

## NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

### *Albert Winslow Barker, Photographer*

ALBERT WINSLOW BARKER (1874-1947) became a well known lithographer in the Delaware Valley. At first educated by his father at the family home in Moylan, Pennsylvania, he enrolled in classes at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts at the age of sixteen.<sup>1</sup> Barker learned his craft well, and "by 1903 he was teaching in the Pennsylvania Museum's School of Art settling into the traces as a professional artist and art teacher."<sup>2</sup> Indeed, by 1905 Barker had exhibited five times at the Pennsylvania Academy: in 1898, 1900, 1901, 1902, and 1905.<sup>3</sup>

Barker continued to teach art until, at the age of thirty-seven, he entered Haverford College. Continuing his academic education at the University of Pennsylvania, he received his Master's degree and Ph.D. in classical archaeology. Then Barker returned to his art.

Until he discovered lithography, Barker's favorite medium was charcoal, for it permitted him the flexibility and contrast with which to illustrate the Pennsylvania landscape, which he found so beautiful. Nature always dominated Barker's scenes, although often he portrayed men and women at work in harmony with nature. In the summer of 1927, Barker learned the lithographic process under the instruction of the prominent lithographer Bolton Brown. For the rest of his life Barker devoted himself to mastering the medium. Lithography permitted him even more flexibility and control than had charcoal. The

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Whitmore, "Albert W. Barker: Poet and Lithographer," *The Print Collector's Quarterly*, 27 (1940), 277.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

<sup>3</sup> Special card catalogue in the Art Department, Free Library of Philadelphia, Logan Square.

broad dark sweep of a hill, the sharp outline of a barn, or the delicate wisp of a cloud could be more carefully defined. Barker actively experimented with crayon, stone, and printing to overcome the problems involved in lithography. By perfecting the lithographic crayon and by creating a method of printing that did not use acid, Barker contributed greatly to the medium.<sup>4</sup>

Barker's lithographs were well received. By 1936, nine years after learning the lithographic process, he had exhibited in one-man shows at the Smithsonian Institution and at the Corcoran Gallery, and fifteen museums owned thirty-two of his prints.<sup>5</sup> Also, during the years from 1937 to 1939, *The Print Collector's Quarterly* featured at least one of Barker's lithographs in its "Prints of To-Day" section.<sup>6</sup>

What many may not realize is that Barker was also a skilled photographer whose sensitive eye succeeded in capturing the vitality of his familiar Pennsylvania countryside. His photographs depict a way of life that no longer exists. Yet we see the beauty, strength, and vigor of that harmony between the Pennsylvania farmer and his or her land.

Little is known about Barker's photography. His father enjoyed taking pictures of the countryside, and this must have influenced him.<sup>7</sup> Barker was never described as a photographer, and his photographs have never been exhibited.<sup>8</sup> They are now brought to the public's attention.

The following selection of photographs were printed from eleven of the 142 glass plate negatives (c. 1910) which comprise the Historical Society's Albert Winslow Barker Collection of Glass Plate Negatives, given by Miss Elizabeth Barker and Mrs. Agnes S. Davis in 1980. As the negatives predate Barker's instruction in the lithographic process, they may possibly have served as studies for his graphic work. Barker's papers, and a collection of 7,000 glass plate negatives of Europe (1910), are located at Bryn Mawr College.

*Historical Society of Pennsylvania*

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<sup>4</sup> "Barker, Lithographer," *The Art Digest*, 1 December 1936, p. 21.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* The Historical Society of Pennsylvania owns eleven of Barker's lithographs (Society Print Collection and WPA Collection).

<sup>6</sup> *The Print Collector's Quarterly*, 24 (1937), 449; 25 (1938), 241, 486; 26 (1939), 370.

<sup>7</sup> Telephone call with Miss Elizabeth Barker, December 1, 1981.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*



Small girl with man cutting tobacco



Man loading tobacco



Man cutting corn



Men loading corn



Ploughing

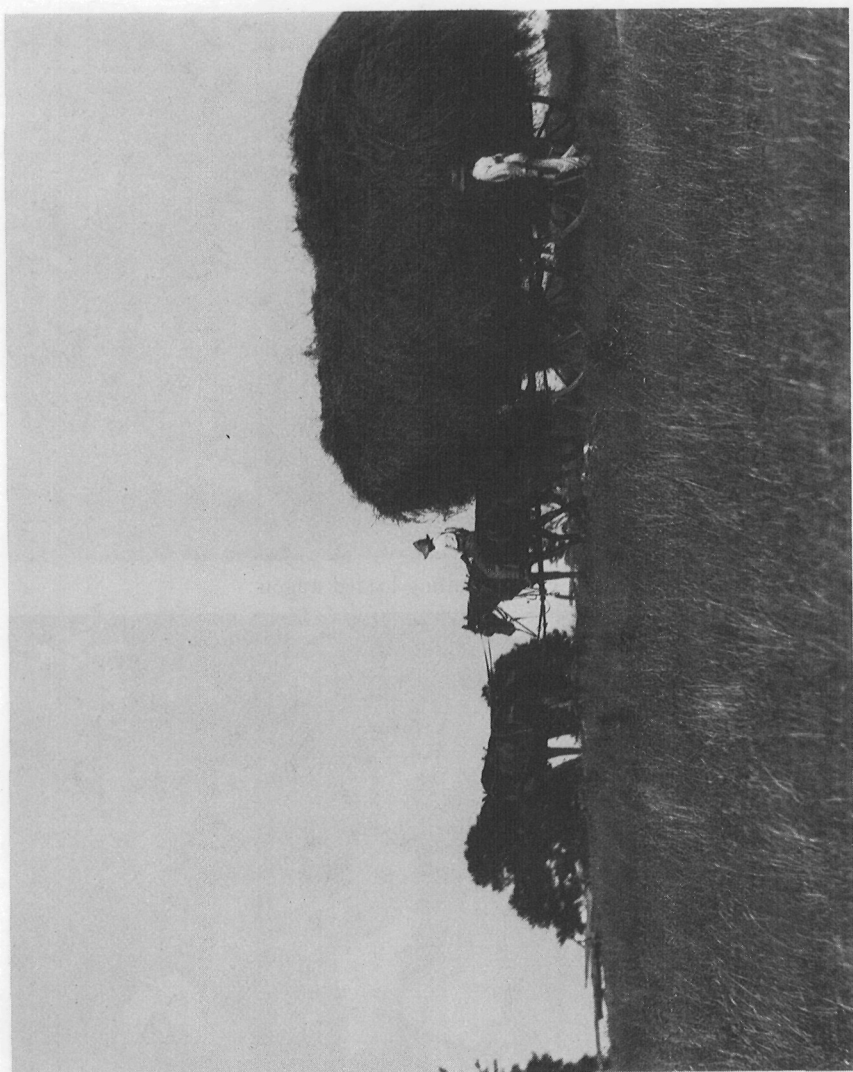




Horses pulling loaded wagon



Hay

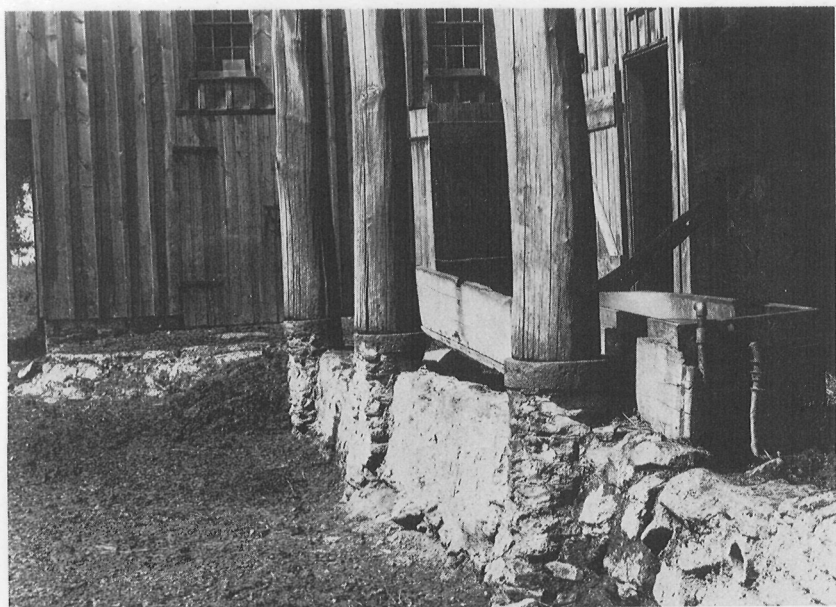


Men with hay wagon





Barn on William Thomas Farm  
(just North of W.C.A.U. mast near Newtown Square)



Barn near Marple



Barn near Marple