Photography and Migration at Colby College

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ARLIS: Visual Literacy as a Pedagogical Tool: Photography and Beyond

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INTRODUCTION

- What does Photography and Migration Look Like
- Colby’s Photography and Migration Project Goals
- Course goals
- Info-Visual Literacy Intersections
- Outcomes

Right: French-Canadian born photographer Gedeon Picher and wife Alzira, ca. 1900, Waterville, Maine. Tintype. Gift to Colby College Special Collections.
MIGRATION DATA:
There are now an estimated 258 million people living in a country other than their country of birth — an increase of 49% since 2000.

REFUGEE DATA:
By the end of 2017, 68.5 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violations.

https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/
https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/infographics
Border Crisis and Journalism: Documenting or selling the migrant?

John Moore, “A two-year-old Honduran asylum seeker cries as her mother is searched and detained near the U.S.-Mexico border [McAllen, Texas. The asylum seekers had rafted across the Rio Grande from Mexico and were detained by U.S. Border Patrol agents before being sent to a processing center for possible separation,” Getty Images, June 12, 2018.

“Welcome to America.” Time, July 2, 2018, cover, published online June 21, 2018.
Above: Michael Wells, “Arizona Desert 2010,” photograph. Right: “Prevention Through Deterrence” (U.S. Border Patrol): “illegal traffic will be deterred or forced over more hostile terrain, less suited for crossing, more suited for enforcement.” At least 3,199 bodies have been recovered in Arizona alone between 2000 and 2017 (Verso of postcard).
“Toiling painfully upward from the moment they reach Ellis Island”

Jill came stumbling after

relatives and friends. Attempts to regulate the business have not succeeded, and for two or three hundred authorized agents for whom the companies stand sponsor, there are probably 3,000 peddlers or runners who sell tickets for cash or on the installment plan, on paychecks, in tenements and shops. They overcharge and defraud. Notaries public who, abroad, are men of special training and position, here commonly play the part of rogues, often uneducated, sometimes not speaking English, cunning—willing to antecede papers, to arrange for illegal and immoral transactions, to act as go-betweens in the renting of disorderly houses, to engage in fraudulent real estate transactions, to take affidavits which they know to be false.

In his relations to these non-English-speaking aliens is peculiarly the prey of shyster lawyers and their steereers and to professional bondsmen. Interpreters are not provided in sufficient numbers, or commanding all needed languages. They translate into English what the alien prisoner says, but do not interpret for him the testimony of the prosecution. He hears only his own side of the case. Congestion and delay, exploited by petty politicians, characterize the courts where naturalization papers are issued. Of forty men recently naturalized, thirty per cent were charged with crimes.

America into climbing

The report of the New York Immigration Commission, appointed five months ago “to make full inquiry, examination and investigation into the condition, welfare and industrial opportunities of aliens in the state of New York,” comprises a well-grounded argument for the establishment of a state department of industries and immigration especially charged with duties which shall tend best to secure to the state the economic advantages derivable from an intelligent utilization of the alien in industrial, agricultural and other employments, and which shall at the same time protect the alien from exploitation, fraud and oppression, and facilitate his development into intelligent and useful citizenship for the ultimate advancement of the state. Such a bureau or department could act as a clearing house, and as a medium of communication with the several agencies and activities with which it is in connection. It would serve as a means for abating abuses, remedying wrongs, and studying conditions, with an eye to their amelioration, and of preventing economic and moral waste.

Photos by Hine

Homes for immigrants were found to vary from those rendering efficient service to others unsanitary, ill-regulated and requiring to send girls to disorderly houses. Aliens whose countrymen are prosperous and interested are protected. Others, such as the Armenians and Greeks, while needing help, find it almost impossible to obtain. The Commission also finds a lack of cooperation among societies for the protection of aliens and of co-ordination of their work, with consequent disadvantages to the aliens and a waste of money and effort. There is only limited supervision by the Ellis Island authorities and none by the state.

Much intelligent work has been done in educating alien children, but only a beginning has been made for adults. Superintendent Maxell is hampered by insufficient funds. A tremendous effort should be put forth to adapt the public schools to aliens of all ages, as the chief means of Americanization. Civics should be taught insistently, on a practical basis, such as would, for instance, acquaint aliens with the municipal and sanitary ordinances. Unconscious violations of the law are a large share of the “crimes” in our city statistics—such crimes as peddling
The Family
Samuel and Maria Osborne and family, 1890. Photograph. Special Collections, Colby College, Artstor.

Living at 5 Ash Street, Waterville, ME, according to the 1900 census, Samuel Osborne and his wife, Maria, both former slaves from Virginia, came to Waterville after the Civil War, with the help of Col. Stephen Fletcher, Colby Class of 1859. Employed by the railroad and then by Colby College as a janitor, he worked at Colby for 37 years. His daughter Marion was the first African American woman to graduate from Colby College, in 1900.

Special Collections Finding Aid
Mother and Child Trope in Photojournalism


Diaspora


“Women of the diaspora, a place of separation and displacement, we have chosen to engage with traditional Arab and Islamic Art as part of a renegotiation of identity...through the loss of place and new encounters.” Lalla Essaydi

Part of the Colby Museum / Anthropology Lab student exhibition: Seeing Otherwise, Making Migration Visible, fall 2018.
Refugees and Migrants Tell Their Own Stories Through Photographs

The 25th annual exhibition by the Open Society Documentary Photography Project elevates the voices of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers.


Sol Aramendi (b. 1968, Argentina; lives in the United States) exhibited work co-created with community members and workshop participants of her initiative Project Luz, “a nomadic space that uses photography as a tool of empowerment for immigrant communities.” (artist website)
Refugee in photography

Homage à Western art history?

(Sheehan, 2018, 12)

Tanya Sheehan @ Colby College Waterville, Maine
• William R. Kenan Associate Professor of Art
• Lunder Institute for American Art, Distinguished Scholar, Director of Research
• Photography and Migration Project Director. 2014-2018.
• Editor, Journal of the Archives of American Art.

Photography and Migration.
Routledge, 2018.

Photography, History, Difference.
Dartmouth College Press, 2015
Photography and Migration Project Objectives

- Seminar: Art / American Studies
- Public programming and events
- Special Collections and Museum resources: analysis, exhibit
- Seminar Research: context of cultures represented in Maine, migration patterns, social and economic factors in Maine and New England.
- Civic Engagement: with local residents and organizations
- Visual and Information Literacy: scholarly conversation, creating new content
- Collections building for the libraries: local photographs and migration studies material

- Website & Storymaps
Core concepts:
Keywords for American Cultural Studies

- Immigration
- Border
- Refugee
- Diaspora
- Family
- (Im)mobility
Student Assignments

• Engage with special collections and library research resources
• Waterville Family Photos Group Project (3 groups of 3): (March April)
  • Select 3 photos
  • 5 critical questions guiding research
  • Annotated bibliography of 10 scholarly resources and primary material
  • Prepare exhibit in Special Collections (March) and Downtown Gallery (April)
  • Group Project Report (written)
  • Group Project Presentation (oral), public event
• Student family photo assignment (personal migration story)
• Planning the Downtown Event with Waterville Public Library:
  • Poster design, oral history video room, photo scanning stations, etc.
Ways of seeing...what's going on in this photograph

St. Peter's School, Lewiston, Class of 1910. Maine Memory Network. "St. Peter's School (Ecole St Pierre) was the first parish school in Lewiston. It opened in 1878 to serve the French-speaking children of immigrants who poured into Lewiston in the 1860s and 70s to work in the mills. Although children were taught exclusively in French -- from Canadian textbooks -- until the 1930s, there was a growing desire among parents to "Americanize" their children to provide them with better life chances. Note the large Stars and Stripes behind the graduates."

Question, analyze, research

Photographic analysis tools created by the National Archives and the Library of Congress will help you answer questions about your photograph.

Possible topic:
French-Canadian immigrants in Maine: identity and assimilation in Franco-American communities

Possible Keywords: (use asterisk to retrieve spelling variations)
- Franco-American*, French-Canadian*, French Americans
- Immigr* / Emigr*
- Assimilation / Identity
- Canada / Quebec
- Lewiston / Maine / New England / America / United States
- St. Peter's, Catholic church, churches, church schools, parish, diocese

Catalog Subject Headings
- Franco-Americans
- French-Canadians-Maine
- French-Americans
- Acadians-Maine
Cultures: Franco, Jewish, Syrian/Lebanese
Photography frames: social history, fashion history, theory
(Anthony Lee, Joan Severa, Marianne Hirsch)
“How do you spell your name,” the mill boss says to M. Poulin, the non-reader and non-writer.

“How P-O-O-L-E-R,” the mill boss tells him.”

Genealogical tools: dates, addresses, work, patterns of mobility, assimilation, identify family members in older photos
Core Databases

- America History and Life
- Ancestry Library
- Art & Architecture Source
- Arts (Proquest)
- Colbiana Photographs (via Artstor)
- Digital Commons @ Colby College
- HathiTrust
- Historical Abstracts
- JSTOR
- Maine Memory Network
- Newspaper Databases
What Happened? Lots!!
Tanya Sheehan contacted me and I asked my sister and my cousin if there were any Picher family pictures that remained from grandfather Gedéon Picher's photography business, and family photos.

I continue to be impressed with the plethora of photos, especially tintypes that we thought had been stolen. Thankfully, my Aunt Lucille had them and gave them to my cousin Colleen, who agreed to gift them to Colby's Special Collections.

Thank you Tanya, for your interest in the Picher family and the photographs. I'm sad that so many were not well preserved ...but thankful that we now have a clearer window of family life near the turn of the 20th century. Finally, by analyzing digitalized images of Gedeon's family, I was able to identify many family members and spouses/friends.


Photo in Quebec: The LaVerdiere homestead & blacksmith shop, Saint-Évariste-de-Forsyth, 1890s, albumen print.

Photo In Maine: The LaVerdiere blacksmith & repair shop, Bay Street, Winslow, Maine, 1924, unframed carte de visite.

Picher/LaVerdiere Family Photograph Collection.
Therese Bernier Small (center) and Tanya Sheehan (right), at a visit at Small’s home on Gold Street in “The Plains” in 2015.

Therese donated her photos to Colby College, and they are digitized and in ARTstor.
Colby College student Muheb Esmat holding a photograph of children dressed as angels at the Notre Dame School, Waterville, Maine, gelatin silver print, ca. 1910s, Therese Bernier Small Family Photograph Collection, Special Collections, Colby College Libraries. Photograph by Michael G. Seamans, centralmaine.com. March 4, 2017.
Students in Tanya Sheehan’s “Photography and Migration” class, getting ready to install special collections photos and documents for public display, spring 2015.

Photograph courtesy of Tanya Sheehan.
Photograph courtesy of Tanya Sheehan.
Photography and Migration student exhibit and presentations
Wormser Room, Miller Library Special Collection, Colby College for a photography exhibition highlighting migration in the area during a research presentation in Waterville on Friday.

Photography & Migration Conference Speakers
Colby College April 2015

Aida Muluneh.
Past/forward: Ethiopia, identity and photography.

Anthony W. Lee.
F. Holland Day, photography & the Nubian series.

Jason De León & Michael Wells.
Undocumented Migration Project.

Thomas Allen Harris, filmmaker. Digital Diaspora Family Reunion.
Photography and Migration Seminar
Spring Semester 2017

Community Events, April 2017.

Poster designed by students.
Waterville Community Event / Engagement: April 22, 2017

Video oral histories and photo sharing. Video courtesy of Colby College Information Technology Services
Official Trailer - The Home Road

A 74-year-old Maine man retraces the journey of his pioneering, 19-year-old great-great-grandfather, who left his home in Canada in 1845.

Events:
Above: Tonya Shevenell’s film, The Home Road.
Right: Cole Caswell, local tintype artist at Waterville PL.
PUBLIC COLLECTIONS
COLBIANA
Waterville family photos scanned as part of the Photography and Migration project are now in ARTstor.

Right: Tintypes from the Gedeon Picher photo studio. Donated by the Picher family to Colby College Libraries Special Collections.
Photography and Migration: Many Forms

- Artistic photography
- Family photos
- Ethnographic documentation
- Documentary film
- Local history
- Photojournalism
- Self-generated
- Social reform

Female employees of the C. F. Hathaway textile factory, Waterville, Maine, 1891, Picher/LaVerdiere Family Photograph Collection, Special Collections, Colby College Libraries
The Photograph and Its Role in Pedagogy and Civic Engagement

• **A catalyst:** bringing “old” and “new” immigrant communities in conversation to address 21st century cultural identity issues.

• **A facilitator:** promoting the importance of immigration stories and visual artifacts into the dialogue of Waterville’s downtown revitalization project.

• **A community knowledge base:** Colby College Libraries as a partner with the community, sharing our resources and expertise in order to preserve the diversity of the stories of the peoples of Waterville.
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Dedicated to the Donelian and Sarkisian families, Armenian immigrants and survivors, and part of my migration story.

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Visual Literacy as a Pedagogical Tool: Photography and Beyond.
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Salt Lake City, March 27, 2019