

Guide to Rowles' Studio Collection
circa 1850s-1980s
The Hudson Area Library History Room

Hudson Area Library
Hudson, New York

Contact Information:

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Collection Title: Rowles' Studio Collection

Collection ID: A2023-003

Creator: Rowles' Studio; Rowles, Samuel G. (1873-1948); Ciancetta, Carmine (1922-2022); Forshew, F., (Frank) (1827 –1895); Whitbeck, V. (1843-?), Unknown

Extent: 312 items, 2.5 linear feet

Dates: circa 1850s-1980s

Language: English

Repository: The Hudson Area Library History Room

Restrictions to Access: The collection is open for research.

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Processing Information: Completed by archivist Nina Boutsikaris in June 2023.

Scope and Content Note: The Rowles' Studio Collection mostly contains reproduction images created by Rowles' Studio in Hudson, NY, which first opened in 1851 as the Francis Forshew Photography Studio and was Hudson's first photography studio. By 1948, Rowles' Studio had a photographic library dating back more than 90 years, which traced the progress of the city. A large portion of the prints and negatives in this collection are reproduction prints from that library, (known as the Rowles' Studio Collection), copies of which were donated to the History Room by the last owner of the business, Carmine Ciancetta, in the final years that the shop was in operation. The bulk of the images are digital proof prints of photos taken by Rowles' Studio in the late-19th century to late-20th century. The proof prints were created for the History Room from original and copy negatives donated by Ciancetta. However, the origin of some of these proof prints is unknown. Rowles' Studio Collection images are mostly commercial, documenting buildings, industry, transportation, people, and events, in the City of Hudson, NY, as well as the surrounding area, including several Columbia County courthouses, circa 1890-1910, Claverack College, Kaaterskill Mountain House, and more. Additional materials in this collection include glass plate negative portraits related to the Rowles family, spanning 1890s-1940s (mostly unidentified, creator unknown), and original negatives (1940s-1950s) related to the Rowles family (creator unknown); as well as cabinet cards and carte de visite portraits created by Forshew and

Whitbeck (mid-19th to mid-20th century). The collection is divided into four series. Digital surrogates of many of the images in this collection are available on the History Room computer.

Historical Note: Rowles' Studio in Hudson, NY was originally operated by Francis "Frank" Forshew (1827-1895), a pioneering and prolific American photographer who was born in Hudson to a school teacher mother and sea captain father. Forshew's photography studio was the first in Hudson. Beginning in 1851 Forshew operated his studio at 237 Warren Street (later 439, after the street renumbering of 1888). He advertised "Daguerreian Rooms," and was making daguerreotypes, tintypes, cartes de visite, cabinet cards, and stereoviews. During the Civil War, Forshew provided cartes de visite to transient soldiers as well as to the families and friends on the home front who wanted to send their images to soldiers away from home on the battlefronts. In the early 1890s Forshew sold the establishment to one of his employees, Volkert Whitbeck (V. Whitbeck) (1843-?), who is said to have joined Forshew's business after being discharged from a Union regiment during the Civil War in 1863. Forshew died in 1895 and was buried in the Hudson City Cemetery. After Whitbeck, the third owner of the studio was Samuel G. Rowles (1873-1948), a lifelong resident of Hudson and a photographer in Hudson for almost half a century. He purchased the studio from Whitbeck in 1916, creating Rowles' Studio, which was now located at 441 Warren Street. A great deal of Rowles' work was reproduced and put on exhibition during the Hudson Sesqui-Centennial Celebration in 1935. After Rowles died, the studio was purchased by Carmine Ciancetta (1922-2022) of Claverack, NY, who relocated it to 709 Warren Street. Mr. Ciancetta closed Rowles' Studio in 1986.

Acquisition information: Between 1981 and 1986, Carmine Ciancetta donated around 100 prints from the Rowles' Studio Collection. Many of these images were originally made when the studio was owned by Forshew or Whitbeck and were later reprinted or reproduced sometime in the mid-20th century. In 2015, Ciancetta donated 22 original negatives of the 1959 Hudson Parade, which the library had digitized and printed as proofs; and in 2016 he donated 32 original negatives of the 1919 Hudson Welcome Home Parade, 14 of which the library had digitized and printed as proofs. There are also a number of proof prints from images probably made by Rowles Studio, but of which the acquisition history is not known for sure. The acquisition history of the glass plate negatives is unknown and the creator is not known. The acquisition history of the slides purportedly donated by Ciancetta has been lost, and therefore the creator of these slides is not known. The acquisition of the original cartes de visits and cabinet cards is also unknown.

Related Materials: Hudson Area Library Oral History Project: Carmine Ciancetta
<https://oralhistory.hudsonarealibrary.org/oral-histories/carmine-ciancetta>

Arrangement: Arranged by format and creator. There are four series: *I. Rowles Family Negatives and Photographs, 1890s-1950s; II. Rowles' Studio Cabinet Cards and Cartes de Visite, 1850s-1900s; III. Rowles' Studio Collection Prints and Proofs, 1800s-1980s ; IV. Rowles Studio Collection Slides, 1800s-1900s.*

Series I - Rowles Family Negatives and Photographs, 1890s-1950s (creator unknown)

Creator: Unknown

Extent: 66 negatives

Scope and Content Note: Negatives related to the Rowles Family. An original "The Stanley Dry Plate" cardboard box (from early 1900s) inscribed with black marker as "Negatives Rowles Family," contains 21 black and white acetate negatives of portraits related to the Rowles Family, spanning 1940s-1950s. One image is identified as J.A. Rowles. A few have dates written on them. Creator is unknown. There are about 45 original glass plate negatives related to the Rowles family, spanning 1890s-1940s (mostly unidentified, creator unknown). Headshots including a stereograph of a man sitting on his carriage. Clearly Identified persons are Samuel Rowles, Jim Rowles and his wife, Mrs. Snyder, Robert Smith, Edward K. Sheldon, and Billy Rowles (as a baby).

Content List:

1. **RSC Box 01 - Rowles Family Negatives, 1940s-1950s**
2. **RSC Box 02 - Glass Plate Negatives, 1890s to 1940s**

Series II - Rowles' Studio Cabinet Cards and Cartes de Visite, 1850s-1900s

Creator: Forshew, F., (Frank), Whitbeck, V. (1843-?)

Extent: 4 Cabinet Cards, 2 Cartes de Visite

Scope and Content Note: Original cabinet cards and cartes de visite created by Forshew and Whitbeck, with studio insignia printed on each image.

Content List:

1. **RSC Box 01 - Carte de visite of unidentified man, 1850s.** Inscribed on the back with "Forshew Hudson N.Y."
2. **RSC Box 01 - Carte de visite of unidentified man, 1850s.** Inscribed on the back with "Forshew Hudson N.Y."
3. **RSC Box 01 - Cabinet card of unidentified woman, 1850s.** Inscribed on the back with "Forshew Hudson N.Y."
4. **RSC Box 01 - Cabinet card of unidentified man, 1890s-1910s.** Front printed with "V. Whitbeck Hudson, N.Y." and on the back, "V. Whitbeck Successor to Forshew Photographer, Hudson N.Y."
5. **RSC Box 01 - Cabinet card "Venetians" group portrait, 1891.** Front printed with "V. Whitbeck Hudson N.Y.," and on the back, "V. Whitbeck Successor to Forshew Photographer, Hudson N.Y." Multiple authors appear to have written on the back, listing the alleged names of the subjects as Tom Hubbel, Harry Alden, Edwin Tobey, Ella Macy, Mary Macy, and Grace Parker. The subjects, three boys and three girls, are dressed in matching outfits. The girls hold oars and the boys hold small string instruments, presumably mandolins.
6. **RSC Box 01 - Cabinet card of unidentified boy, 1890s-1900s.** Front embossed with "V Whitbeck Hudson, N.Y."

Series III - Rowles Studio Collection Prints and Proofs, 1800s-1980s.

Creator: Rowles' Studio Collection

Extent: about 197 images

Scope and Content Note: Two 2.5" binders of Rowles Studio Collection prints (size 8 x 10), featuring mostly Hudson area buildings and homes, plus two studio portraits from the 1850s of Mr. Forshew's wife. Most of these reproduction prints were made in the late 20th century from images originally created in the 19th century. "Rowles Studio Collection" is printed on the front of many of the images. There are about 100 of these prints total. Also includes a 2" binder with about 97 proof prints (size 7 x 4), which were created when the library digitized negatives donated by Carmine Ciancetta in 2015 and 2016, as well as a number of other negatives whose provenance is unknown. These proof prints contain images of the 1919 Hudson WWI parade, a 1959 Hudson parade, local churches, school children, Hudson Iron Works and other industry operations, Mt Carmel Church community members, local businesses, ships and trains, and landscapes of the City of Hudson and surrounding area.

Content List:

1. RSC Binder 01 - Rowles' Studio Collection Prints
2. RSC Binder 02 - Rowles' Studio Collection Prints
3. RSC Binder 03 - Rowles' Studio Collection Proof Prints

Series IV - Rowles' Studio Collection Slides, 1850s-1900s.

Creator: Unknown

Extent: 43 slides

Scope and Content: A batch of black and white slides presumably donated by Carmine Ciancetta, though documentation has been lost. There are 12 slides that represent "Linlithgo Mines." There are 31 slides that represent "Old Hudson" buildings, streets, and landmarks, as well as the surrounding area, including sites that no longer exist, such as Claverack College and Kaaterskill Mountain House. Some of the prints in the RSC Binders are identical to the slides. None of the slides are dated, but the original images were probably made in the late 19th century. The creator is unknown, but is assumed to be Rowles' Studio, as they were presumably donated by Carmine Ciancetta and some of the slides match some of the prints in the collections RSC Binders.

Content List:

1. RSC Box 03 - Old Hudson/Linlithgo Mine Slides

Subjects

Hudson (N.Y.)—History

Parades—New York (State)

Hudson (N.Y.) -- Buildings, structures, etc

Public Works

Names

Rowles' Studio

V. Whitbeck Studio

Frank Forshew Studio

Rowles, Samuel G. (1873-1948)

Ciancetta, Carmine (1922-2022)

Forshew, F., (Frank) (1827 –1895)

Whitbeck, V. (1843-?)

Formats

Photographs

Daguerreotype -- 20th century

Negatives (Photographs)

Glass Plate Negatives

Slides (photographs)

Portraits

Cabinet Card Photographs

Cartes de Viste