

Inside SPNEA:

The Yankee Photograph Collection

Recently, the photographic collection of New England images in SPNEA's Library and Archives—more than 400,000 prints and negatives documenting the buildings, landscapes, and daily lives of New Englanders from the mid-nineteenth century to the present—was significantly augmented by a gift from Yankee Publishing, Inc. The Yankee Photograph Collection features more than two thousand negatives dating from the 1890s to the 1930s and includes views of New England cities and towns, historic houses, landscapes, covered bridges, famous people, disasters, and activities of daily life. Many are from the collection of Alton H. Blackington (1893-1963), a photojournalist and author who worked as a news photographer for the Boston *Herald* and later operated his own service offering illustrated lectures and

commercial and news photographs. Many more negatives are by the landscape and portrait photographer Martha Hale Harvey (1862-1949); others are by unknown photographers.

During the 1960s Robb Sagendorph, the publisher of *Yankee*, acquired the negatives to build an in-house repository of photographic images that could be used by *Yankee's* editorial staff. After extensive use in the late 1960s and early 1970s, demand for the images dwindled, and the negatives were moved into a cellar and soon forgotten. In the 1980s Lorna Trowbridge, librarian and archivist at Yankee Publishing, resurrected the collection and catalogued it. In the fall of 1994 Yankee Publishing, Inc., recognizing the importance of the collection to scholars and researchers, donated it to SPNEA. During the next two years, these remarkable images will be catalogued and made accessible to the public.



Martha Hale Harvey. George Wainwright Harvey and his cat at Lobster Cove, Annisquam, Massachusetts, c. 1895.

This is a portrait by Martha Hale Harvey (1862-1949) of her husband, the artist George Wainwright Harvey (1855-1930). Harvey made artistic photographs of the landscapes, seascapes, architecture, and local people of

Cape Ann. For more than thirty-six years she and her husband had adjoining studios in Annisquam. The Yankee Photograph Collection includes approximately one hundred of Harvey's negatives.



Blackington Collection. * Man with sturgeon, Boston, Massachusetts, 1931.

The Yankee Photograph Collection includes numerous images of New Englanders engaged in various occupations — fishing along the Atlantic coast, stonecutting in Maine, tending stores throughout New England, logging in the Waterville Valley of New Hampshire, and harvesting crops — cranberries in the bogs of southeastern Massachusetts, potatoes in Aroostook, Maine, and strawberries in Falmouth, Massachusetts. In the 1920s, Falmouth produced more strawberries per acre than any other part of the country.

** In addition to his own work, Alton H. Blackington's collection includes some negatives that cannot be attributed definitively to him but were collected by him.*

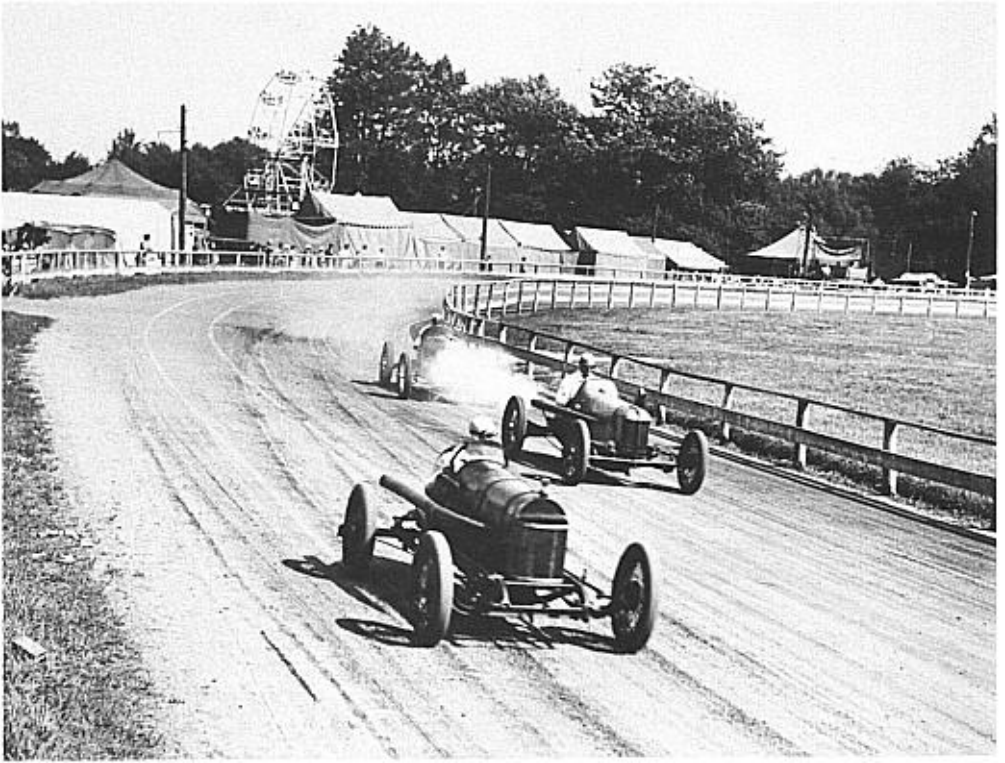


Blackington Collection. Strawberry picker, Falmouth, Massachusetts, c. 1930.



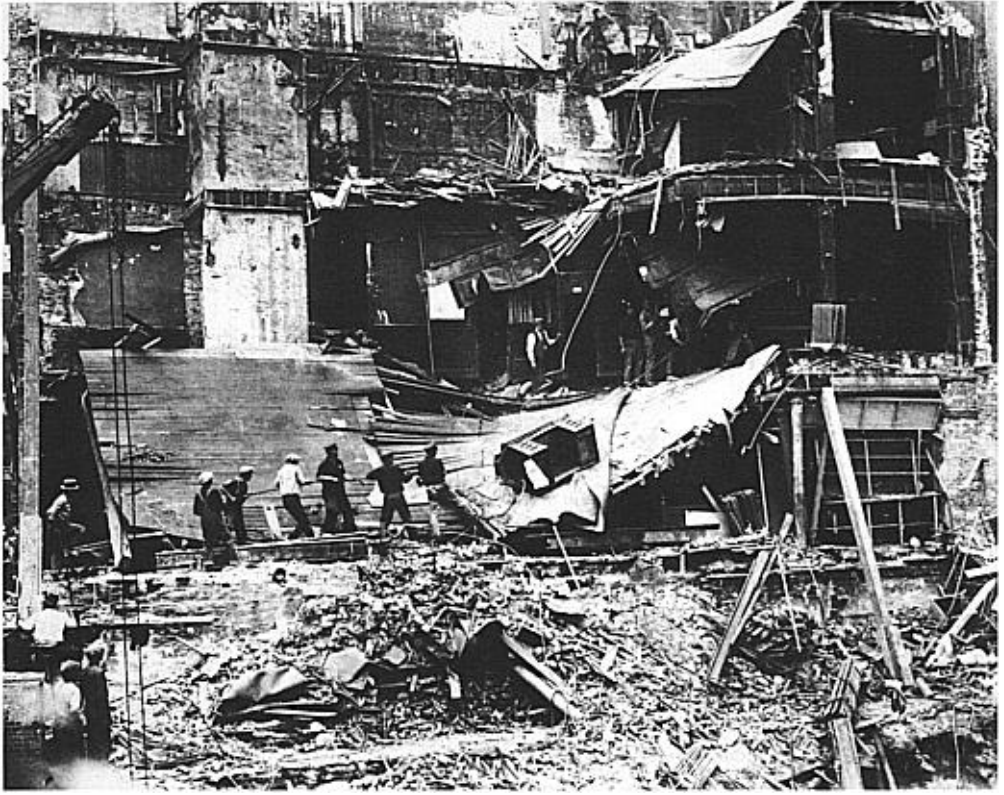
Alton H. Blackington. President and Mrs. Calvin Coolidge and their dog Blackberry at Plymouth, Vermont, 1931.

In his book *Yankee Yarns* (1954), Blackington wrote that “with note book and camera... I covered fires, floods, shipwrecks, and celebrities, always watching for the unusual human interest angle.” In addition to more than 250 images of the Coolidges, Blackington’s collection includes many photographs of Charles Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart taken during the aviators’ trips to New England.



Blackington Collection. Races at Topsfield Fair,
Topsfield, Massachusetts, 1933.

Automobile races first appeared at the Topsfield Fair in 1933. In addition to the auto races, visitors to the fair, the oldest continuous county fair in America, were treated to flower and cattle shows, horse races, fireworks, and firemen's tugs-of-war. New Englanders playing at the beach and at circuses; participating in patriotic parades, fireworks, and tercentenary pageants; attending educational and religious activities at museums and churches are well represented not only in the Blackington Collection but in the collections of the anonymous photographers as well.



Alton H. Blackington. Pickwick Club disaster, July 4, 1925.

In his career as a photojournalist, Alton H. Blackington captured dramatic images of explosions, fires, floods, air disasters, and hurricanes. This view shows the aftermath of the collapse in the early morning hours of July 4, 1925, of the Pickwick Club, a private club on Beach Street in Boston. More than forty people died, and many more were injured in the disaster. Despite an early newspaper report that blamed the disaster on the leaping of dancers doing the new Charleston, the official reason given for the collapse was the failure of the building's concrete pilings.



Photographer unknown. Pollock's Store, c. 1890.

The people in this photograph are looking in the window of what was probably the Boston store of Charles Pollock, who sold stereoscopes and stereo views and published photographs. The photographs hanging in the middle of the window are cabinet card portraits (paper prints on 4¼-by-6½-inch mounts) of notable people, including actors, authors, musicians, and historical figures from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Cabinet card portraits were popular from the late 1860s through the end of the century. Other merchandise visible in the window includes stereoscopes, stereo cards, and views of landscapes.

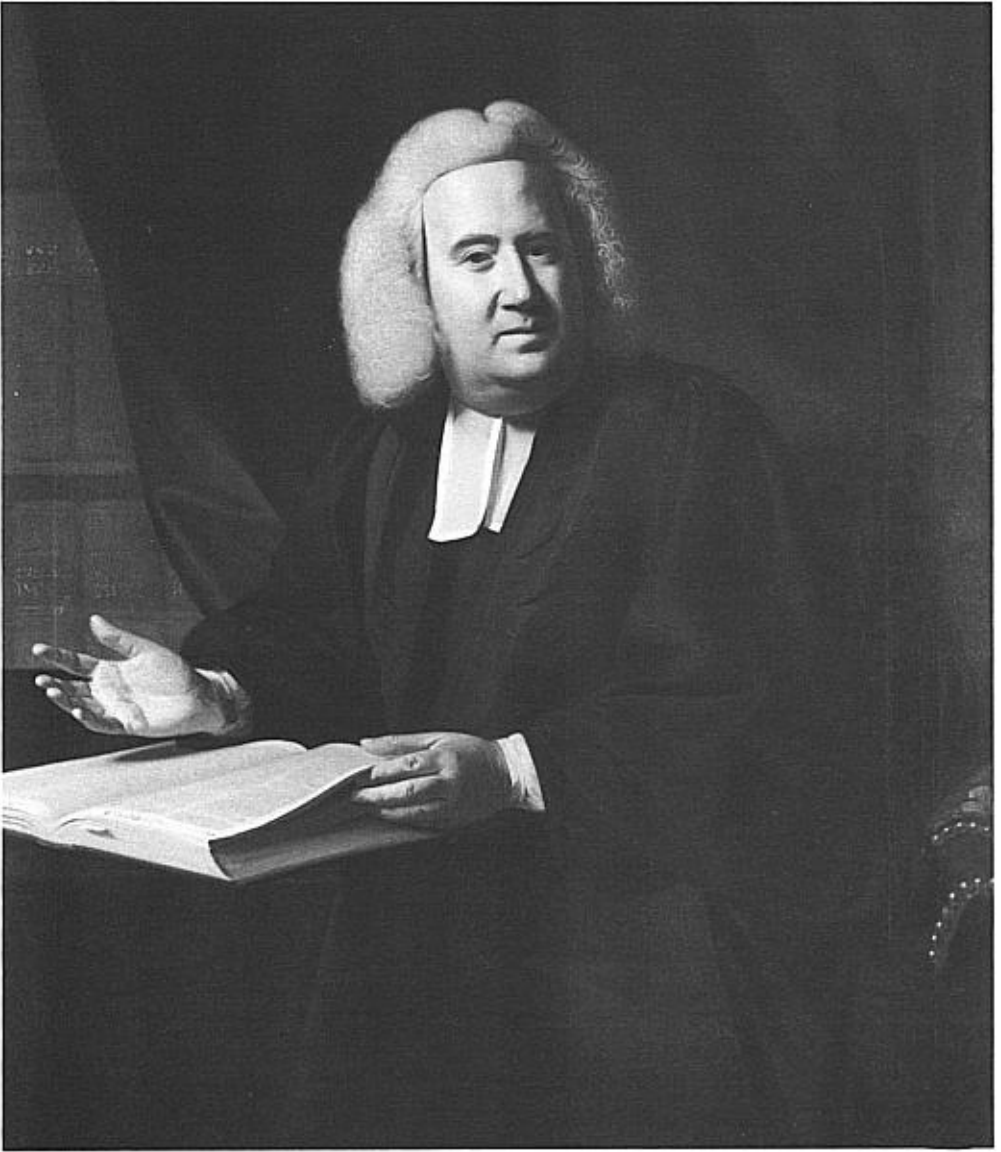


Fig. 1. *John Singleton Copley, Rev. John Ogilvie, oil on canvas, 1771.*

Courtesy The New-York Historical Society, New York City.