

SIXTEENTH ANNUAL HISTORICAL WALKING TOUR

Sunday, June 13, 2010

# PHOTOGRAPHERS OF BEECHWOOD



*History Told, Lives Celebrated*

# PHOTOGRAPHY IN 19TH CENTURY OTTAWA

Photography was revealed to the world in early 1839. Ottawa's first photographers were itinerant daguerreotypists, who began visiting the city in the mid 1840s. Daguerreotypes were unique and fragile images – only one image was made for each exposure in the camera – and were expensive. Thus few images exist of early Ottawa or its people. Ottawa did not have a population sufficiently large and rich to support a permanent photographer until 1852 when Joseph Lockwood opened his studio.

More photographers followed him, at first usually specializing in portraits. Some of them, like Lockwood's daughter Alvira, the partners Pittaway and Jarvis, the Topley family and many others are buried here at Beechwood.

Rapid and constant developments in photographic processes led to less costly and more easily manipulated photography, allowing more people to purchase photographs and in turn attracting more photographers to the trade. By the 1870s virtually every Ontario town of a thousand or more people had at least one photographer; by the 1880s many of them were publishing illustrated pamphlets showing the major buildings and industries of their towns.

Ottawa became capital of the Canadas in 1858. From 1859 the civil service included an increasing number of both official and unofficial photographers using their cameras to document many facets of Canada and Canadian society.

With minor exceptions until the 1890s photography was a professional pursuit. Only with the development of factory-made dry plate glass negatives and, more especially, with George Eastman's idea of providing a single-window photographic service for the masses did amateur photography come to the fore, and "snap shooting" became a way of life.

Over sixty years photography's nature had changed: what had started as means of producing portraits for a cheaper price than painters could offer had become a means of transporting images of people and places across time – from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present.



The staff of Samuel J. Jarvis' studio at 117 Sparks St. circa 1892

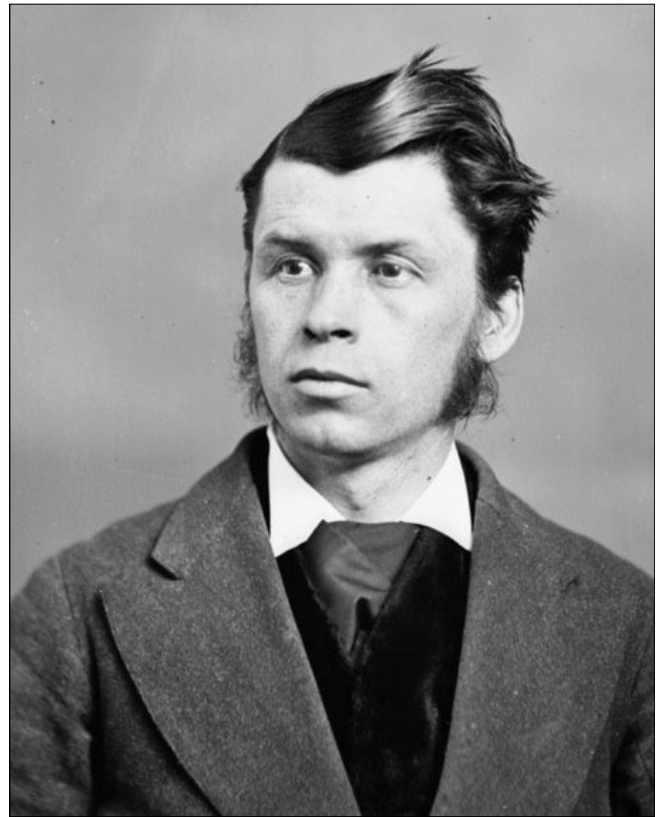
©Copyright Bytown Museum/ Musée Bytown





**Isa May Ballantyne**

Credit: James Ballantyne/Library and Archives Canada/PA-126332



**William James Topley**

Credit: Topley Studio Fonds / Library and Archives Canada / PA-033338



**Miss (Alvira?) Lockwood**

Credit: William James Topley / Library and Archives Canada / PA-212841



**Adam Ballantyne**

Credit: James Ballantyne/Library and Archives Canada/PA-132225

# JARVIS, Samuel J.

Samuel J. Jarvis was born in Ottawa, Ontario, on May 11, 1863, son of James and Grace Jarvis. As a young boy he learned photography from his uncle and namesake, Samuel Jarvis. In 1882, he entered into partnership with Alfred G. Pittaway, a successful collaboration that continued, with one break, until 1936.

In his own right, Samuel Jarvis had an extraordinary career. Aside from family and individual photographs, Jarvis specialized in large composite pictures. In 1893, he won an award at the Chicago World's Fair for his photograph of the members of the House of Commons. His photographic portraits of prime ministers Sir John A. Macdonald and Sir Wilfrid Laurier were later used as models for their statues that now stand on Parliament Hill.

For decades, Jarvis and Pittaway, together and as individual entrepreneurs, were dominant forces in the Ottawa photographic community and inspired countless others to take up the profession. Their studios were always busy; in addition, they sold camera equipment, supplies, albums and more.

Samuel Jarvis was a name in Ottawa photography for almost 60 years and his family photos are cherished to this day. He died at his home in Ottawa on 13 November 1952.

# SPENCER, Elihu

Elihu Spencer, born circa 1818, was one of Ottawa's first photographers to meet with commercial success, although he was in the business for only ten years from 1859 to 1869. He was born in Canada East, now Quebec, in 1818. In July 1840, he married Nancy Flynn and they had several children. At the time of the 1851 census, he was residing in Hawkesbury, Canada West, where he is described as a "dagarian" or "daguerreotype" artist. Evidence suggests that the Spencers may have resided in the United States for a time, but in 1859, Elihu opened a photographic studio in Ottawa, a "Gallery of Art" he called it, on Sparks Street near Elgin.

Spencer's business thrived for the next decade. He specialized in the small "cartes de visite" and cabinet photographs and at one time employed five people, one of whom may have been his son, Joseph. He was also an award winning photographer for his scenes of Ottawa and environs. His photographs and stereoscopic views of government buildings, especially during the construction of the Parliament buildings, were very popular with the public. In the 1860s, visitors to Ottawa were encouraged to stop by his studio to examine "his specimens of Photographic Art."

Records are inconclusive, but it appears that Elihu Spencer left Ottawa by 1870; he may have retired from photography. He lived for many years in Dundee, Quebec, but returned to Ottawa in the mid-1890s to live his remaining years with his daughter, Sarah Cluff.

When he died in July 1898, Ottawa newspapers made no mention of the fact that he had been a photographic pioneer in the city.

# PITTAWAY, Alfred G.

Alfred George Pittaway was born at Portsmouth, England, on December 18, 1858, son of George Pittaway and Mary Jane Joseph. He emigrated to Ottawa with his family as a young boy. In May 1879, he married Grace Bruce at Kemptville, Ontario, and settled in Ottawa.

From an early age, he was interested in all sports, and would become a prominent organizer and supporter of lacrosse, hockey, football and other sports in Ottawa.

Alfred Pittaway, however, is best remembered as one of the most prominent photographers to capture the faces of Ottawa. He learned the trade from Samuel Jarvis, and in 1882, entered a partnership with Jarvis's nephew, Samuel J. Jarvis, a partnership that would thrive for over fifty years.

From his studio on Sparks Street, Alfred Pittaway was frequently called upon to photograph government officials, social events at Rideau Hall, society weddings, sports teams and ordinary people. He prospered as a photographer because of his attention to artistic quality. Today, his photographs can be found in archives, museums and private collections throughout the region. He was one of Ottawa's premier photographers. For a time, he used the Stanley Cup as a prop in his photographs of local hockey teams.

After more than 45 years in the business, Alfred Pittaway retired in the late 1920s and died at his home on Carling Avenue on 21 January 1930. Soon after he passed from the scene, another young photographer opened his own studio on Sparks Street; his name was Yousuf Karsh.

# BINKS, Charles

Charles Binks was born in Ottawa, Ontario, on 4 May 1875, son of William Binks and Isabella Rodger. As a young lad, he first worked as a clerk in a law firm, but in 1894, the city directory describes Charles as a photographer with Bunting and Company, photo engravers.

In 1895 or 1896, Charles opened his own photography business and remained in business for the next thirty years. Prior to the First World War, he managed the William Topley studio for a short time, but soon was on his own again.

Charles Binks died suddenly on August 10, 1926, when he was only fifty years old. His son Russell, with assistance from other family members, continued to operate Binks and Company for several years and sold a wide range of photographic supplies, pictures and framing in addition to studio photography. The Binks business ceased to operate in the early 1930s, undoubtedly a victim of the economic depression.

Charles Binks was a star lacrosse player in his youth and may have been inspired to enter the photography business by Alfred Pittaway. Other sources suggest that as a young teen, he learned his technical skills from James D. Wallis, a veteran Ottawa photographer. In many ways, Charles Binks was a typical Ottawa photographer, and his genial personality, noted the Ottawa Citizen, guaranteed that he would be successful in his chosen field.

# McLAUGHLIN, Daniel A.

Daniel McLaughlin was born in Quebec City on 16 February 1865, the son of Samuel McLaughlin (1826 – 1914) and Mary Jane Fitch. Samuel McLaughlin was a photographer with the Board of Works, later known as the Department of Public Works, since the fall of 1859. He retained this position until the mid-1890s when he was succeeded by his son, Daniel.

As a young man, Daniel McLaughlin was in the photo engraving business in Ottawa, but had often assisted his father with his photographic work. In October 1896, he was appointed the official government photographer for the departments of Public Works and Railways and Canals in place of his father who had retired. And like his father before him, Daniel was responsible for creating a photographic record of new federal government construction, including buildings, railways, canals and other public works.

Daniel McLaughlin married Sarah O'Donnell in 1895, but he was a widower with seven children when he died unexpectedly on 20 May 1917. For the record, his father retired to Los Angeles, California, where he died in 1914.

The McLaughlins, father and son, contributed significantly to our understanding and appreciation of our built landscape in Ottawa and beyond. Together, they spent almost 60 years as official government photographers, performing an invaluable service to history.



# TOPLEY, William James

William Topley was the eldest of a family which was to include six photographers, spread across three generations. Legend has it that Topley's mother, Anna Delia, wanted to purchase a musical instrument for her talented son but instead bought a photography outfit and lessons.

By the early 1860s Topley was working as a photographer; when his father died he and the family moved from Aylmer to Montreal where he and two of his brothers apprenticed at the William Notman studio. When in 1867 Notman decided to branch out to Ottawa, the 22 year-old Topley was made manager. By 1879 he had bought out Notman, constructed his own magnificent studio, gone bankrupt, and then been appointed official photographer to the Governor General, the Marquis of Lorne. Obviously he knew how to land on his feet. In 1888 he moved to a location on Sparks which, 42 years later, became Yousuf Karsh's first Ottawa studio.

Topley was active in the YMCA, the Dominion Methodist Church, in art circles, and in numerous local philanthropies.

Topley passed on the studio to his son William de Courcy in 1907; the studio closed in September 1923 after 55 years. In 1935 the Public Archives of Canada acquired over 150,000 glass and nitrate negatives, which document the development both of Ottawa and its in-



Looking towards Rideau Street from Nepean Point, showing Rideau Canal Locks  
Credit: Topley Studio Fonds / Library and Archives Canada / PA-012930

# ASHFIELD, James

James Ashfield was born in Bytown on October 10, 1847, son of Irish immigrants John and Elizabeth Ashfield. When he died on 19 March 1922, local papers noted his contributions to the Methodist church and his mercantile career in which he specialized in crockery and glassware.

But James Ashfield was also a photographer. About 1884, the well-known Montreal photographer, William Notman, closed his Ottawa studio. Ashfield took over the studio at 98 Wellington Street, opposite the Parliament buildings, re-named it the Royal Studio and Art Rooms and sold photographs of well-known politicians, public figures and current events, as well as albums and frames.

By the early 1890s, Ashfield no longer advertised himself as a photographer, but in his brief career, he can be remembered for two accomplishments. In 1885, he photographed Robert Harris's famous painting of the "Fathers of Confederation" in the Parliament buildings, and sold copies from his studio. The original painting was later lost in the 1916 fire.

Ashfield also took a series of photographs of the voyageurs selected from the Ottawa area for the little known Nile Expedition, as part of the courageous effort to relieve Khartoum and save Major General Charles Gordon. These photographs are unique and are the sole photographic record of this odd chapter in Canadian military history.

James Ashfield died at Ottawa, Ontario, on 20 March 1922, his career as a photographer long forgotten by local newspapers who reported on his passing.

# TAGGART, Charles Story

This is really the story of a father and a son, Christopher B. and Charles S. Taggart. It is also about knowing your business and recognizing opportunity when it arises.

Christopher Taggart settled in Ottawa about 1885, advertising himself as an artist and photographer. In a few years, he was joined by his son Charles and together they operated a studio at the corner of Bank and Wellington streets where they also did framing and sold artists' supplies.

The Taggarts faced stiff competition in the photography field. Just blocks away were the studios of well-known photographers such as William Topley, Pittaway and Jarvis, and James Wallis just to mention the leading figures in the trade at the time.

The Taggarts diversified and by the early 1890s, in addition to photography, they worked as real estate agents, sold insurance and acted as auctioneers.

Charles S. Taggart died on 7 April 1906 at the young age of 35, leaving his wife Florence and two small children. By this time, he had left photography behind and was manager of the Northern Life Insurance Company. His father, Christopher, later served as a city alderman for many years and retired from all of his business ventures just prior to the First World War. He died on 20 March 1915 and is buried in Shawville, Quebec.

# BALLANTYNE, Isa May & Adam

Photography has not always been the exclusive purview of professionals. In 1894, the Camera Club of Ottawa was established, a simple reminder that interest in amateur photography was sweeping the capital. Technology had changed with the invention of the Kodak camera; photography was now within reach of one and all.

James Ballantyne (9 March 1835 – 6 April 1925), a successful coal and lumber merchant, was one of the Club's first members. He was passionate about photography, an interest shared by two of his children, Isa May and Adam.

Isa May Ballantyne was a cultured woman with a life-long interest in the arts, including literature, music, painting and photography. She served as vice president of the Camera Club of Ottawa in 1898-1899. Her younger brother, Adam, was a merchant by day, but had a strong interest in photography; he served as secretary of the Camera Club in 1899-1900.

Several hundred Ballantyne family photographs are held by Library and Archives Canada. They provide a fascinating view of family life between the late 1880s and the First World War. The Ballantyne family and their involvement in amateur photography provide the real evidence that they were amateur in name only, because they approached photography as an art form and have left us an invaluable record of daily life.

James Ballantyne died on 6 April 1925 and is buried at Smith's Falls. His daughter, Isa May, passed away on 6 May 1929, on the eve of her 65<sup>th</sup> birthday; her brother Adam died on 29 March 1945.

# OTHER IMPORTANT PHOTOGRAPHERS

ALVIRA LOCKWOOD  
(PHOTOGRAPHER & ARTIST)  
SECTION E, RANGE 11, GRAVE 8

JAMES D. WALLIS  
(PHOTOGRAPHER)  
SECTION 19, LOT 114 S.E.

WILLIAM IDE  
(PHOTOGRAPHER)  
SECTION 21, PLOT 32

FREDERICK GEORGE ASHTON  
(PHOTOGRAPHER)  
SECTION G, RANGE 40

JOHN WOODRUFF  
SECTION 17, LOT 17 S.W.  
(PHOTOGRAPHER & CIVIL SERVANT)



Camera Club of Ottawa, circa 1895, near Chelsea, QC.  
Credit: Library and Archives Canada/PA-126331



# WALLIS, James Dodridge

James D. Wallis was born in Huntingdon, Quebec, in 1837. It appears that he resided in New York State for some years, but in the late 1860s, he had re-located to Kingston, Ontario, in business as a portrait photographer.

Shortly afterwards, Wallis moved his family and business to Ottawa and joined other photographers on Sparks Street where he specialized in family photos and “cartes de visite.” He was proprietor of a very successful business, but in October 1893, he accepted a temporary appointment as a photographer with the Chief Astronomer’s Office. While he continued with his portrait business, he was now responsible, among other duties, for photographing the night skies, and supervising other photographic work undertaken by the Department of the Interior. His position was made permanent in July 1905. James Wallis did not retire from the Observatory until 1920, in his 83<sup>rd</sup> year!

James Wallis was also a nationally known curling enthusiast who received numerous trophies and awards over the course of a 40 year career. Countless Ottawa families have a Wallis photograph of their ancestors. His career as a man behind the camera spanned an incredible seventy years.

James Wallis died on 22 July 1926.

# LOCKWOOD, Alvira

Alvira Lockwood was born in Kemptville, Canada West, in 1845, daughter of Joseph and Malinda Lockwood. Her father had been taking daguerrotypes for several years when he decided to settle his family in Bytown in early 1852. He was the first resident photographer in the city.

Joseph Lockwood died in 1860, leaving his wife and six children. As a young teenager, Alvira, who had often assisted her father, assumed responsibility for the business with her mother and siblings. She continued the Lockwood photograph business for over twenty years. In the early 1880s, Alvira decided to pursue her interest in art. She first moved to New York City and subsequently, spent five years in Paris studying art before returning to Ottawa in 1891.

Alvira Lockwood, nurtured in photography, was now an artist with an interest in all media. She taught art appreciation classes, she mentored young artists and was, by all accounts, one of most picturesque women in the Ottawa art community.

She died on 5 April 1925 and is buried in an unmarked grave on the far eastern side of Beechwood Cemetery. Unfortunately, her archive of photographs was destroyed in the 1920s. Sadder still, Alvira's brief newspaper obituary makes no mention of the fact that she was not only Ottawa's first female photographer, but undoubtedly its youngest.

# SPECIAL THANKS / REMERCIEMENTS SPÉCIAUX :

Special thanks to Glenn Wright, Lesley Anderson and Andrew Rodger for providing research and narrators, and to Lesley Anderson of **Ancestry.ca** for sponsoring this event .

**Ancestry.ca**, Canada's leading family history website, offers members access to 126 million searchable Canadian family history records and is a member of the Ancestry global network of family history websites.



## Narrators

François Chartrand  
Sophie Chevalier-Forget  
Anne Lauzon  
Laura Munn-Rivard

Heather Oakley  
Jean Yves Pelletier  
Andrew Rodger  
Glenn Wright



Parliament Buildings, Centre Block under construction  
Credit: Elihu Spencer/Library and Archives Canada/PA-022413

*Fondation du Cimetière*

*Beechwood*  
*Cemetery Foundation*

280, avenue Beechwood Avenue  
C.P. / P.O. Box 7025  
Ottawa (ON) K1L 8E2

**Tél./ Tel:** (613) 741-9530

**Télec./ Fax:** (613) 741-8584

**Courriel/ E-mail:** [info@beechwoodcemetery.com](mailto:info@beechwoodcemetery.com)

[www.beechwoodcemetery.com](http://www.beechwoodcemetery.com) / [www.cimetierebeechwood.com](http://www.cimetierebeechwood.com)

*Beechwood, le cimetière national du Canada*