



The Urbana Free Library

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Everett C. Block Collection
1902-1910 and 1960

COLLECTION 72

Compiled by: Karla Gerdes, April 2016
Creator/Corporate name: Everett C. Block
Inclusive Dates: ca.1902 – 1910 and 1960-2000
Physical Description: 11 boxes (6.5 linear ft.)

Provence: Items were donated by Donna Block Nichols and Edward Block December 2, 2014, accession #2014-0025. Additional negatives from William Kammin, were donated by Carol Erb, December 23, 2014, accession #2014-0030.

Access Restrictions: The items are accessible to the public within applicable copyright restrictions and limited to use at the Champaign County Historical Archives of the Urbana Free Library.

Biographical/Historical Note: Everett Block and his family moved to a farmhouse located between the NW ¼ and the NE ¼ of Section 21 in Sidney Township in 1946. Everett discovered several glass plate negatives in the attic of the house. Many of the negatives were intact but others were broken and all of them were dirty. Because of the time constraints of farming, having a growing family and other obligations, nothing was done with the negatives until the winter of 1960. Everett placed the intact negatives in a wooden box and brought them downstairs to look at them. He worked on cleaning the glass side of the negatives during the day when the children were in school. He recognized that one of the negatives was a house across from the school in Sidney and realized that the other negatives might be from the local area. The Block family moved out of the house in 1963 and Everett took the box of intact glass negatives with them. Everett left the broken negatives in the house thinking that he would not be able to do anything with them. He went back later to see if they were still at the house but the new occupants had thrown them away.

Everett realized that the number of people who might be able to recognize the people and places in the photographs were aging and there might soon be no one who could supply that information. He enlisted the help of George Hawthorne to print photographs from the negatives. The resulting photographs were put on display at the Sidney Spring Festival on June 18, 1966 and in June of 1967. People from Sidney and the surrounding communities were able to view the photographs. Everett conducted close to 50 interviews in his search for information about the pictures and negatives. One of those interviews was with Carrie Epperson.

The Farmhouse: Archie Thompson and his wife lived in the house in the early 1900s; the William Kammin family lived in the house from the 1920s -1940s; and the Everett Block family lived there from 1946 – 1963. The house was torn down in 1993.

The Photographer:



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The negatives that were found in the house by Everett Block and Bill Kammin are believed to have been taken by J. J. Fisher. Negative X3 has J. J. Fisher, Sidney, scratched into the glass. Negative X4 has J. J. Fisher, Artist, scratched into the back of the negative. Everett's notes contain both J.J. and J.G. in reference to the photographer.

Carrie Epperson told Everett that as a young girl she had lived with Mr. and Mrs. Fisher. They came to Archie Thompson's farm around 1901. Mrs. Fisher had a job taking care of Mrs. Thompson, who was sick at the time. Mr. Fisher was a photographer. When the Fishers left the Thompson farm, they did not take Carrie with them. Carrie later went to live with her grandparents.

Some local newspapers printed snippets concerning Epperson, the Fishers, and the Thompsons:

An Article from the *Urbana Daily Courier* August 5, 1903 , page 1, says, "J.J. Fisher photographed four generations of the Harvey family Sunday."

An article in the *Sidney By –Way*, April 8, 1904, page 1, says,

Mr. Archie Thompson has in his care a bright little ten-year old girl who has been making her home with J.J. Fisher until recently, but is now without a settled home. The child would be excellent company for some elderly couple. The little girl is exceptionally bright and should succeed in finding a suitable home.

The *Sidney By –Way*, April 1, 1904 states, "Mrs. J.J. Fisher has accepted a position as housekeeper for a Fitzgerald family near Broadlands."

Scope and Content Note: The collection consists of 256 glass plated negatives of houses, people, farm scenes, churches, and some businesses in the Sidney, Homer, and Broadlands area of Champaign County. A majority of the photographs were taken between 1900 and 1908. Seventeen of the negatives in this collection were donated by Carol Erb and had belonged to William Kammin. There are also printed photographs made from most of these negatives and other pictures that were printed from negatives or pictures belonging to other people. There is a notebook with handwritten notes about the various pictures and names of people Everett interviewed. The collection contains 4 boxes of slides that were made from some of the pictures, hand written notes for a slide presentation, and a cassette tape recording of the presentation. Various map layouts showing where some of the pictures were taken are also included. Additional items include a history paper written by Donna Block, a notebook filled with obituaries of people from Sidney and the surrounding area, a photo album compiled by Everett with mostly unidentified people, and other miscellaneous photographs. Photographic artifacts include a Kodak camera, Brownie movie camera, homemade viewing box, and a film splicer.



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Arrangement: The photographs and negatives retain Everett's original enumeration. According to Everett's notes, the W series negatives were from the West family, and the X series negatives were from Bill Kammin/Carol Erb. The T series photographs were possibly made from negatives or existing photographs from the Taylor family. There are no negatives for the Taylor pictures except for an oversized glass negative for T-83.

Subjects:

Broadlands (Ill.)
Country life
Farm life
Farms
Glass negatives
Homer (Ill.)
Photography—Negatives
Rural conditions
Sidney (Ill.)

Names:

Block, Everett C.
Block family
Epperson, Carrie
Erb, Carol
Fisher, J.J.
Kammin, William
Nichols, Donna Block
Taylor family
Thompson, Archie
West family

Container list:

Box 1: Photographs 1-100, A1-A100 & B1-B8
Box 2: Photographs W1-W29, X1-X16, T1-T83, Misc. photographs & Rp2-13;
Box 3: Glass Negatives 1-40
Box 4: Glass Negatives 41-80
Box 5: Glass Negatives 81-100
Box 6: Glass Negatives A1 – A40 except for A22
Box 7: Glass Negatives A41 – A80
Box 8: Glass Negatives A81 – A100 & B1 – B10



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Box 9: Glass Negatives W1 – W29

Box 10: Glass Negatives A22E & X1-X15; T-83 is an 8 x 10 glass negative and still needs to be housed.

Box 11

Folder 1: Notebook with handwritten notes about the glass negatives and picture information

Folder 2: Handwritten notes with some history and information about the slides for a presentation 1-46 *Note that starting with #23 the presentation is off by one number from the presentation in folder 3.

Folder 3: Handwritten notes on Slides 1-71, for the 1987 presentation to the Sidney Historical Society.

Folder 4: 4 boxes of slides that were used in the 1987 presentation to the Sidney Historical Society [explanation of slide numbering is included in folder.]

Folder 5: Cassette tape of the slide presentation given at the Sidney Historical Society in July of 1987.

Folder 6: Photograph Album Compiled by Everett Block with photographs from negatives belonging to Bill Lewis, unidentified photographs and photographs from William Kammin and the Block family.

Folder 7: Sidney, Homer, Broadlands, Philo Obituaries 1969-2000, some 1940s -50s A-L

Folder 8: Sidney, Homer, Broadlands, Philo Obituaries 1969-2000, some 1940s -50s M-z

Folder 9: A copy of a history paper written by Donna Fay Block in 1968 titles, "The Village Community Has Its Purpose"

Folder 10: Misc. items including a plat of Sidney with locations marked where pictures were taken, a more recent plat of Sidney but no location marked; and a typed copy of the article, "*Quad Cities*" of Sidney, Illinois Township; Johnstown, Deers, Block and Rutherford, by Kevin Erb, with additional pictures added.

Box 12

Photographic Process Ephemera

Kodak Brownie Movie Camera, lenses, empty box for a Sylvania projection lamp, 3- movie reel tins with reels, exposure meter, ground glass plate for reprinting, processing trays, wooden handle roller, negative or paper holder rollers, and other unidentified items.

Un Boxed Ephemera: Viewing Box, No 1. A Kodak Jr. Camera, Film splicer.

[This item was moved to the map collection: - Latest map of Champaign County, Illinois Prepared for Prairie Farmer's Reliable Directory of Farmers and Breeders in Champaign County, Published by Prairie Farmer Publishing Co., Chicago, The Kenyon Co., Des Moines.]