the Cherry River, Nicholas County, 1902



Wright aeroplane flying over Parkersburg, circa 1910

WVRHC Staff Favorites



Interior of bar, Grafton, circa 1890



Students at Alleghany Collegiate Institute
pose with sports equipment, Alderson, circa
1900

WVRHC Staff Favorites



African American drummers, Morgantown,
circa 1915



Finishing department at Empire Laundry,
Clarksburg, 1914

WVRHC Staff Favorites



Man and small boy enjoy porch swing,
Morgantown, circa 1905



Young couple on a hilltop, Monongalia
County, circa 1900

WVRHC Staff Favorites



Crowds enjoy amusements at Luna Park,
Charleston, circa 1915



Three boys hold onto their goats, Monongalia
County