Born in Chicopee Falls, Mass., Aubrey D. Lapolice (1893-1981) was a maintenance superintendent at the Belchertown State School for a forty year period, from the time of its establishment through his retirement in 1961. A veteran of the First World War, he oversaw a campus of nearly 850 acres and a physical plant of nearly one hundred buildings and structures. He died in February 1981.

The Lapolice collection includes 35 images of the physical plant and construction projects at the Belchertown State School during its first two decades of operation and 21 images of the welcome home parade in Belchertown in 1946 for returning American troops.
Background on Aubrey D. Lapolice

A long-time maintenance supervisor at the Belchertown State School, Aubrey Daniel Lapolice, was the only son of four children of a working-class family from Chicopee Falls, Mass. Born on April 22, 1893, Aubrey was just ten when his father, Joseph, a section hand on the railroad, and mother Anna relocated to Belchertown, and in 1910, the census records that they had added four young girls -- “state charges” -- to their household.

After service in the 76th Division during the First World War, Lapolice returned home and within a fairly short time, secured a position in maintenance at the Belchertown State School. The School had been authorized in 1915 as the Commonwealth's third institution, after Fernald and Wrentham, for the care of “feeble-minded children,” and the first in western Massachusetts. At the time Lapolice began, the school was overseen by Wrentham, operating as a farm colony while construction of the dormitory and administrative and support buildings was under way. The school officially opened on November 15, 1922, with the arrival of a transfer of 65 boys from the Fernald School and, two weeks later, an additional 128 boys from both Fernald and Wrentham.

As superintendent of maintenance, Lapolice was involved in construction projects and maintenance around the campus of nearly 850 acres and a physical plant of nearly one hundred buildings and structures as of the date of his retirement in 1961, including farm buildings, a power plant, support buildings, and 7,846 linear feet of concrete tunnels.

Lapolice married Catherine Leary in 1918 (1888-1955), raising a daughter Kathleen Marie (later McGrath), who was born in 1924. At the age of 87, Aubrey Lapolice died in Belchertown on Feb. 22, 1981.

Scope of collection

Aubrey Lapolle's collection contains photographs documenting his workplace during the second quarter of the twentieth century: the Belchertown State School. Having begun work at the School before it formally opened and as overseer of maintenance, Lapolice's images offer important documentation of construction activity and the State School campus.

In addition to the images from the Belchertown State School, the collection includes a wonderful series of 21 photographs of the parade in Belchertown to welcome home servicemen returning from the Second World War and two photographs that appear to come from Lapolice's father, Joseph Lapolice, taken while he worked on the Hampden Railroad. In 1910, the Hampden Railroad was planned as a connector line between the village of Bondsville (Palmer) and city of Springfield, but while construction commenced, the line never ran because it failed to receive a license to operate from the state.

Inventory

Belchertown (Mass.) Roll of honor
ca.1946
Gelatin silver print
Box 1: 1

Belchertown (Mass.) Welcome home troops parade: Belchertown Fire Department vehicles
1946
4 gelatin silver prints
Box 1: 2

Belchertown (Mass.) Welcome home troops parade: ceremonies
1946
2 gelatin silver print
Box 1: 3

Belchertown (Mass.) Welcome home troops parade: floats
1946
10 gelatin silver prints  
Box 1: 4  
Belchertown (Mass.) Welcome home troops parade: marchers and crowd  
1946  
5 gelatin silver print  
Box 1: 5  
Belchertown State School: administration building(?)  
ca.1948  
2 gelatin silver print  
Box 1: 6  
Belchertown State School: carpenters shop  
1931  
Gelatin silver print  
Box 1: 7  
Belchertown State School: dormitory  
ca.1919  
Gelatin silver print  
Box 1: 8  
Belchertown State School: employee's cottages and tunnels  
ca.1928  
5 gelatin silver prints  
Box 1: 9  
Belchertown State School: Fairchild Cottage  
ca.1928  
Gelatin silver print  
Box 1: 10  
Identification of house uncertain, but appears to be the R.E. Fairchild store post-renovation.  
Belchertown State School: farm buildings and barns  
1948 Nov. 3  
6 gelatin silver prints  
Box 1: 11  
Belchertown State School: farm buildings and silos  
ca.1948  
Gelatin silver print  
Box 1: 12  
Belchertown State School: gravel crusher (?)  
ca.1928  
Gelatin silver print  
Box 1: 13  
Belchertown State School: merry-go-round dedication  
1963  
Invitation and newsclipping  
Box 1: 14  
Belchertown State School: miscellaneous  
1939-1960  
3 items  
Box 1: 15  
Belchertown State School: 'Our first patients'  
1921  
Gelatin silver print  
Map case 7: 3  
Image of nine young men and two women (presumably teachers).  
Belchertown State School: painting a storage tank  
ca.1930  
5 gelatin silver prints  
Box 1: 16
Belchertown State School: power plant
1948 Nov. 3
3 gelatin silver prints
Box 1: 17
Belchertown State School: power plant interior
ca.1928
2 gelatin silver prints
Box 1: 18
Belchertown State School: tunnels in construction
ca.1927
2 gelatin silver prints
Box 1: 19
Belchertown State School: tunnels east of school in construction
ca.1928
3 gelatin silver prints
Box 1: 20
Belchertown State School: tunnel to hospital in construction
1930 June
Gelatin silver print
Box 1: 21
Hampden Railroad: construction of bridge over roadway (Ludlow, Mass.)
ca.1910
 Mounted gelatin print
Box 1: 22
Hampden Railroad, Greens Crossing (Ludlow, Mass.): crew posed
ca.1910
 Mounted gelatin print
Box 1: 23
Lapolice, Aubrey D.
1961, 1981
 Mounted gelatin print
Box 1: 24
Citation for community service (1961) and obituary (1981).
R. E. Fairchild store (Belchertown, Mass.)
ca.1920
Gelatin silver print
Box 1: 25
White oak log and crew (Aubrey D. Lapolice at far right)
1938
2 gelatin silver prints
Box 1: 26

Administrative information
Access
The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Processing Information

Language:
English

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