Guide to Collection

Becker, Harry T.

Harry T. Becker Photograph Collection, ca. 1932-1945

PCA 67

311 photographs
322 nitrate negatives

ACQUISITION: The first seven folders of the collection are materials purchased from Samuel Becker, nephew to Harry T. Becker in 1977 (Acc. No. 1978-016). Folders 8 through 12 of Box 1, and all of Boxes 2 and 3 were transferred from the Alaska State Museum October 24, 1985.

ACCESS: The photos may be viewed, however, they may not be photocopied.

COPYRIGHT: Request for permission to publish or reproduce material from the collection should be discussed with the Librarian. Photocopying does not constitute permission to publish.

PROCESSING: The photographs were numbered and placed in Mylar.
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Harry T. Becker, a Fairbanks photographer, lived in Alaska from 1932 to 1945. He specialized in photography at Syracuse University and while serving in the U.S. Signal Corp, recorded many scenes in France during World War I. He was employed in Alaska as photographer for the U.S. Geological Survey and later worked on the Alaska Railroad.

Becker's services as a photographer/cook on hunting and fishing expeditions were in great demand. Around 1934, Becker settled in Fairbanks and opened the Photo Shop. Becker's wife and partner hand-tinted many of the photographs since much of his work predated color film.

In 1935, he photographed Wiley Post and Will Rogers just before their flight to Barrow. These photographs, the last views of Rogers and Post before their fatal plane crash near Point Barrow, have been published many times without credit to Becker. The original prints were donated to the Will Rogers Museum in Los Angeles.

Becker eventually moved the Photo Shop from Fairbanks to Kodiak. After a few years in business in Kodiak, he closed because of poor health. In 1945 he left Alaska for Whidbey Is. where he stayed from 1945 to 1957. However, the winters became an increasing burden on his health and he eventually retired in Cayucas, California, where he grew flowers and fished until his death at age 87 on April 12, 1977. Source: Stanton H. Patty, Seattle Times, 2/1/76; Letter from Samuel Becker, nephew.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS NOTE

The Becker Collection contains over 300 contact prints selected from approximately 322 nitrate and safety negatives. The photographs vary in size (4x5 to 5x7 to 8x10), some are hand (tinted) colored. Also in this collection is a folder of documents that includes a newspaper photograph and article concerning the last photograph ever taken of Will Rogers which was taken by Becker. About 20 Alaska Sportsman magazines are included in this collection some of which include Becker photographs.

The Alaska State Museum retained 20 hand colored Becker photographs as a circulating exhibit. Safety film negatives are available for selective views. A subject inventory is available.

Box 3, oversized materials, includes several large hand tinted prints.

http://www.library.alaska.gov/hist/hist_docs/finding_aids/PCA067.pdf
INVENTORY

Box 1 of 3  Photographs

PEOPLE

PORTRAITS  Mary Joyce - 24A - 24B - 129
          Wiley Post - 135 - 136 - 141-143
          Will Rogers - 137-138-139-140-141-143
          Harry Becker(?) - 121-125- (neg.125a not printed)-130-131A-131B-132
          Carl Eielson - 154
          Leonard Seppala - 122 [This photograph is a cropped version of the
          original photograph. The original photograph can be found at the Musuem
          of History & Industry, Seattle, Washington; image number
          1986.5G.2763.]

          100-104 (Non-Alaskan)

TOWNS/VILLAGES

ANCHORAGE  1-2-3

KODIAK   86A-86B-86c-87-94A- (neg.94b not printed)

VILLAGES  107-108-109-110

BUILDINGS

LOG CABINS & CACHES  4A-4B-5-6-7A-7B-8-9-19-27-35-123-126

UNIDENTIFIED BUILDINGS  10-11-12-13-14-15-16-17-18

SOD IGLOO  111

RUSSIAN CHURCH, KODIAK  88-89-90A-90B-91-92-93

MINING

PLACER MINERS  47-50-51-52

NUGGETS  48A-48B-49-53-54

TRANSPORTATION
DOGS & DOG TEAMS 20-21A-21B-21C-22
23-24A-24B-25-26-27-
28-29-30-31-32-33-34-
35-36A-36B-37A,B,C,(U.S.Mail)
38-39-40-41-42-43-44A (packdog)
44B-45A-45B-46-122-128


RAILROAD 151-152

MISCELLANEOUS 124 (carriage)
174 (moose)
153 (packtrain)

WILDLIFE

BEAR 158A-158B-159A-159B-162-163A-163B
BEAR, POLAR 160-161A-161B
BEAVER 120-164-165-166A-166B-167
EAGLE 168
FOX 169-170-171
LONG HORN STEER 172
LYNX 173
MOOSE 175-177-178-179-(neg. 180 not printed) -181-182-183A-183B
MOUNTAIN SHEEP 184-185-186-187-188-189-190
MUSK OXEN 191-192-193
PORCUPINE 121 (Harry Becker? feeding)
PTARMIGAN 194-195-196-197
REINDEER 176 neg. - 198-199-200
SEA LIONS 201-202
SQUIRREL 203
WOODCHUCK 204
FISH & GAME

BEAR   62A-62B-63-64-65A-66
BIRDS  70-71-72-73
FISH   74-75-76-77-78A-78B-79A-79B-80-81-82-83A-83B-84A-84B-85 (fish trap)
LYNX   61
MOOSE  57,67
SHEEP  68
PELTS  59-60
GAME TROPHIES 65B-65C-67-68-69


PHOTOGRAPHS OF PAINTINGS AND OTHER MATERIAL

26-Bear In Dog Team - Cantwell Photo #51
54-A Clean Up On 19 Below Dome Creek, Alaska
154-Carl Eielson by U.S. Mail Team. M. Manger photo
174-Training Moose For Trail, Skagway, Alaska.
199-Another View of Reindeer Herd. Mile 305 Alaska Railroad
228-Cabins Painting by Lambert
229-Scenics Painting by Lambert
230-Dog Team - Photograph
231-Northern Lights - Painting
232-Northern Lights - Painting
233-Man Pulling Sled - Painting
235-Christmas card
236-Christmas card
239-Mendenhall Glacier - E. Andrews Photograph
240-Winter Trail Near Ptarmigan Drop - Cantwell-Photo

MISCELLANEOUS

http://www.library.alaska.gov/hist/hist_docs/finding_aids/PCA067.pdf
ESKIMO GRAVES  112, 113
FLOWERS  114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 133
NORTHERN LIGHTS  205, 206, 207
SKELETONS  55, 56, 234
SNOW SCULPTURE  237, 238
SUN  208, 209, 210, 211, 241

Folder 8  Large Photographs

242  [Black bear, in wooded area; 1 of 2]
243  [Black bear, in wooded area; 2 of 2]
244  [Young wolf]
245  [2 polar bears]
246  [3 bear cubs]
247  [8 fish]
248  [Harry Becker, in Native winter clothing; hand-colored]
249  “Eskiimo Girl in Parka” [hand-colored]
250  [Dog sled, no musher]
251  [Harry Becker holding fish]
252  [Float plane near beach; hand-colored]
253  [Landscape: snow-covered mountain in background; hand-colored]
254  [Aurora Borealis above cabin; hand-colored]
255  [Dog sled with mushers]
256  [Dog sleds with mushers]
257  “Kodiak Brown Bear (right) one of the largest carnivorous animals in the world in comparison with ordinary size Bear (left)”
258 [Wiley Post in cockpit; Will Rogers standing on wing]
259 [Unidentified buildings photographed at night]
260 [Wild flowers] neg
261 [Mail plane on first flight from Fairbanks to Juneau; dog sled and musher in foreground; hand-colored]
262 [Wiley Post in cockpit; Will Rogers standing on wing]
263 “Freighting with dog team in Alaska”
264 [Aerial view of unidentified town] [Alaska Road Map]

Folder 9 Large Photographs

265 [Woman fishing in stream, n.d.]
266 [No description; cabin and platform, n.d.]
268 [Unidentified man with strings of birds]
269 “#140; Freighting on Thompson’s Pass; Cantwell”
270 [Native American with camping gear, teepee, and large 3-story house in background]
271 [Miner panning for gold]
272 [Sunset in unidentified location]
273 [2 men, 2 horses – one man is Harry Becker]
274 [Mountain goat on crag]
275 [Miner and pack dog]

Folder 10 Small Photographs

276 Alaska Reindeer [by sled]
277 [Reindeer Herd]
“First Airmail Flight Fairbanks to Juneau”

Kodiak, Alaska

[Three bear cubs; 1 of 3]

[Cabin with dog sled out front]

[Bear in snow]

[Wreck (?)]

Polar Bears – Alaska

[Lone bear walking across bridge]

“612 – Cow Seals hauled out – Alaska”

“Eskimo Landing a Bowhead Whale” [hurls a harpoon at whale]

“The Aurora Borealis”

[Bird sits in snow]

[Dog sits outside a shelter]

“Montakuli” © O. Wm. Geist 1936

“Reindeer Herd, Cantwell, Alaska; Cann”

[Cabin on posts]

[Harry Becker – portrait]

“Mt. McKinley by Bragan” – a slide

“An Alaskan Flower Garden”

[Native Alaskans inside home] neg.

[Three bear cubs; 2 of 3]
300  [Three bear cubs, 3 of 3]
301  [Reindeer herd- panorama]
302  “Esquimo Ivory Carver – Rossman”
303 – 304 [Miner panning for gold – 2 copies]
305  [Container on wheels – man standing to right] neg. 6/21/10 Moved and renumbered 94A
306  “Sunset on boat”
307  “City of Seward near here”
308  [Comedian Joe E. Brown seated in front of people]
309  [Moose swimming across river]
310  “Plane that I flew into camp”
311  [Portrait of woman.] Digital print from negative. Notes on negative sleeve: Sidney Lawrence portrait

Box 2 of 3  Photos, Clippings and Documents

Folder 1  Miscellaneous Documents

1  [Photo of receipt for $7,200,000.00 check for purchase of Alaska]
2  [Ice covered trees at water’s edge]
3  [Letter seeking permission to use a Harry Becker picture, Aug. 18, 1941]
4  [Certificate of Election – Harry Becker elected councilman in Kodiak; August 27, 1940]
5  [Deed of gift by Becker for 3 hand-colored photographs to State of California]
6  [Letter acknowledging gift of 3 hand-colored photographs]
7  Newspaper Clipping (undated) of article concerning last photo made of Will Rogers
8  [Railroad pass for Harry Becker]
9  [Letter of recommendation for Harry Becker]
10  [Lab fee receipt for Harry Becker – University of Syracuse; First Semester 1914]
11  [Newspaper clipping (Feb. 8, 1962) for exhibition of Harry Becker’s hand-painted photographs]
12  [Employment agreement between Harry Becker and Fritz and Hawley, Inc.; August 23, 1929]
13  [Photo of 3 dog sleds and mushers]
14  [North Pole Liar’s License for Fishermen made out to Harry T. Becker, n.d.]  
15  [Klipper & Klipper advertising card]
16 [Newspaper photo of Wiley Post and Will Rogers]
17 [Photo of Wiley Post and Will Rogers]
18 [Newspaper photo and story of Becker’s photo of Will Rogers – last one made]
19 [Damaged first day cover for First Official Flight U. S. Air Mail Fairbanks to Juneau, Alaska; May 8, 1938]
20 [Carbon of letter of resignation as Kodiak city councilman by Harry Becker, Feb. 24, 1941]
21 [Employment contract for Harry Becker at Fritz and Hawley, Nov. 10, 1925]

Book and Magazines

The Alaska Sportsman Book of Animals and Birds With Cartoons and Alaska Oddities

Natural History. September 1954.

The Alaska Sportsman. August 1944.

What to Expect in Alaska by J. B. Caldwell (2 copies).

The Alaska Sportsman. May 1939

The Alaska Sportsman. June 1939 (2 copies)

The Alaska Sportsman. May 1940

The Alaska Sportsman. July 1940 (2 copies)

The Alaska Sportsman. May 1941

The Alaska Sportsman. March 1944

The Alaska Sportsman. July 1944

The Alaska Sportsman. March 1945

The Alaska Sportsman. July 1945

The Alaska Sportsman. March 1947

The Alaska Sportsman. June 1947

The Alaska Sportsman. November 1949

The Alaska Sportsman. November 1951

http://www.library.alaska.gov/hist/hist_docs/finding_aids/PCA067.pdf
The Alaska Sportsman. September 1955

The Alaska Sportsman. September 1956

**Box 3 of 3**  **Oversized Items** *(Located in PCA Oversize – PCA 67)*

**Loose items in top of box:**

1. Alaska Brochure – Flag


4. [Large photo of 12 fish, rod and creel, n.d.]

5. [Large photo of cabin with mountain in background and outbuilding on posts]

6. [B/w photo of fisherman in stream; may be Harry Becker]

7. [Harry Becker with prize fish]

8. [Man seated in snow next to mountain goat]

9. [Dog-drawn sleigh with 2 women passengers and driver in top hat]

10. [Herd of mountain goats]

11. “Ice pool tripod anchored on the Nenana River, Alaska. A cable is attached to the tripod and an electric clock. When the ice moves the tripod 100 ft. it stops the clock which is the official time.”

12. [Building identified with sign: “Nenana Ice Pool”]

13. “Alaskan Prospector with Pack Dog on Trail” [Smaller version elsewhere in collection]

14. [Harry Becker holding string of fish]

15. [Harry Becker holding 2 dead wolves by feet]
Folder 1

16 [Harry Becker holding two large fish]
17 [Man stands with 2 dogs and sled on ice.]
18 [Water from two hoses poured into canyon (?)]
19 [Herd of mountain goats on mountain side]
20 [Unidentified Bay]
21 [Unidentified, snow-covered road; crossed above by telephone wires]
22 [Log structure – cache - on posts in foreground, mountain in background]
23 [Three bear cubs; smaller copies elsewhere in collection]
24 [Dog sled and musher in village of log cabins, two on posts]
25 [Unidentified mountain]
26 Print of drawing: miner panning for gold
27 Print of drawing: hunter in kayak aiming harpoon at walrus
28 [Pile of ten fish on straw]
29 [Hand-colored photo of fish, rod and creel]
30 [Unidentified landscape showing mountains in background]
31 [Moose in shadow at unidentified bay]
32 [Dogs being hitched to sled]

Folder 2  Loose large photographs - Matted

33 – 36[Four hand-colored views of Mt. McKinley]

Folder 3  Loose large photographs – Hand-colored*

*Had been housed in expand file with notation on cover: “Probably Harry Becker material”

37 [Mounds of snow with tops of small trees protruding]
38 [Aurora Borealis above cabin]
39 [Log structure on posts – food cache - in foreground, mountain in background]
40 [Man and woman fishing at edge of stream]
41 [Lake in foreground; mountain in background]
42 [Three bears cross a snow-covered ridge]
43 [Herd of mountain goats lying on a grassy hillside]
44 [Moose in snowy field]
45 [Fish, rod and creel]
46 [Wild flowers]
47 [Display: rifle, oar, pots, saw handle, canoe (?), box]
48 [Cabin in woods]

INVENTORY OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVES
Negatives stored in freezer in Vault

Printed – Mostly from 4x5 and 5x7 film negatives
Box 1 - #1-49
Box 2 - #50-100
Box 3 - #101 – 160
Box 4 - #161A – 217
Box 5 - #218 - 311

Not printed
Box 6 – 54 negatives, most unnumbered, that include the following:
20 miniatures (35mm copy negs) taken at a distance of two feet with a Minolta camera –
represent a sample of the collection (contained in one envelope)
67-94b – Kodiak Fire Dept.
67-125a – Becker with cameras
67-180 – Moose Bull in snow

http://www.library.alaska.gov/hist/hist_docs/finding_aids/PCA067.pdf
Subjects: Bear, Beaver, Cabin, Fish, Dog, Dog Sled, Dog Team, Eskimo Igloo, King Island, Moose, Mountain Sheep, Northern Lights, Ptarmigan, Puppies, Scenic, Sea Lions, Treasury Department purchase warrant,

Empty envelopes – These are the original envelopes that the negatives came in. Most envelopes have written information on them describing the negative.

Box 7 - Printed negatives #1 – 139
Box 8 – Printed negatives #140 – 311 & Unprinted negatives