

## INTRODUCTION: IMAGES OF COMMON WEALTH II

The Spring 1997 issue of *Pennsylvania History* (volume 64, number 2) was entirely devoted to the history of photography in Pennsylvania. The edition met with great success, winning that year the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives' Arline Custer Memorial Award recognizing the best books and articles written or compiled by individuals and institutions in the MARAC region; and the Society of American Archivists' Hamer-Kegan Award for increased public awareness of a specific body of records.

In mid-2013, *Pennsylvania History* editor Bill Pencak decided it would be good to produce another issue on the same theme, and already had accepted two articles (those on Terrance V. Powderly and Robert Ginsberg). He again invited this author to be guest editor. Alas, as we were gathering the other articles, Bill suddenly passed away in December. I greatly regret he will never see the results, yet I also feel he is looking down on me as I write these words.

Much has evolved in our world with regard to photography in the seventeen years since that issue appeared. This evolution could be called the computerization of photography, the movement away from a mechanically and chemically produced image. The Spring 1997 journal was put together using glossy prints or

transparencies, with text delivered to the publisher, often in person, on floppy disks. The issue you are reading now employs email, dropboxes, scans, and an editorial website to bring it together. The commercial use of polyester camera film has been entirely replaced by digital photography. The negative, the dominant means of producing an image throughout most of photography's history, has been eliminated in favor of an electronically produced direct positive. Slides as well have been replaced by PowerPoint presentations constructed from digital images. The motion picture industry has gone digital as well, and neighborhood theaters around the state and country are struggling with the expense to convert their projection equipment to the modern format.

Photography is now more immediate than ever before. The camera itself has been integrated into a hand-held electronic device, married with a clock, a telephone, a calculator, and a myriad of other technologies, to be kept in a pocket and accessed 24/7. It has become ubiquitous and hard to imagine life without such devices.

Yet the purpose, and use, of photography remains the same. It is a tool, like a spoon or a hammer, serving to make our lives more efficient. Digital snapshots can be instantly forwarded around the earth or even to the earth from other planets in our solar system. It enables us to share our lives with the global community. The artfulness in composing an image also remains the same, within the hand and mind of the photographer.

The monographs appearing here reflect recent research and information about how this tool is used and manipulated. Two provide overviews to the photograph collections of Terrance Powderly and H. Winslow Fegley, by William John Shepherd and Candace Perry, respectively. Powderly, that champion of labor, is not remembered as a photographer. Yet his images follow his work and interests and reinforce his lifetime of advocacy. We are grateful that these photographs were preserved and remain to be studied at Catholic University. Likewise, Winslow Fegley's collection at the Schwenkfelder Library is an outstanding and unique record of the homes and farms in east-central Pennsylvania, many of which no longer exist. Fegley, like Edwin S. Curtis and his efforts with Native Americans, wanted to record the Pennsylvania German way of life disappearing before him. Sarah Weatherwax examines the early years of photography in Philadelphia, offering new information about the little-known or researched female photographers operating in the commonwealth, and centers on the life of Sally Hewes. She also presents a vignette on John McClees. Jay Ruby gives thoughts on

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Joseph Replogle, a nineteenth-century small-town commercial photographer, and how study of him and his images reveals much about what ordinary citizens expected from the medium. Edward Slavishak provides a thoughtful scrutiny of William Gedney's 1975 attempt to revisit the places Walker Evans photographed in Bethlehem in the 1930s, and their perceptions of urban decline.

Finally, Bill Pencak's dear friend Robert Ginsberg enlightens us with a deeply personal essay on the nature of photography and what it can reveal about each one of us. We are also grateful to Bob for helping to underwrite the production of his article in color.

What does photography teach us about humanity? Photographs can be considered the original "social media." People connect and respond to images more than words. It is therefore as a social media we present the following essays offering interpretation and analysis of photographs and photographers in the Keystone State from its very beginnings to the recent past.

LINDA A. RIES

*Guest Editor*