

NJS Presents**Museums, Archives, Artifacts, and Documents****In this Issue:*****Dorn-Severini Historic Photography Collection Donated to Monmouth University*****By Kurt W. Wagner****DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14713/njs.v6i2.215>**

In December 2019, Kathy Dorn Severini and George Severini, residents of Fair Haven, NJ, donated a collection of photographic images to Monmouth University, a private, comprehensive 4-year institution in West Long Branch, NJ, located about a mile from the Atlantic Ocean. With a 2019 enrollment of 6,167, the University offers undergraduate and graduate programs across all traditional disciplines, as well as a Doctorate in Nursing Practice and an Ed. D. program. Monmouth University is a Grammy Museum affiliate, offers a Peace Corps Prep program that is unique in New Jersey, and is the home to the Monmouth Polling Institute.

From 1937 until 2004, the Dorn family operated a photography business in Red Bank, NJ. The business did a variety of work: photographing business openings, individuals, weddings, events, aerial views of the surrounding communities, and scenes of people and their lives in and around Monmouth County and adjacent regions in New York City and New Jersey. Since the business's closure, the Dorn-Severinis have kept this large collection of images in the public eye by creating calendars, greeting cards, and large format prints used as décor in several businesses and restaurants in Red Bank and nearby communities. The family has always known and placed great value on the fact that the images, through acquisitions made by the business of other photo collections, covering the period 1880 to 2004, represent a unique visual history of the region. They decided that the images and the history that they represent should, rightly, be made available for

study and research. Starting in about 2016, Mr. George Severini and Dean Kenneth Womack, School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Monmouth University, began to discuss the appropriateness of the Dorn-Severini collection as a donation to Monmouth University, ultimately to be digitized and made freely available for viewing and research.

The collection consists of approximately 16,328 images in the form of 1,551 8" by 10", 6" by 8", and 5" by 7" glass plate negatives, 6,768 4" by 5" black and white flexible negatives, 200 8" by 10" and 5" x 7" black and white flexible negatives, 8,800 120mm and 35mm negatives, approximately 3,300 aerial 4" by 5" black and white negatives, and about 400 additional other negatives and prints in various, standard sizes.

The images within the Dorn-Severini collection depict not only eighty years in the life and times of a half dozen communities in Monmouth County, New Jersey, but also represent an immense untapped primary source for research in this area in close proximity to the New York and Philadelphia metro area during an era of rapid growth and change. Research potential includes study of the transition from a largely rural and agricultural economy to one with much more retail business and residential population, to the evolution of America's first beach vacation destination in the nineteenth century to the Jersey Shore of today. Researchers in history, political science, sociology, municipal planning, cultural and ethnic studies, business, entertainment and leisure, and numerous other fields will all find this to be an important and completely unexploited source for research and scholarship. Of particular note is that the collection contains numerous depictions of the African American community in the area, which can serve as visual documentation of their emergence into middle class society.

Monmouth University's Guggenheim Memorial Library, working with the Department of History and Anthropology, will archive, catalog, and digitize this image collection so that its

content may be made discoverable via common web searching. We envision an ongoing series of projects, some with grant funding, to create a rich metadata environment that will allow deep research of the collection by date, medium, location, topic, and other categories. You can read more about the collection, and follow our progress, [here](#).

The following images offer *NJ Studies* readers a look at sample items from the collection:



**Ice Boating on the Navesink River. 5" x 7" positive image of glass plate negative.
Undated, early twentieth century.**



Bathers at Asbury Park beach near beached S.S. Morro Castle. 8" x 10." September 1934.



Dorns and airplane used for aerial photography. Undated 4" x 5" positive print. Number 2544.



Group on porch at Wardells. Port-au-Peck, Oceanport, NJ. 1901. From inscription on reverse: "L.R. Daniel Applegate - Lawyer, Capt. John Abbott Worthleg - Coat Merchant, Antonides - Liquor Store Owner, Sen. John S. Applegate - Lawyer. 8" x 10" positive print. Number 1980.

Kurt W. Wagner is the University Librarian of Monmouth University in West Long Branch, NJ, and has been in the position since January 2016. Previously, he was Assistant Director for Library Information Systems at the Cheng Library at William Paterson University in Wayne, NJ. He brings twenty-five years of experience in academic libraries and higher education, including project management, work with high-performing, collaborative teams, and teaching at the undergraduate and graduate levels at William Paterson, Rutgers University, and the Pratt Institute. Wagner is a member of the Executive Committee of VALE, NJ's academic library

consortium, and serves on the editorial board of the Atlantic Journal of Communication. Wagner was the recipient of the New Jersey Library Association's Technology Innovation Award in 2009 and 2013. Wagner holds a Master of Arts in Library Science (U. Arizona, 1993) and a Master of Arts in Communication (William Paterson University, 1998).