

Helen Plummer Gatch photographs collection, 1880-circa 1910

Overview of the Collection

Photographer	Gatch, Helen Plummer, 1861-1942
Title	Helen Plummer Gatch photographs collection
Dates	1880-circa 1910 (inclusive) 1880 1910
Quantity	0.21 cubic feet, (23 photographs in 1 box)
Collection Number	Org. Lot 32
Summary	Collection of work by photographer and artist, Helen Plummer Gatch, a pictorialist from Salem, Or., mostly depicting family members and views of the Oregon coast, along with other portraits of family members.
Repository	Oregon Historical Society Research Library 1200 SW Park Avenue Portland, OR 97205 Telephone: 503-306-5240 Fax: 503-219-2040 libreference@ohs.org
Access Restrictions	The collection is open to the public.
Languages	English.
Sponsor	Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Biographical Note

Helen Plummer Gatch (1861-1942) was born in Alton, Illinois, to Dr. Orlando P.S. Plummer, who moved to Portland, Ore. with his three daughters in 1864 after the death of their mother. As a young woman, Helen taught school before her marriage to Claud Gatch (born 1859), a banker who served as mayor of Salem, Or. from 1893-1896. They had two children, Orytha "Ryth" (born 1886) and Thomas Leigh "Tam" (1891-1954).

Helen Gatch, an ambitious amateur photographer, used her domestic life and her children as subjects for her pictorial photography, but also appears to have done documentary photographs during the 1890s, including one of the Oregon Insane Asylum in Salem. Although she did not construct stage sets for her photographs as other pictorialists did, Gatch used composition, costuming, and titles to pictorialize her subjects and to produce Dutch genre images. One example is "Romeo and Juliet" (Oregon Historical Society negative number CN004533), made in 1891, showing Ryth and Asahel Bush, Jr., playing Shakespeare at the Bush family home in Salem. This image was frequently reproduced and exhibited. Gatch used prominent Salem homes and friends as sets and models for her pictorial photography. She also photographed at the family summer house on the Oregon Coast near Newport.

Gatch made her mark at the local, regional, and national levels with winning contest entries and acceptance of her work into salons at San Francisco and Philadelphia. She joined the Salon Club (which opposed the Photo-Secessionists) and was involved in the organization of the Federation of American Photographic Societies in 1904. Her work was shown in the first American Photographic Salon later that year in New York, and it came to Portland the following year as the first show at the new Portland Art Museum. Gatch served on the committee for the second American Salon and on the jury for the third. She also was active in the Oregon Camera Club.

The Gatch family moved to California in 1912, and Helen died in Oakland on January 11, 1942.

Content Description

The collection consists of photographs taken by Helen Plummer Gatch, 1880-circa 1910. Gatch's photographs include cyanotype coast scenes on the vicinity of the family's summer cottage at Newport, as well as black-and-white prints depicting her children, Thomas Leigh and Orytha Gatch, and other family members, including Governor Stephen Fowler Chadwick and his wife, Jane Ann Smith Chadwick. This series also includes a photogravure of an award-winning Dutch genre print. A second series includes portraits of Helen, her husband Claud, and other unidentified family members, taken by professional portrait photographers in Portland and Salem, Or. The collection description also includes images from both series that were separated into an individually cataloged system at the Oregon Historical Society Research Library.

Use of the Collection

Restrictions on Use

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Preferred Citation

Helen Plummer Gatch photographs collection, Org. Lot 32, Oregon Historical Society Research Library.

Administrative Information

Arrangement

This collection is arranged into the following series:

Series A: Photographs by Helen Plummer Gatch, circa 1890-circa 1905

Series B: Family portraits, 1880-circa 1910

Acquisition Information

Library Accession no. 14087 and Photo Accession no. 1977D025

Processing Note

A number of prints from this collection were transferred to an individually cataloged computerized system at the Oregon Historical Society Research Library, circa 1980. The location of these images are included in the Detailed Description of the Collection.

Bibliography

Hull, Roger. "Myra Wiggins and Helen Gatch: Conflicts in American Pictorialism." *History of Photography* (Summer 1992): 152-169.

Related Materials

A number of Helen Plummer Gatch's photographs are located in related family collections at the Oregon Historical Society:

- Povey family collection (Org. Lot 7)

 - Photo 303P094 - Insane asylum, Salem, Or., 1891

- O. P. S. Plummer family collection (Org. Lot 14)

 - Photo 309P132 - Helen Plummer Gatch, circa 1895

 - Photo 309P005 - Orytha Gatch and Asahel Bush, Jr., in "Romeo and Juliet" tableau, balcony at the Bush House, Salem, Oregon, circa 1895

 - Photo 309P002 - Children of Helen Plummer Gatch and their aunt, Gay Gatch, in meadow of black-eyed susans, circa 1895

- Oregon Journal collection

 - Photo 330P393 - Mrs. John West (mother of Oswald West) examines Thomas Gatch's bare foot, undated

Detailed Description of the Collection

The following section contains a detailed listing of the materials in the collection.

Series A: Photographs by Helen Plummer Gatch, circa 1890-circa 1905

The photographs include cyanotypes taken by Helen Plummer Gatch on the Oregon coast near the family's summer home at Newport and black-and-white mounted family snapshots and art photography prints. Also included is a photogravure of an award-winning Dutch genre scene, possibly from a Salon portfolio.

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
1/1	Oregon coast - cyanotypes Images include views of the Gatch cottage, dunes, surf, and the Jump Off Joe rock formation. People pictured include Thomas Leigh Gatch and unidentified women in bathing costumes. Images in Cataloged System: Helen and Claud Gatch cottage and surrounding cottages at Newport (original	1900-circa 1904

Container(s)	Description	Dates
	at 314P122) and a portrait of Mrs. Claud Gatch, Sr. [mother of Claud Gatch, Jr., and wife of the University of Oregon President], made in the cottage (314P123).	
1/2	Scenic views "Oregon Woods," location unidentified (cyanotype)Image in cataloged system: Untitled pastoral, two young women on steam bank reflected (black-and-white), circa 1900 (315P118)	circa 1900
1/3	Orytha Gatch Two mounted pictorial style viewsImage in cataloged system: (315P105)	circa 1890
1/4	Orytha and Thomas Leigh Gatch	1892
1/5	Governor Stephen Fowler Chadwick and family Mounted snapshots, probably by Helen Plummer Gatch. Family group includes the governor and his wife, Jane Ann Smith Chadwick, with other Gatch family members. There is also an individual photo of Jane Ann Smith Chadwick in a garden.	circa 1895
1/6	Dutch genre scene, probably of Gatch children in costume— photogravure labeled "First Award"	circa 1905

Series B: Family portraits, 1880-circa 1910

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
1/7	Helen Plummer Gatch and Claud Gatch Individual studio portraits, circa 1895, circa 1910Image in cataloged system: Claude Gatch, circa 1900 (314P066)	circa 1895-circa 1910
1/8	Grace Plummer	1880
Folder		
1/9	Unidentified children	circa 1895

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Women photographers

Personal Names :

Chadwick, Jane Anne Smith, 1835-1916--Photographs

Chadwick, Stephen Fowler, 1825-1895--Photographs

Gatch, Claude, b. 1859--Homes and haunts--Newport (Or.)--Photographs

Gatch, Helen Plummer, 1861-1942--Photographs

Gatch, Claude, b. 1859--Photographs

Gatch, Orytha, b. 1886--Photographs

Gatch, Thomas Leigh, 1891-1942--Photographs

Geographical Names :

Newport (Or.)--Beaches--Photographs

Newport (Or.)--Dwellings--Photographs

Form or Genre Terms :

Cyanotypes

Photographic prints

Finding aid prepared by Sharon Howe
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