

News Release FROM THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

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MICHIGAN AVENUE AT ADAMS STREET, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, 60603, U.S.A.
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

An interest in his family history led Chicago photographer, David R. Phillips, to acquire one of the rarest collections of post Civil War negatives in the United States. Over forty enlarged prints from this vast collection are currently on display in Gallery 106 of The Art Institute of Chicago, Titled, Fragments of the Past, the exhibition, which consists of portraits, street scenes, commercial shots and rural views in the Leavenworth, Kansas area from 1867 until 1900, will continue through October 19.

Phillips, a native of St. Louis, Missouri, has been a freelance photographer in Chicago since 1963. About ten years ago his interest in tracing his own family history combined with his photographic background started him on a search through the country for photographs of his ancestors. In 1966 this quest led him to Leavenworth, Kansas, where he had some family roots. In Leavenworth he was referred to the studio of photographer, Mary Everhard. Originally a New York photographic retoucher, who had studied with Steichen and Stieglitz, Miss Everhard went to Leavenworth in 1924 and began her career as a portrait photographer. Over the years she preserved the photographs as well as the negatives of early Leavenworth photographers.

Phillips describes his excitement on his first visit to the Everhard studio where he was shown a thirty by forty foot room lined from floor to ceiling with boxes of old negatives. He also recounted Miss Everhard's unusual grading system for the negatives. The boxes were labelled "very most", "very,very most" and "glory hole."

Miss Everhard was interested in placing her negatives where they would be properly cared for and catalogued. In 1968 Phillips completed arrangements to buy the entire collection, which he has recently brought to Chicago.

Many of the photographs in the present Institute exhibition are the work of E. E. Henry who went to Kansas from England before the Civil War and worked as a photographer in the area until 1886. Also, included are pictures by Henry's stepson, Harry Putney; by Horace Stevenson, who did portraits and commercial work during the period; and by Joseph Prawitz, a landscape photographer, who worked in St. Joseph, Missouri from 1900 until 1930. Two noteworthy pictures are a unique panoramic view of the city of Leavenworth in 1867, which Phillips made by fitting three negatives together, and a portrait of General Douglas MacArthur at the age of eight dressed up for a costume ball.

Phillips says his purpose in building the collection of early negatives is "to perpetuate the work of unknown great photographers of the past whose work now serves as a historical document of the life of their day."

A second group of enlargements from the Phillips collection will be shown at the Institute from October 25 through December 7.