



Smithsonian

National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the Rosalie O'Connell Photograph Album

NMAH.AC.0187

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	Rosalie O'Connell Photograph Album
Date:	1912-1917
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.0187
Creator:	O'Connell, Rosalie Melita (Collector)
Extent:	0.1 Cubic feet (1 box)
Language:	English .
Summary:	Collection consists of a photograph album belonging to Rosalie O'Connell.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The collection was purchased by the Division of Mechanical and Civil Engineering from Mrs. Richard C. O'Connell in 1979.

Provenance

Collections transferred to the Archives Center from the Division of Mechanical and Civil Engineering (now Division of Work and Industry) 1986.

Related Materials

Materials in the Archives Center

Baltimore & Ohio cyanotype book in mechanical and civil engineering collection, NMAH.

Processing Information

Collection processed by David Haberstich, 1986. Information based on a report by Carolyn Long, with additional information supplied by William Worthington and John Stine.

Preferred Citation

Rosalie O'Connell Photograph Album, 1912-1917, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning copyright restrictions. Other intellectual property rights may apply. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

Biographical / Historical

In the 1890s the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad maintained a photographic record of its properties along its routes (Divisions); a book of cyanotype prints was made of each Division for railroad officials. The Museum purchased a book of the Baltimore & Ohio Philadelphia Division from the sister-in-law of Rosalie M. O'Connell, and found that it contained personal photographs mounted on the backs of the cyanotypes. Rosalie O'Connell had used the book as a personal photograph album from 1912 to 1917. Because the scrapbook material was damaging the cyanotypes, the National Museum of American History, Division of Conservation removed the photographs in 1985.

Rosalie apparently had come into possession of the cyanotype book when she was a teen-aged girl, possibly due to her father's job with the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad and/or the presence of other B & O employees in the neighborhood. Between the years 1912-1917 Rosalie used it as a personal photo album and scrapbook, adhering snapshots, newspaper clippings, and memorabilia to the reverse side of the cyanotypes. Because these items and the adhesives were causing damage to the cyanotypes, in 1985 Carolyn Long of the NMAH Division of Conservation removed the O'Connell material from the cyanotype pages. Thus for the first time the "Rosalie O'Connell Photograph Album" was physically separated from the B & O cyanotype album.

Scope and Contents

The collection contains 205 photoprints, including 149 informal outdoor portraits and 46 studio portraits. Although the photographs, post cards, and other materials have been physically removed from the cyanotype album, album captions for the photographs are preserved in copy photographs made before the materials were removed during conservation treatment. The following is excerpted from Carolyn Long's paper, "The History and Conservation Treatment of the Baltimore and Ohio Cyanotype Book and Rosalie O'Connell's Album, Plus the Cyanotype Process Explained" (copy in control file).

Snapshots, newspaper clippings, and other memorabilia were adhered to the reverse of the cyanotypes, and several sentimental poems, evidently Rosalie's own compositions, were written on the back pages. At the time the album was assembled, she dated the pages and wrote formal inscriptions with dark brown ink in a flowing script. In later years she wrote further explanations and made humorous comments with a blue ballpoint pen, apparently in the 1940's or later. The pictures and inscriptions create a record of a young woman's life in the early twentieth century that is as interesting as the views of railroad bridges and depots on the front of the pages.

Rosalie appears to have been in her teens or early twenties at the time, and was a pretty, vivacious girl with long dark hair. Her family, the C. T. O'Connells, lived at 2011 Barclay Street, Baltimore, in a blue-collar neighborhood near the railroad yards. Many railroad employees lived in the area, which offers an explanation of how Rosalie happened to have the cyanotype book. The O'Connells were a large Irish Catholic family, according to the album, which mentions Rosalie's siblings: Florence, an older sister with two children, Charles and Ursula; Bill, who served in the Mexican War; Ed, a football player; Richard, who ran for Democratic delegate to the State Convention in 1915; and a younger brother named Bartlett. Apparently Richard was Rosalie's favorite brother, for she wrote inscriptions such as "My Pal" and "My Dick" under his pictures. It was Richard's wife Ona who later sold the album to the Museum.

The O'Connells' neighbors were the Gables and the Feldmeyers. The Gables and their children are shown behind their house, with a wooden privy in the background. Above their picture, Rosalie wrote "The Dirty Dozen in 1916." "Pop" Gable apparently worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad and is pictured on top of a "Pennsy" engine. There are also snapshots of Rosalie with her flock of chickens in the back yard, and of neighborhood girls having a "fresh air fund" bake sale at 2003 Barclay.

Rosalie's best friend was Beatrice "Beets" Malstrom. The two girls, with other friends and family members, swam and ice skated at Jane's Creek and went to Riverview Park. Rosalie worked at Turner's Grocery Store on North Avenue, and a series of snapshots shows her co-workers clowning with a bottle of beer on a motor scooter.

Rosalie was courted by George Barry, who is shown with her on the boat Louise when he was home on furlough from the Navy in 1917. Poems and inscriptions suggest an eventual breakup of the relationship. Above one of these pictures she wrote, "The arrival -peace and happiness unexpected." Later, however, she wrote in ballpoint, "so mixed up," and "He was nice, but I was not in love."

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into one series. Materials arranged topically, with a copy photographic key to the original album arrangement.

Bibliography

Carolyn Long, "The History and Conservation Treatment of the Baltimore and Ohio Cyanotype Book and Rosalie O'Connell's Album, Plus The Cyanotype Process Explained," unpubl. ms. Nov. 22, 1985 (copy available in Archives Center).

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Catholics -- 1910-1920 -- Baltimore (Md.)
- Family -- 1910-1920 -- Baltimore (Md.)
- Irish Americans -- 1910-1920 -- Baltimore (Md.)
- Outhouses -- 1910-1920 -- Baltimore (Md.)
- Parks -- 1910-1920 -- Baltimore (Md.)
- Priests -- 1910-1920
- Railroads -- 1910-1920 -- Baltimore (Md.)
- Recreation -- 1910-1920 -- Baltimore (Md.)
- Skating -- 1910-1920 -- Baltimore (Md.)
- Soldiers -- 1910-1920
- Swimming -- 1910-1920
- Youth -- 1910-1920 -- Baltimore (Md.)

Types of Materials:

- Albums -- 1900-1920
- Photographs -- Black-and-white photoprints -- Silver gelatin -- 1910-1920

Names:

- Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company
- Barry, George
- Gable family
- Pennsylvania Railroad.

Places:

- Baltimore (Md.) -- 1910-1920

Container Listing

Box 1	Photograph Album, 1912 - 1917
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