

Hopewell Valley Historical Society
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George Hart Frisbie Photographs

circa 1895-1920

86.006

Extent

Approximately 800 4"x5" gelatin dry plate and film negatives

Creators

George Hart Frisbie (1852-1937)

Walter J Frisbie (1870-1937)

Scope and Content

George Hart Frisbie (1852-1937) was a prolific amateur photographer whose images document turn-of-the-century life in the Pennington area. The collection includes portraits and scenes of village and rural life dating from the late 1890s to some time before 1920, recorded primarily on 4"x5" glass plate negatives.

In the 1880s, mass produced gelatin dry plates made widespread amateur photography possible. Instead of having to expose and develop a photo while the emulsion was wet,



photographers could now bring dry plates with them on location. Frisbie took advantage of this technological advance to take photographs in a wide range of settings in the Pennington area. His photos capture valuable images of everyday life at the turn of the 20th century.

Evidence in the photographs indicates that both George and his brother, Walter, took photos. Later photos feature Walter's family more prominently.

Photographs feature street scenes, family portraits, leisure activities in the outdoors, and houses. A small number of photographs are portraits of African American members of the Hopewell community.

System Of Arrangement

Before donation to the Historical Society, family and friends searched the collection and may have disarranged the negatives. There is no discernable order to the collection, but the order in which they were accessioned has been maintained.

Biographical History

George Frisbie was born in Pennington in 1852. His family had been active in the business life of the town during the 19th century. George's grandfather, Augustus Frisbie, and his father, Joseph Frisbie, operated a dry goods and grocery business at 44 South Main St., Pennington. In 1881, George took over operation of the business and continued for several years before becoming the financial officer for a large Trenton wholesale grocery firm. George married Clara Mangan in 1876. They had a son, C. Edgar, in 1893. Edgar died while serving in France in World War I.

Walter J. Frisbie, George's brother, was born in Pennington in 1870. He was an agent for a transportation company in Trenton. Walter married Elizabeth Wiley in 1892, and they had a son, Walter Taylor Frisbie. Frisbie held an official position in the founding of the Pennington Fire Company, Pennington Board of Trade, Pennington Athletic

Association, and the Social and Literary Club. He served on Pennington Borough Council for many years before being elected mayor in 1914. He served two consecutive two year terms. During the Depression, Walter served as Overseer of the Poor in Pennington. Walter and Elizabeth spent their entire married life in in the Wiley family home on West Delaware Avenue.

Administrative History

In 1986 Walter Frisbie's daughter in law, Alice Frisbie, and granddaughter, Mary Thornton, donated the collection to the Hopewell Valley Historical Society. The society received a grant from the New Jersey Historical Commission, which it used to create positive prints from the negatives. The glass plate negatives were donated in a wood box. They were removed and the box retained in the collection. A full index of the collection is in the process of being created.

Physical Access

Prints of all photographs in the collection are available at the Historical Society for reference.

Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use

Contact the Hopewell Valley Historical Society for terms of reproduction.

Languages and Scripts of the Material

The collection is entirely in English.

Citation

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Subjects and Genres

Below is a list of subjects and genre types to be found in the collection:

- African Americans, portraits
- Architecture, domestic
- Babies
- Beaches
- Camping
- Children
- Cities and towns
- Delaware and Raritan Canal (N.J.)
- Domestic animals
- Farms
- Frisbie, George (1852-1937)
- Frisbie, Walter (1870-1937)
- Gelatin dry plate negatives
- Group Portraits
- Hopewell (N.J.)
- Horse-drawn vehicles
- Outdoor Recreation
- Parades
- Pennington (N.J.)
- Picnics
- Portraits
- Railroads
- Rivers
- Roads
- Ships
- Sports
- Street scenes
- Titusville (N.J.)
- Washington Crossing State Park (N.J.)

Updated February 2023 by Katie Chase.
Scope and Content and Biographical notes contributed by Jack Koeppel.