

Frank Lauder Autochrome Collection

The Frank Lauder Autochromes consist of unique color images of homes, gardens, and landmarks in the Kansas City metropolitan area taken in the 1930s and early 1940s.

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Frank Lauder

Title: Frank Lauder Autochrome collection

Dates: circa 1930-1942

Size: 7 linear feet, 64 boxes, 1402 glass negatives, 96 prints, 259 slides

Location: P22

Administrative information

Restrictions on access: Unrestricted access.

Additional physical form available: Autochromes have been digitized, selected photograph prints and slides were made.

Publication note: See *The Kansas City Star*, November 5, 2000, Star Magazine, page 12 - "Library's autochrome photos showcase Kansas City's Depression-era splendor" by Tim Engle.

Acquisition information: Acquired, circa 1952-3.

Citation note: Frank Lauder Autochrome collection (P22), Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Pubic Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

Collection Description

Biographical/Historical note

Frank Lauder was an accountant/auditor by trade. He worked for the Long-Bell Lumber Company according to his listing in the Kansas City directories of the late 1920s as well as noted on his 1918 World War I registration card. This card also states that he was born in Iowa on June 10, 1876, and lived at 1418 E. 35th Street in Kansas City, Missouri. He apparently lived with his mother, Laura C. Lauder.

After losing his job at the lumber company, he supported himself through photography and lecturing. He traveled throughout the Kansas City area, documenting its notable residences and gardens. He then used these images to supplement lectures he presented to local garden clubs. Apparently he never married and did not return to accountant work after World War II. His date of death and place of burial are unknown.

The Autochrome Process - The glass negatives were created using an early color photographic process called the autochrome. British scholar Dr. Robert Leggatt explains the autochrome process on his [History of Photography](#) website:

The Autochrome was the first viable color photograph process, and was introduced in 1907 by the [Lumière](#) brothers. The Autochrome "screen" was created by forming a layer of minute starch grains dyed in the primary colours (red, blue and green), behind which was a layer of panchromatic film. When the picture was taken these starch grains acted as tiny filters on the film. The film was then subjected to reversal development, and then viewed, as a transparency, through an identical screen. The pictures, though dark by

present day standards, were delicate and of a soft pastel nature.

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The autochrome process was supplanted by the invention of Kodachrome film in 1935 by two concert musicians, Leopold Godowsky, Jr., and Leopold Mannes. While working for the Kodak Company, the two Leopolds successfully developed film that would separate color in one exposure and would produce dyes in the film during development. This process was far less cumbersome than the autochrome and proved to be very popular with professional and amateur photographers alike.

Scope and content note

Color Issues - Because autochromes were made using organic materials, they can deteriorate over time in a myriad of ways. As a result, the color in the images also may be affected in a wide variety of ways. These factors affected how the images were prepared for this website. When the autochromes were digitized, they first appeared to have a film or "wash" over the image. The color in the slides was automatically adjusted using image manipulation software (Adobe Photoshop) to achieve a more realistic sense of the original. The color in a number of the slides then had to be adjusted manually owing to further deterioration that could not be corrected with the automatic features of the software.

The Frank Lauder Autochrome collection consists of 1402 glass color negatives with over 1,200 unique color images of homes, gardens, and landmarks throughout the Kansas City metropolitan area. Most date from the early 1930s and provide a truly captivating and one-of-a-kind view of Kansas City's past. Many of the images are close-ups of individual plants and flowers. Initially the collection of autochromes were contained in 17 wooden boxes.

The collection also includes over 250 color slides that are not autochromes and were produced by John W. Gutowski. Also included are a handful of black-and-white slides. Of the total number of autochromes, 1228 are unique images. Autochromes not included on the original inventory list have been inventoried, and unnumbered slides have been assigned an "X" slide number.

There are 96 color prints (8' x 10') of selected slides that were produced by John W. Gutowski, who was at that time associate professor of art at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. According to the above mentioned *Kansas City Star Magazine* article, "he examined the slides a decade ago. [circa 1990] He'd wanted to build an autochrome mediascope, a viewing device, for the collection but never got around to it." These prints were a gift given in 2002 by Gutowski's widow Cydney Millstein.

Notes from lectures given by the photographer and two original inventories of the slides as well as a list of residences by address and their owners are also a part of the collection. These inventories are not online but can be viewed as apart of the collection.

Initially processed by Special Collections Librarian Sara Nyman, 1995; further processing by Special Collections Librarian Stuart Hinds, 1999.