

New Jersey Civil War Era Photographers

Lecture by Gary D. Saretzky

Abstract

By 1861, photographic technology had evolved from relatively expensive daguerreotypes on copper to inexpensive ferrotypes (tintypes) produced on iron plates and popular cartes-de-visite (cdvs) on albumen paper mounted on cardboard. The war boosted the trade: uniformed soldiers leaving for the front marched into studios for what might be their last portrait and wives put on their best for the camera so their husbands could carry their loved ones' images into battle. Photographic albums encouraged the collecting of family photos along with images of military, political, and other celebrities.

Some Jersey photographers operated elsewhere during the war, while others stayed on the home front. Theodore Gubelman ran a photo gallery in Tennessee before returning to Jersey City. Charles Weiffle, in Newark in 1864, and later in Morris County, set up tents near military camps near the Army of the Potomac where he made tintypes and cdvs. Former Newark daguerreotypist George S. Cook, who before the war relocated to Charleston, South Carolina, became known as "the Mathew Brady of the South." These and other Civil War era photographers will be featured in this lecture.

Bio

Gary D. Saretzky, archivist, educator, and photographer, worked as an archivist for more than fifty years at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Educational Testing Service, and the Monmouth County Archives, from which he retired in 2019. Saretzky also taught the history of photography at Mercer County Community College, 1977–2012, and served as coordinator of the Public History Internship Program for the Rutgers University History Department, 1994–2016. He has published more than 100 articles and reviews on the history of photography, photographic conservation, and other topics, and lectures regularly throughout New Jersey, including "Photographers of the Civil War Era: Theodore Gubelman of Jersey City," *New Jersey Studies* (Winter 2021), available online.