

Mississippi Department of Archives and History

Learning Lagniappe: Educator Extras

Painter Photograph Collection

http://mdah.state.ms.us/arrec/digital_archives/painter

The Painter (Milton McFarland, Sr.) Collection consists of images of 1,073 black-and-white photographic prints in two albums. A self-taught photographer, Milton McFarland Painter, Sr. produced images of Friars Point, Mississippi, regions surrounding Coahoma County, and vacation stops across the western United States, Mexico, and Canada from about 1912 to the 1920s. Painter was especially interested in the Mississippi River, its levees and lakes, and the steamboats that made frequent stops in Friars Point. He used a Kodak camera that generated three-inch by five-inch (3"x5") negatives, which he meticulously cataloged and filed.

Milton Painter kept detailed notes about the people and places he photographed. He identified Chisms, Hebdons, and other neighbors in Friars Point; actors Charlie Chaplin and Sarah Bernhardt; and many sea- and river-faring vessels.

Subjects that can be addressed within this Digital Archive: The Mississippi River, railroads and transportation, flood control and levee construction, race relations in early twentieth-century Mississippi, North American climate, world events, early movies, and Native American housing.

For more lessons and activities based on the Digital Archives and other collections visit the Classroom Materials page on our website at

<http://mdah.state.ms.us/new/learn/classroom-materials/lesson-plans-and-teaching-units/>

Teacher Discussion Guide on Reverse

Teacher Discussion Guide

Use images from the MDAH Digital Archive entitled “Painter (Milton McFarland, Sr.) Collection” (found at http://mdah.state.ms.us/arrec/digital_archives/series/painter) to lead your class in a discussion analyzing and interpreting the following images:

1. Type in “Moon Lake” in the “search for keyword” box. Examine the images.

- a. What sort of activities took place at Moon Lake? Fishing, swimming, and parties.
- b. Why do you think Painter took so many photos here? Painter was most likely a member of the Elks Lodge who built it, or a frequent guest.
- c. Research the location on the Internet. Why is it an important Mississippi landmark today? Mississippi authors Tennessee Williams and William Faulkner both wrote about the location in their works and frequented Moon Lake Casino (later called Uncle Henry’s Place). Eudora Welty has a short story titled “Moon Lake.”

2. Type in “Front of Friars Point Showing Levee” (Item 16) in the “search for keyword” box. Describe the levee. Do you think this levee would last for a very long time? Why or why not? What factors would affect the success of the levee? The levee consists of two levels of earth with wooden walls. The levee probably would not last very long depending on the frequency of floods.

3. Type in “View From Court House Looking North” (Item 99) in the “search for keyword” box. How is the town positioned in relation to the river? Would this be a good or bad location for a town? Why? The river surrounds the town on two sides. This area would be good for growing crops, fishing, and transporting goods, but even with the levee system in place there could be flooding.

4. Type in “Skating scene 4 lined up” (Item 174) in the “search for keyword” box. What does this image tell you about Mississippi’s climate? Do you think these people are skating on the main river or a smaller branch of the old river? The climate can get cold enough to freeze the river. They are most likely on a smaller branch where the ice would be thicker.

5. Type in “Back of Store” (Item 33) and “Front of Store” (Item 44) in “search for keyword” box. What differences do you notice between the front and back of the store? Why do you suppose the owner built it this way? The front entrance is shaded and has an elevated porch, and there is a sign on the front side of the building. The rear entrance has a smaller shaded area, no signs, and a gravel road leading straight out the back door. The front door was for the clients and the raised porch was to protect clients when it rained. The back door was for deliveries. Horse-drawn carts could pull straight up to the door and unload with ease.

6. Click on “Browse Images” and scan through the pages of images.

- a. What forms of transportation do you see? Rowboats, paddle wheelers, ferries, trains, cars, tractors, and airplanes.
- b. Judging by the subjects of his photographs, what were Painter’s interests? Painter enjoyed the outdoors; the river fascinated him. He loved taking photos of friends and family. He enjoyed traveling and even went to California, Colorado, and Canada by train.