

Collection #  
P 0115

**ALBERTYPE COMPANY  
COLLECTION, CA. 1900–CA. 1950**

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1996

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[www.indianahistory.org](http://www.indianahistory.org)

## **COLLECTION INFORMATION**

<b>VOLUME OF COLLECTION:</b>	4 boxes of photographs 366 scanned images online
<b>COLLECTION DATES:</b>	Ca. 1900–ca. 1950
<b>PROVENANCE:</b>	Wisconsin State Historical Society, ca. 1980
<b>RESTRICTIONS:</b>	None
<b>COPYRIGHT:</b>	Indiana Historical Society.
<b>REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:</b>	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the Indiana Historical Society.
<b>ALTERNATE FORMATS:</b>	Scanned Images Collections: search with the term, Albertype and all scanned images can be viewed
<b>RELATED HOLDINGS:</b>	
<b>ACCESSION NUMBER:</b>	1980.0007
<b>NOTES:</b>	

## **HISTORICAL SKETCH**

The Indiana Historical Society acquired the collection from the Wisconsin State Historical Society, ca. 1980. The photographs and negatives were originally part of a larger photographic collection that was acquired by the Wisconsin Historical Society from the Library of Congress.

Originally known as Wittemann Brothers, the Albertype Company was founded in 1890 by brothers, Adolph and Herman L. Wittemann. Company agents, including Adolph Wittemann, took photographs of landmarks in different cities and regions. Using the technological innovation of the collotype, or albertype, the company photo mechanically reproduced the images and distributed prints across the United States in the form of postcards and viewbooks.

In addition to using its own archive of original negatives, the Albertype Company reproduced photographic images that were taken by other companies or individuals. The company amassed photographic negatives of towns and cities across the United States and produced over twenty-five thousand collotypes before closing in 1952.

In the late nineteenth century, photographic and photomechanical reproduction became popular for commercial use. The collotype, a photomechanical process, was introduced in 1855 by French photographer and chemical engineer, Alphonse-Louis Poitevin. He discovered that a bichromated gelatin-covered plate could produce prints after being exposed to light through a negative. The plate could also be reused for reproductions.

Collotypes were important to the photographic reproduction industry because they were fairly inexpensive to produce, and their range of tones permitted exact reproductions of photographs through a photomechanical process. They are also noted for their accurate reproduction of drawings, prints, and watercolors, and are still in limited use today in fine art reproduction. Collotypes were known by numerous names, including “phototype,” and “albertype,” the name given by its inventor, Austrian photographer, Joseph Albert.

### Sources:

Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Collection V-18, Albertype Company Photographs

<http://archivesmonth.blogspot.com/2010/10/wisconsin-historical-society-albertype.html>

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

The collection came with approximately 1,000 black-and-white copy photographs and 366 nitrate negatives related to the state of Indiana. The images were made between ca. 1900 and ca. 1950 for use as postcards, and souvenir booklets. The subjects are of important landmarks within each represented town and city. The subjects include businesses, universities and colleges, churches, schools, streets, natural attractions, tourist areas, and recreational activities. There are aerial views of towns, and images of monuments and memorials. Other scenes include views of residences, bridges, parks and asylums in Lafayette, New Albany, and Bloomington, Indiana.

The photographs are organized by subject and are in numerical order. The stock photographs were made here at I.H.S. from the originals and are stored in Box 4.

The nitrate negatives have been scanned. Some of the negatives were numbered and some were not numbered, each negative image is now online in the Digital Images Collections and is described with information taken from its envelope. Not all scanned images have a corresponding photograph.

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