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Aubrey D. Lapolice Collection

1910-1963

1 box (0.25 linear feet)

Call no.: PH 070



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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.

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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.



"Our first patients," 1921

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 Lapolice'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

List of BSS buildings (1960), newsclippings, and Annual Report for the Belchertown State School (1939).

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

Gift of Dani McGrath, Feb. 2016.

Processing Information

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English

Copyright and Use (More information)

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Search terms

Subjects

Belchertown (Mass.)--Photographs
Belchertown State School--Photographs
Construction projects--Massachusetts--Belchertown--Photographs
Hampden Railroad--Photographs
Mentally disabled--Massachusetts--Belchertown
Parades--Massachusetts--Belchertown--Photographs
Psychiatric hospitals--Massachusetts--Belchertown--Photographs
Railroad construction workers--Massachusetts--Ludlow--Photographs
Tunnels--Massachusetts--Belchertown--Photographs
World War, 1939-1945--Veterans

Contributors

Lapolice, Aubrey D. [main entry]

Genres and formats

Photographs

Link to similar SCUA collections

Disability

Massachusetts (West)

Photographs



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