



Record Group Number: 9015 **Subgroup Number:** 003 **Series Number:** 001

Records Title: Purnell Photograph Collection

Collection Name: Private Photograph Collections

Subgroup Name: Harold W. T. Purnell Collection

Series Name: General Photograph Collection

Beginning Date: 1860 **Ending Date:** 1965

Bulk Dates: 1860-1963 **Quantity of Material:** 21.61 cubic feet

Extent: 71 @ 0.17 boxes, 19 @ 0.19 boxes, 1 @ 0.24 boxes, 2 @ 0.27 boxes, 1 @ 0.38 boxes, 1 @ 0.47 boxes, 3 @ 0.62 boxes, 2 @ 0.18 boxes, 1 @ 1.26 box, 1 @ 1.36 drawer, 5 @ 0.23 boxes, 7 @ 0.13 boxes, 5 @ 0.04 boxes, and 1 @ 0.2 map folder

Biographical Note: Harold W. T. Purnell (1896-1965) was born and lived most of his life in Georgetown, Delaware. After taking over his father's hardware store, he became a prominent merchant and civil leader. He was involved in many local and state organizations. Most notably, he served as a state senator from 1938 to 1946 and was president pro tempore from 1942-1946. Mr. Purnell's love of history was also manifested by his collecting hobbies, especially his efforts to save historical photographs.

Scope and Content: These photos were collected in several ways. In addition to those that Mr. Purnell discovered or had given to him, he bought many from studios that went out of business. He also actively sought old photos from acquaintances and made copies to add to his collection. In 1978, the photograph collection was given to the Archives by his son, Lewis M. Purnell.

Over thirty Delaware photographers and many from out of state are represented in the collection. Studios most represented are Brown Photo Service in Georgetown, Waller Studio in Laurel and Sanborn Studio in Wilmington. (See list of Delaware photographers/studios in the collection.)

The collection contains representations of a wide range of subjects and time periods that give an excellent view of Sussex County life. For easier access, the collection is divided into four sections: places, portraits, subjects, and albums and family photos. Photos that have their location identified are arranged by town. This section contains some excellent street scenes, views of local businesses, churches, houses, public buildings, schools, organizations, transportation, and other subjects. Although most are from Sussex County, some Kent and New Castle County towns are also represented, as well as one box of Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Washington, DC, and

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Japan photos.

Portraits have been divided into the following categories: families, groups, individuals, and weddings. Although many are unidentified, this section does contain the majority of the nineteenth century photos in the collection.

Subject photos represent unidentified locations and have been arranged under broad subject headings such as agriculture, organizations, business and industries, houses, local events, military, recreation, schools, and transportation. The collection also contains seven photo albums and glass negatives from two families.

The collection contains prints, film negatives, glass negatives, tintypes, cabinet cards, cartes-de-visite, ambrotypes, transparencies, slides, lantern slides, albums.

Arrangement:

The Places section is arranged alphabetically by the name of the town and thereunder alphabetically by subject. Portraits are divided into families, groups, individuals, and weddings and subdivided into identified, arranged alphabetically, and unidentified, arranged by broad time periods. Subjects are arranged alphabetically by subject heading. The albums and family photos are arranged alphabetically by family name with unidentified albums and photos at the end.

Index:

See box content lists and Photograph Database.

Available Copies:

Digital copies of some photographs available on [CONTENTdm](#) and [Flickr](#).

Condition of Material:

Poor to good condition. Acid, storage, water, dirt, handling damage.

Accession Number(s):

MS 8737, 8815, 8925, 9015, 9138, 9159, 9227, 9519, 9539, 9897, 98137, 98176, 99149, 2002052, 20060076

Input Date:

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