

A Conversation with Geoff Wexler

*Photography and the Davies Family
Research Library Collections*

OREGON VOICES

by Jennifer Strayer

GEOFF WEXLER, who retired this past August as Director of the Davies Family Research Library at the Oregon Historical Society (OHS), oversaw one of the country's major collections of Western Americana for four years. He began his archival career in the mid 1980s at the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison, and has since served at the University of California, San Diego; the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley; and as the archivist for theater artist Robert Wilson in New York City. He holds a bachelor's degree in history from the University of California, Berkeley, and master's degrees in history and library science from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Throughout his career he has worked to provide greater visibility for archival collections, not only through the traditional venues of library reading rooms but also through innovative exhibits that ease the tension between art and curation, history, and imagination. His interest in

the historical dimension began early in life when growing up in San Diego, California, a booming city devoted to the new and current but with a rich (yet obscured) history. He began working professionally as a graduate student with the vast archival collections at the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison. Inspired by the work of historian Michael Lesy, he discovered imaginative perspectives on historical images, documents, and texts. In recent years he has created numerous installations utilizing the collections of the OHS research library.

Jennifer Strayer occasionally writes about photography and always enjoys discussing it. She interviewed Wexler via email correspondence during his last week as Library Director at OHS.

JENNIFER STRAYER (JS): Since the main point of reference for our conversation will be the OHS's photograph collection, briefly describe it.



OHS digital no. b0015234

IN THIS 1932 *Oregon Journal* photograph, a supporter of the Women's Organization for National Prohibition Reform holds a "Repeal 18" emblem. The Oregon Historical Society holds the entire *Oregon Journal* photograph collection of about 300,000 images.

GEOFF WEXLER (GW): OHS holds one of the largest photograph collections in the United States. We have estimated the size to be around six to seven million images, but I am sure this is an underestimate. These numbers are a surprise to many people, both within and outside the archival world, and the reason for this surprise is that only a small percentage of OHS's collections are represented in online catalogs and the like. Over the

years, the OHS library staff has worked assiduously to enhance discovery of the collections by all available means, but the sheer volume and the rate of accumulation has proved daunting. As to the content of the collections, they range throughout the entire history of photography, which roughly coincides with the time span of European-American settlement of Oregon and the Oregon Country. Holdings include a wealth of studio portraiture, city and



THIS 1942 VIEW of the Knapp House is one of a number of images in the Oregon Historical Society's Minor White collection that documents inner Portland neighborhoods prior to demolition.

townscapes, landscapes and scenic views, albums assembled by individuals and businesses, images recording the history of organizations, and family collections. Notable photographers represented include Carleton Watkins (one of the most significant collections of mammoth prints and stereo views in the country), Darius Kinsey logging views, and Minor White images of inner Portland neighborhoods prior to demolition. We hold the entire photograph archive of the *Oregon Journal* newspaper (portions of which are currently being digitized) as well as major local commercial studios, such as Photo Art

and Delano. The volume and quality of those holdings are staggering.

JS: Roland Barthes stated that the advent of the photograph divides the history of the world and this would seem borne out by the vast holdings in the OHS collections, which appear to dwarf the written archive. But whereas Barthes believed that the photograph helped put an end to the tendency to mythologize history, others disagree. Susan Sontag argued that photography by nature is an elegiac practice that evokes a certain pathos merely by featuring the past and that given enough time, most photographs come to be

viewed as art. Having worked with historical images for many years now, to which view do you ascribe? Do both hold some truth?

GW: Of course both hold truth — I mean, who am I to argue with Roland Barthes and Susan Sontag? But seriously, I do think that photography has provided a more democratic (and hence more widely used) form of record-keeping than written texts. The ability to write — and write clearly — requires education and a certain commitment to learning which has, unfortunately, tended to be linked

to income level. But even a highly educated person will still find it much simpler to take a picture of a child's birthday party than to describe it accurately in words, be it in a letter or a diary. The same can be said for institutional record-keeping: a twentieth century logging company would naturally find it far easier to document its operations through a series of photographs than have someone describe them in writing, which would require a great deal of detailed observation and careful composition. So, it should not be surprising that, as soon as the technical means of photography became simplified at the end of the nineteenth century, an explosive proliferation of photographic images came about. This explains, in large part, the fact that images make up such a major part of the OHS collections.

As to the notions of Barthes and Sontag you mentioned, I would say that photography does all of this and much more. After all, a photograph represents different things to different people at different times. One of the largest OHS collections, for example, is the archive of Thomas J. Cronise, one of the major studios in Salem, Oregon. These portraits are treasured by people researching their

family histories. They are ecstatic when they find what may be the only known image of an ancestor. But a few years ago, a graduate student used this collection to study not the people in the pictures but the fanciful backdrops used by the studio. To some people photographs do mythologize history — perhaps creating a romantic vision of city streets filled with flood waters. To others a photograph is simply a functional record: how far up the wall did the flood waters go that year? The curator of an art museum may see the flood pictures as examples



THIS 1918 PORTRAIT of Amanda Richardson of Chemawa, Oregon, is part of the Thomas J. Cronise photograph collection at the Oregon Historical Society.



FRONT STREET between Southwest Stark and Washington is documented here during the Willamette River flood of 1894 in Portland, Oregon.

of late-nineteenth-century notions of perspective and composition; the curator in a historical museum may use the pictures to show the buildings on a flooded street that were later demolished in the 1940s. I think it is presumptive (although still thought-provoking) to limit the meaning of photography in any way.

JS: This seems like a good time to delve into the other layers of interpretation that occur in the capturing and presenting of a photographic subject. If the subject of the photograph is human, there is his or her decision of what “face” to show the camera. Then there is the interpretation of the photographer (which may be less of an issue with amateur photography). One well known example is Roy Stryker influencing how the depression

would be viewed by making lists of the scenes he wanted photographed, then charging his Farm Security Administration (FSA) photographers with finding and capturing those scenes. A lot has been written by people intent on teasing out what was stage managed in certain FSA photographs. Lastly, there is interpretation based on the original presentation of the photograph (family album, advertisement) that may be changed if the photograph is removed from this environment. In your exhibits and performance pieces you have used historical photographs in a way that detaches them from the potential problems of these types of interpretation. Talk a bit about this.

GW: I am most interested in series of photographs created in a particular context. Taken together, these images

can suggest so much more than a single image might reveal. It is not simply that the series shows you more members of the family or more rooms in the house; all these images, taken together, provide a mood or ambiance of a period in time. They also give you an abundance of clues as to the consciousness of the photographer and her or his milieu.

In this regard, I was greatly inspired by the work of Michael Lesy, and specifically two of his early books, *Wisconsin Death Trip* and *Real Life: Louisville in the Twenties*. Each book presents a series of photographs by a single commercial photographer or firm — in the Wisconsin case it was Charles Van Schaick in Black River Falls, Wisconsin; in the Louisville case it was the firm of Caufield and Shook. If you looked at an individual image in the Louisville book — say a group of men at a company’s board of directors meeting — you would certainly find some interesting contextual information — the clothes, the heavy office furniture, the bare meeting room, the bored expressions on the men’s faces. But when, on the next page, you see a group of similar men dressed up in women’s clothes at a fancy dress party, you begin to understand so many things about the meaning of clothes in the 1920s and the sensibilities of an urban elite, among other things. Both photographs are from the same time period, both were taken by the same commercial firm, and both include the same kind of white middle-and upper-class men from the same city. Now, add to those

photographs — as Lesy does — texts from contemporary newspaper stories, transcriptions of interviews with mental hospital patients, records of murder trials, and oral histories with people who lived in this period, and you get a very strong impression of a period of time in a particular place. Of course, this is hardly the whole story of Louisville, Kentucky, in the 1920s. One could easily create an entirely different impression by using another group of photographs and other written records. But Lesy has given us a very powerful extract from a particular context. This is something probably disdained by most academic historians and for good reason: they are interested in ferreting out specific facts and answering specific questions, all of which are essential to revealing historical truth in an objective sense. Lesy’s approach is much more attractive to artists who may be looking for an intuitive sense of things — a gestalt, if you will. This gestalt has been created, in part, by Lesy himself, just as a museum exhibition always reflects the ideas of its curator. But Lesy has also provided a stage that allows the photographs and texts to speak for themselves, just as a good film director will lead an actor or actress to reveal something essential about his or her own character in the context of a role.

JS: Staying with commercial photography but moving the focus to an OHS collection that has this sense of context you have outlined, describe that collection and what in particular can be extracted from it.



THIS PHOTOGRAPH from the Gifford photograph collection is displayed in an installation titled “Antioch the Glorious: Visions of Metropolitan Life” at the Oregon Historical Society Research Library. The women typists wearing similar outfits and hair styles are seated in a row at the U.S. National Bank. The photograph illustrates a theme of order and organization common in urban life during the early twentieth century.

GW: One of the OHS collections I have found particularly interesting is the Gifford Photograph Collection [Org. Lot 982], which closely parallels the Caulfield and Shook collection that Lesy discovered in Louisville. Benjamin Gifford (1859–1936) was a highly regarded Oregon photographer who flourished in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Early in his career he was best known for dramatic landscape images, many of which adorned railroad stations throughout the western United States. But the OHS collection consists largely of commercial photographs taken around 1919 and 1920,

when Gifford ran a Portland studio in partnership with Arthur Prentiss. Unlike Gifford’s earlier landscape work, which had a certain pretention to being fine art (hand coloring was common with these), the commercial work was simply utilitarian and largely used for advertising and publication purposes. As such, it provides what I see as a valuable historical document of Portland society (or at least an important segment of that society) at a particular time. Since the studio’s primary job was to satisfy its clients’ wishes, the images reflect the notions that businesses and organizations wanted to project about



THESE NEWLY BUILT early-twentieth-century bungalows on Francis Street in Portland, Oregon, are all of a similar design and mirror the order and angled row of typists in the photograph on the facing page. Rows of homes continuing beyond the edge of the image imply the abundance and limitless consumption found in many of Gifford’s photographs during that time period.

themselves. And when placed next to Lesy’s Louisville images — documents of a similar-sized American city but in a very different region (with a very different history) — the Gifford collection reveals many themes common to urban life in the early-twentieth-century United States. One of these themes, for example, is the tendency to amalgamate people and objects in an effort to organize them rationally.

You can see this most clearly in three Gifford photographs. One is a picture of women office workers at the U.S. National Bank, carefully aligned at their typing stations, each with similar

dresses and hair-dos, and all of them overseen by a burly man in an office smock standing at the rear. Another depicts a row of newly built, single-story bungalows on Francis Street in Portland, each of a similar design, with the angle of the street mirroring the angle of the row of stenographers in the bank office. And then there is a typing class at the Knights of Columbus school. Again you see people carefully aligned, in this case young men in similar business suits sitting at identical typewriters. Individually, these photographs already convey a great deal of information — about dress, about office



THE GIFFORD COLLECTION at the Oregon Historical Society largely consists of commercial photographs, such as this image of Metropolitan Store's Chiclets display in about 1920.

machines, about architecture, about lots of things. But taken together they reveal an important aspect of early-twentieth-century urban life: the effort to organize large groups of people into standardized modules.

I used the Gifford collection in two pieces, both inspired by Lesy's work, but taking things a few steps further. One of them was an installation of Gifford images called "Antioch the Glorious: Visions of Metropolitan Life." Accompanying the images were quotations from an article on the ancient city of Antioch that appeared in *National Geographic* in 1920. The other piece was a slide show accompanied by live

piano music, which I supplied myself. In this case the Gifford photos were interspersed with tangential texts from the *Oregon Journal*. The texts were not as closely related to the images as were the ones in Lesy's *Real Life*. Rather, I used them more for juxtaposition and contrast. And between the three groups of images in the slide show (I characterized them as acts in a drama) I created three *entr'actes* consisting of portraits of women from the same period taken by the Cronise studio in Salem — selected from one of the major OHS collections. These two pieces were obviously not the sort of exhibits you would normally find in a

history museum. But, hopefully, they encouraged people to view these photographs in imaginative ways.

JS: It is fascinating that *Real Life: Louisville in the Twenties* features some Caufield and Shook photographs that are not just similar but almost exactly the same, in both subject matter and presentation, as those of Gifford (the row of newly built bungalows, the female office workers in their carefully aligned work stations, the displays of consumables), which really does drive home the point you make about certain themes being pervasive across urban America at this time.

Besides the compulsion to organize, another theme I see in the photographs of both collections is proliferation — so many large groups of people, such vast quantities of merchandise for sale. The photographs of the new bungalows and the office workers present both subjects in a receding line that travels to the very edge or beyond the photograph, implying limitlessness. Considering these are just two of what you note are the many themes concerning early-twentieth-century urban America that can be inferred from these photographs, it is easy to see why you have been drawn to work with this type of collection.

Is there an amateur collection at OHS you find equally compelling (although likely for different reasons)?

GW: The other OHS collection that stands out for me is the Kerr Family collection [Coll 74]. This contains a sequence of early Kodak box camera

images taken by Peter Kerr (1861–1957), a wealthy Portland grain merchant who came to Oregon from Scotland to make his fortune. Sometime in the 1890s, Kerr acquired one of the early Kodak cameras and began taking informal snapshots of his family and friends. Although these sorts of informal images became common in later years — thanks to the continuing simplification of cameras — in the 1890s the formal professional photograph was still dominant, either of the posed studio variety or carefully controlled location shots. Because of this, these 1890s snapshots provide, I think, a very different perspective from the formal images we associate with the time. Here you see people lounging about on porches, clowning with their friends and pets, walking precariously on logs at the seashore, or relaxing after a golf game at a country club. There are pictures of people's backs, a woman holding her hand over her face in protest against being photographed, a group of men teasing a dog. These are round images, which were standard in the early years of the Kodak cameras. And most of the prints in the OHS collection were made in the mid 2000s, directly from the original negatives. This gives them a fresh, almost contemporary look.

What I find the most striking about these images is the way they look like photographs of people that might have been taken more recently. Sometimes it seems as if these are people in the 1960s dressing up in Victorian costumes. One can almost perceive that the subjects are somewhat uncomfort-



OHS digital no. bbo15230

which is the sort of ambiance we are used to seeing in recently taken photographs. One could almost imagine Peter Kerr taking these pictures with his smart phone. I am sure, however, these informal snapshots were never intended for consumption outside the close circle of Kerr's family and friends — a big difference we need to keep in mind when we look back to the 1890s. Instead, it was the formal studio portraiture that largely appeared publicly in periodicals and yearbooks and other publications. It was not a time when people posted pictures of their drunk friends on Facebook. Even if the

THE KERR FAMILY photograph collection contains a series of early Kodak box camera images of family and friends. Peter Kerr took this informal photograph of David C. Lewis and an unidentified woman between 1897 and 1905.

able in their clothes — which after all were probably quite cumbersome, especially for the women, who wore layers of petticoats and tight corsets even when lounging about in a private setting. This kind of relationship between people and their clothes is not as evident in a formal studio portrait of the time, where the person is usually in a stiff artificial pose against a fanciful painted backdrop. In those studio portraits the subject is, in a way, playing a role on a stage, and thus the clothes and backdrop are part of the drama. But in the Kerr snapshots the people are relaxing and (in many cases) seem to be actually having fun,

Kerr Kodak images were, in a sense, a precursor to Facebook-style photography, their social context was entirely different. And it should not be surprising that the Kerr family kept these images to themselves for over a century before they donated them to OHS in the early 2000s.

But there is a larger issue raised by this collection, and this bears on all historical documents and artifacts. We are used to thinking of these things as *old*, as things that come to us from another time — another planet, almost. And, to the extent that historical artifacts exhibit the deterioration of time — the yellowing of paper, the

darkening of the image, the cracks in the porcelain, the smell of mold from storage in unheated basements — the more they seem distant, foreign, and only vaguely related to our present-day lives. And yet, when one sees a photographic print of a Kodak image in the Kerr collection, made directly from the original negative by OHS in the mid 2000s, that quality of deterioration is largely absent. One sees a fresh image on present-day photographic paper, not a cracked albumen print yellowed over time by its acidic paper backing. And the fresh image, again, seems as if it was taken recently, with contemporary

people cavorting on the beach in 1890s costumes. What all this means to me is that so much of our notions of historical artifacts — be they photographs or houses or out-of-tune pianos with chipped ivory keys — derives from this sense of deterioration. And thus a distancing occurs. Whereas historical objects exist now, in the present moment, and are part of our everyday world on all levels, just as history itself is a dimension of everything around us, ourselves included. Sigmund Freud cleverly likened the human psyche to the city of Rome, with present-day structures built on top of (and among) layers and layers



OHS digital no. bbo15232

FAMILY AND FRIENDS gather on the porch at Cliff Cottage, Peter Kerr's home at Elk Rock in Portland, Oregon. This is also one of the Kerr Family photographs taken between 1897 and 1905.



THIS OREGON JOURNAL photograph documents an August 15, 1975, takeover of Bonneville Power Administration offices by about one hundred Native Americans protesting federal repression on reservations.

of past constructions. History is with us all the time, even if it may not look or smell “old.”

It should not be surprising that many cultures make no distinction between what is “old” and what is in everyday use today. An ancestral spirit may be alive and well within a home or a cooking utensil. But in our contemporary urban culture, the past is somehow removed from us — a place we left long ago, returning only as distanced onlookers in a museum or archive. When we leave the museum — or when we close the photo album — we are back in what we say is the “real” world, which somehow operates on a different plane from the

world of history. This is an illusion and, I think, a somewhat dangerous one. If we do not accept history as a dimension of the present moment, we cannot see ourselves and our world as the result of that history. When we see grainy black and white films of the Holocaust, it is too easy for us to dismiss those atrocities as somehow a part of a musty historical time that has little to do with our own world. But, as everyone should know, there are plenty of similar atrocities happening around the world at the present moment — albeit on a smaller scale. This was one of the brilliant touches of Claude Lanzmann’s film *Shoah*, which explored the Holocaust not through

archival footage (there was none in his film) but through up-to-date interviews and scenes of concentration camps as they were at the time he made his movie. This made the Holocaust a facet of the present time — which it is, in so many ways — and not just some old historical costume drama.

This (believe it or not) brings me back to the Kerr collection: if we see a woman in a formal studio portrait of the 1890s, tightly laced into a corset that is probably damaging her internal organs, wearing layer upon layer of clothes that may have been highly uncomfortable (and also a drain on her household budget), we may tend to think “oh well, that was just the way things were in the old days.” But if we see the same woman in an informal snapshot that looks as if it was taken yesterday, sitting under the hot sun and really looking uncomfortable in her heavy garments, one might think (especially if one is a woman), “that could be me, or someone I know, sitting there and feeling suffocated by those clothes.” This cleaner, more contemporary-looking photograph significantly reduces the distance between now and then. It gives us more of a sense that “then” is really a part of “now.”

JS: That is an interesting point that the reproducible content and the original photograph can evoke different responses. When I hold a very old photograph in my hand, as opposed to a reproduction, I am definitely more apt to experience what Sontag described when she spoke of the photograph

as a nostalgia-inducing relic. You very eloquently addressed why we must be careful to mitigate this tendency when dealing with either the original photograph or the reproduced content.

As with the Kerr family, from the late nineteenth century onward, a growing number of people began to give shape to the events that made up their lives by photographing them. What percentage of the OHS collection comprises these amateur photographs, as opposed to those of commercial photographers? As a whole, are they representative of the Oregon population?

GW: Although OHS holds a substantial quantity of informal photographs — primarily in family collections and albums — the archives of commercial studios and publications are really the largest part of our holdings, perhaps three-quarters of the whole. Among these is the Photo Art studio collection, which comprises maybe a million images that are mostly negatives. Another major collection is the archive of the *Oregon Journal*, one of the two main newspapers in Portland. All of these commercial collections represent the kind of industrial-scale photography that produced massive quantities of images, and they tend to overshadow the smaller collections from individuals and families, which are still of great historical value.

Among the family and personal collections, it should not be surprising that European-Americans of the middle and upper classes are most heavily represented, especially in

materials dating from before World War II. These were the people who had the means and leisure time to take photographs. They were also the people whose families saw OHS as the appropriate repository for their collections. After all, OHS in its early years tended to focus on documenting European-Americans who had settled in Oregon in the nineteenth century. Their descendants were among the largest financial supporters of the institution as well. So many of them saw OHS as “their” institution, whereas non-European ethnic groups have not, in the past, felt as welcome. That situation has been changing, luckily, in more recent times. OHS recently acquired the photograph archive of *The Skanner*, for example, which is the largest African American newspaper in the Pacific Northwest. In 2008, OHS became the repository for the archives of the Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church, the main African American congregation in Portland. Still, holdings on so many other ethnic groups are missing — notably Asian Americans. These groups have probably documented their lives and their organizations as thoroughly as others, but they have not had enough opportunities for establishing archival collections at OHS. Luckily, many ethnic-based historical organizations have stepped in to fill this need, such as the Oregon Nikkei Endowment, which has a robust archival program devoted to the Japanese American experience in Oregon.

JS: There are several categories of photography (with overlap among them) that are a major part of the OHS collection and help define it as representative of the West or the Pacific Northwest: landscape, Native American culture, and the timber industry. What are some important or interesting things to know about the OHS collection regarding these regionally defining photographs?

GW: In the realm of landscape photography, three significant collections stand out. These are the work of Carleton Watkins, Fred Kiser, and Lily White. Carleton Watkins (1829–1916) is well known as the premier photographer of the U.S. West. Headquartered in San Francisco, he came to Oregon for many photographic expeditions, most notably in 1867 and 1883–1885. His 1860s mammoth prints are highly valued by collectors, especially those depicting the Columbia River Gorge. These prints were not enlargements but match the size of the actual glass plate negatives exposed with a large format, wet plate camera. Watkins, like most photographers of the 1860s, was forced to develop his negatives immediately after exposure, which entailed a host of complications in the field. His prints are almost all that remains of Watkins’s work, since most of his negatives were destroyed in the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire. OHS is fortunate to hold one of the world’s largest Watkins collections, including a rare set of his stereo views.



OHS Research Library, org. lot. 1286

OHS RECENTLY ACQUIRED a photograph archive from *The Skanner*, the largest African American newspaper in the Pacific Northwest. This undated photograph documents an advertisement from *The Skanner* and Tri-Met referencing Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Fred H. Kiser (1878–1955) became well known through his magnificent views of western scenery, most notably Crater Lake, Glacier National Park, Mount Hood, and the Columbia Gorge. He was also the official photographer of the Lewis & Clark Centennial Exposition in 1905. His work was unabashedly commercial, and his company was highly successful, especially in the 1910s and 1920s. OHS holds a wide variety of Kiser images from all aspects of his career, including a substantial group of meticulously hand-colored photographs.

Lily White (1866–1944) came from a prominent Portland family and worked for a time with a close friend, Sarah Ladd. In the early 1900s, the two began a series of photographing cruises up the Columbia River in a houseboat called the *Raysark*. Their photographs exemplify the aesthetic sensibilities of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with images that are meticulously composed and sensitively toned. White’s work was known nationally, and she was one of the few women members of Alfred Stieglitz’s famous Photo-Secession



LILY WHITE photographed this scene along the Columbia River in 1901. The Oregon Historical Society holds a large collection of her meticulously composed and printed landscape photographs.

Group. Her work is in the tradition of Watkins, but it stands in stark contrast to the utilitarian photographs churned out by commercial firms like Gifford and Prentiss (who also created more aesthetic work for a different audience). OHS has acquired a substantial collection of White's photographs, which are very hard to find.

All three of these photographers — Watkins, Kiser, and White — are emblematic of what might be considered a “western” sensibility, with a focus on dramatic landscapes and the beginnings of urban centers, not to mention the recording of Native

American tribal communities. But their work is also significant, of course, in the overall history of photography.

JS: How has the photography collection changed during your tenure at OHS? What are some of the issues future custodians will have to deal with as it continues to grow?

GW: As I mentioned above, the OHS photo collection has been recently enriched through the acquisition of two major African American collections — a subject matter OHS collections sorely lacked until now. But

the most important change has come about not through acquisition but by enhanced access. Through a number of significant grants, OHS has begun to make many of its previously hidden collections available for research, both in-house and on the web. One project I initiated about six years ago was to convert an old photograph catalog containing about 40,000 images into digital form, linking the images to records in the library's online catalog. This was very much an expedient project, and I am afraid the resulting low-resolution watermarked images are nowhere near the standards now set for most digital systems. Also the metadata and discovery system for these images is relatively primitive. But the project has at least given researchers worldwide a degree of access to our collections never before available. Recently, however, through a major grant from the Collins Foundation, OHS has established a true digital infrastructure, and many col-

lections are now being scanned with acceptable resolution and metadata. Two major collections will soon come online: a collection of the naturalist William Finley, and a large group of negatives from the *Oregon Journal*. In addition, OHS has been fortunate to have on staff Matthew Cowan, an experienced photograph and moving-image archivist, who has taken several of our motion picture and glass plate slide collections on the road for public exhibitions. These and other projects represent, I feel, the most important aspect of OHS's archival work at present. With such a vast collection of images, and with so little access to these rich holdings up until now, the work of the OHS library staff can be very clearly laid out for at least the coming decade. But, of course, all this work will be built on top of the many years of labor of previous staff members. Without their work, OHS would not hold one of the premier photography collections in the United States.

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