

ARCHIVES OF MICHIGAN

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Circular No. 31 – Photographic Collections

The Archives of Michigan has the largest collection of historical photographs in the state dealing exclusively with Michigan. This collection now numbers about 330,000 items, and mirrors the rich heritage of the state and documents almost every aspect of life in Michigan, especially for the period 1850-1950. The images are divided into four main divisions.

General Photograph Collection

Nearly 50,000 of the most significant and most used photographs are arranged alphabetically by subject from Apiaries to Zoos. Particularly important holdings deal with Michigan lumbering, Great Lakes shipping, Michigan mining, urban and rural life styles, and Michigan community scenes. The photographs are kept in metal file cabinets in double-weight, acid-free folders, approximately 20 photos per folder. A notebook of "Subject Headings" is available in the Reading Room. There is also a card index of places and of more specific subjects. The collection is also available on microfilm, and can easily be used independently by researchers in the Microfilm Area of the Reading Room. (These begin at Roll 6001.)

Biography Collection

This collection contains about 20,000 portraits of Michigan residents past and present. They are kept in acid-free envelopes, and are arranged alphabetically by last name. A card index to all these individuals is readily available in the Reading Room. These portraits range from early carte de viste prints to modern 8"x10" glossies. There are also a few oversize and early image (daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, tintypes) portraits. These portraits range from all the governors of Michigan and other prominent persons to Civil War soldiers and ordinary citizens.

Special Collections

Special Collections are collections from government agencies and private donors which are kept as separate entities. They range from vast groups of photos and negatives numbering in the thousands to three unique nature prints. There are large collections from state departments, such as Natural Resources, Public Health, and Transportation. Private donations include images of Great Lakes vessels collected by Edwin Brown, DeWitt Watson, and Earl Crandall. Photographs of Michigan scenes used to manufacture postcards are found in collections of the Albertype Company, Charles Childs, and Stanley Kufra, pertaining mostly to the western portion of the state.



Negative Collection

The Negative Collection contains nearly 20,000 4"x5" copy negatives of images in the holdings for which prints have been reproduced at some time in the past or which were made for preservation purposes. Almost any image in the Archives can be reproduced for a nominal cost; a current Price List is available in the Reading Room. Xerox copies for most images can also be provided at minimal rates.

All images in the Archives of Michigan have come by transmittal from government agencies or by donation from private citizens, and the staff is anxious to consider items to add to the photographic collections. (Please contact Helen Taylor, Archivist, at 517-373-1452.) Persons interested in the type of photographs available can consult [Pictorial History of Michigan](#) by George S. May, published by the Michigan Historical Commission in 1967-1969. Historical research of the photographic holdings of the Archives of Michigan is open to all the public and interested persons are encouraged to contact the Archives to discuss their needs and to arrange a visit.

