

Exceptional Cameraworkers: Early Black Photographers in New Jersey

By Gary D. Saretzky

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14713/njs.v9i2.331>

The few known African American photographers in the 19th and early 20th centuries faced significant challenges, including racial prejudice and competition from white photographers for both white and the relatively few Black customers. The New Jersey photographers examined here were no exception and this may help explain why images by an artist with a long career, William M. Dutton, are so hard to find today and why other artists, like Isaiah Burton and Levi Bankson, worked only briefly in the medium before moving on to other, more remunerative occupations. Beginning his photographic career at the end of the 1800s, Albert Thomas Moore achieved considerable success in the first part of the 20th century in New Brunswick and South River but less so in Atlantic City.

For additional illustrations to this article, see <http://saretzky.com/download/black-photographers-keynote.pdf>.

Photography by African Americans dates back to 1840, the year after Louis Daguerre made his invention public in Paris. It was there that Jules Lion, a free, mixed race artist, studied painting before immigrating to the United States in 1837. Establishing his home in New Orleans, Lion opened the first portrait studio in the Crescent City in March 1840, one of the first in the United States.¹ Later in that same decade, Augustus Washington, born in Trenton, New Jersey, of African

¹ The first daguerreian portrait studio in the United States was probably that of Alexander S. Wolcott and John Johnson in New York, established on or about March 4, 1840. C. Wesley Cowan and Rachel Wetzell, "New Light on Henry Fitz Jr.: A Pioneer Daguerreian," in *The Daguerreian Annual 2022* (Cecil, Pennsylvania: The Daguerreian Society, 2022), 12. For Lion, see George Sullivan, *Black Artists in Photography, 1840–1940* (New York: Dutton, 1996), 15–22. See also Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders: Black Women Photographers* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1985), 3; Deborah Willis-Thomas, *Black Photographers, 1840–1940: An Illustrated Bio-Bibliography* (New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1984); and Deborah Willis, *Reflections in Black: A History of Black Photographers, 1840 to the Present* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2000).

American–South Asian parents, opened a photography studio in Hartford, Connecticut, but he apparently made only a few daguerreotypes in his home state where he learned the process.² Other than Augustus Washington, New Jersey’s early Black photographers are not listed in bibliographies and encyclopedias about the medium’s African American pioneers.³ This essay examines four selected photographers of color who operated in the Garden State in the 19th and early 20th centuries: William M. Dutton, Isaiah Burton, Levi W. Bankson, and Albert Thomas Moore.⁴

² Augustus Washington was born 1820 or 1821 in Trenton to a South Asian mother and an African American father, formerly enslaved. His mother died shortly after his birth and his father married a formerly enslaved woman in October 1821. As a youth, Washington did manual labor for his father for a few years and briefly ran a small school for African American students. In 1837–1838, he attended the Oneida Institute in Whitesboro, New York, after which he managed the African Public School in Brooklyn for three years, during which time he also served as a subscription agent and contributor to the Black weekly, *Colored American*. About this time, he helped establish a Black temperance society and organized mass meetings in support of Black voting rights. Desiring to attend Dartmouth College, Washington completed a preparatory course at Kimball Union Academy in Meriden, New Hampshire, from 1841 to 1843, and entered Dartmouth as its only Black student in the fall of 1843. During the winter break, short of funds, Washington returned to Trenton and was “favored in learning the Daguerrean Art” before returning to Hanover. He made daguerreotypes in New Hampshire to help pay his college expenses and during the late 1840s–1854 at his studio in Hartford, Connecticut, where his clients included academicians and abolitionists such as Frederick Douglass. Washington traveled from 1848 to 1850 when he returned to his Hartford studio. He supported the return to Africa movement and emigrated to Liberia in 1854, where he continued daguerreotypy, operated a store, built houses that he rented out, and worked as a teacher and farmer with a sugar plantation. He also daguerreotyped in Sierra Leone, the Gambia, and Senegal. His daguerreotypes in Liberia included a series of Liberian legislators. After giving up his daguerreotype practice, Washington pursued other business interests and, by 1867, had 30 to 60 employees. In Liberian public affairs, Washington became a judge, member and Speaker of the House of Representatives, and a senator. In 1873, he began publishing and editing a newspaper called the *New Era*. Washington became ill at his farm and although brought to Monrovia for medical treatment, died on June 7, 1875. Michael Kernan, “A Durable Memento,” *Smithsonian* 30, no. 2 (May 1999), 26–28; Ann M. Shumard, *A Durable Memento: Portraits by Augustus Washington, African American Daguerreotypist* (Washington: National Portrait Gallery, 1999).

³ Sources that do not mention the Black photographers under consideration here include Valencia Hollins Coar, *A Century of Black Photographers: 1840–1960* (Providence, Rhode Island: Museum of Rhode Island School of Design, 1983); Bibliography Committee of the New Jersey Library Association, *New Jersey and the Negro: A Bibliography, 1715–1966* (Trenton: New Jersey Library Association, 1967); Willis; and Willis-Thomas, op cit.

⁴ Not addressed here is the successful Sussex County photographer and prolific inventor Clayton J. Dorticus (1863–1903), born in Cuba of a father born in Spain and a Cuban-born mother. Dorticus had a light complexion but can be found today on lists of Black inventors because he was identified as a man of color by Henry E. Baker, an examiner at the U.S. Patent Office in the late 1890s. Baker, an African American attorney, made secret marks on forms to keep track of Black inventors and wrote two books about them. Dorticus was listed as white in the 1895 and 1900 censuses, married a white woman, Mary Fredenburgh, and had two daughters, Josephine Dorticus and Serita McEvilly, listed as white in census records. Newspaper articles about Dorticus did not mention his race at a time when it was routine to use “colored” to describe non-white subjects. On his death certificate, Dorticus’s race was “Cuban.”

For a Black man in America during the pre-Civil War era, it would have been very challenging to enter the photography profession. As there were no photography schools, photographers were self-taught or learned by taking lessons from, or apprenticing with, an established practitioner, likely to be white and not interested in having a Black assistant. Not surprisingly perhaps, there are no known Black women daguerreotypists in the United States and only a small percentage of practitioners were white women.⁵ Lessons, a camera, and materials were relatively expensive and there was considerable competition once the daguerreotypist opened for business, except in rural areas where itinerant lensmen plied their trade. Although some, like African American Glenalvin Goodridge, worked in relatively small towns such as York, Pennsylvania, the few Black daguerreotypists in America tended to operate in Northern cities where there was a substantial African American population.⁶

Around 1850, the cost of a daguerreotype could be as little as a dollar but a dollar was worth much more then, equivalent to about a day's wages for a male laborer and two days wages for a woman laborer.⁷ Because the African American middle class was quite small, Black daguerreotypists like James P. Ball in Cincinnati and Augustus Washington probably photographed more whites than members of their own race.⁸ While both white and Black

⁵ The first documented Black woman in photography was Mary E. Warren, listed in the 1866 Houston, Texas, directory as a "colored" photographic printer. Moutoussamy-Ashe, 10. It is quite possible that women in the families of earlier Black photographers were active in the medium. For New Jersey's first white woman photographer, see author, "Charlotte Prosch: New Jersey's First Female Daguerreotypist," *Garden State Legacy* 31 (March 2016): <http://www.GardenStateLegacy.com>

⁶ John V. Jezierski, "'Dangerous Opportunity': Glenalvin J. Goodridge and Early Photography in York, Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania History* 64, no. 2 (Spring 1997), 310–332. Theme issue, "History of Photography in Pennsylvania."

⁷ At the Hamilton Mill in Lowell, Massachusetts, around this time, men made \$1.03 per day, women \$0.53 per day, and boys \$0.34 per day. W.M. Grosvenor, *Does Protection Protect? An Examination of the Effect of Different Forms of Tariff on American Industry* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1871), 299, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hwvk9i&view=1up&seq=325>.

⁸ James Presley Ball (1805–1904) had a long photographic career. After learning the process from one of the handful of black daguerreotypists, John B. Bailey of Boston, he relocated several times and ended up in Honolulu. After he opened his first gallery in Cincinnati in 1845, Ball only got two customers in the first three months, and one of them bought on credit. He became an itinerant daguerreotypist and returned to Cincinnati in 1849, where his business grew

photographers faced many of the same challenges, including obtaining start-up capital, acquiring technical proficiency, and learning effective marketing techniques, it is likely that racial prejudice discouraged or prevented some African Americans from entering the profession. These factors all contributed to the paucity of Black photographers, but a few overcame these obstacles.

William Miller Dutton

William M. Dutton was probably the first Black daguerreotypist to operate in New Jersey. Although he had a long career, no examples of his work have been found to illustrate this article. Dutton was long forgotten until John Craig, who searched nationally for photography-related professionals in 1840s and 1850s business directories, published a short bio in his useful 1996 compendium.⁹ Dutton was born in April 1824 in New York to Baptist minister Stephen Dutton and his wife Emeline (née Miller).¹⁰ By the time William was about seven years old, his family moved to Canada, as that was where three of his younger siblings were born (Solomon H., Harriet F., and Emeline A.) between about 1832 and 1840.¹¹ The Duttons then came back to the United

to become one of the premier studios in the city. Ball became known for photographing both Black and white subjects, the latter including P.T. Barnum and Charles Dickens. Willis, 5.

⁹ Unfortunately, Craig erroneously assigned a middle H. to Dutton's name, perhaps the result of a typo in one of the directories he used or an error in transcription. In retracing Craig's research, I was not able to find a reference to a photographer William H. Dutton but did find Black photographers named William Dutton and William M. Dutton and no persuasive evidence that they were not the same person. It seems likely that the photographer usually went by William Dutton early in his career and then in the 1860s more often began using his middle name or initial. John S. Craig, *Craig's Daguerreian Registry, Volume 2, Pioneers and Progress, Abbott to Lytle* (Torrington, Connecticut: John S. Craig, 1996), 170. An entry for Dutton with a few of his later directory listings is included in the Langdon Road database, <https://www.langdonroad.com/dol-to-dz>.

¹⁰ Birth month for William M. Dutton from 1900 U.S. Census, Brooklyn, consistent with his death record which provides the year. His parents' names are included in his second marriage record and death record. "William Dutton and Sarah Paul Duncan 1871," New York, New York City Marriage Records, 1829–1940, FamilySearch database, accessed 21 June 2022, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:24MJ-Q37> ; ; "William Miller Dutton 1907," New York, New York City Municipal Deaths, 1795–1949, FamilySearch database, accessed 13 May 2022, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:2WFP-8ZY>. Census records for Dutton vary concerning his parents' birthplaces. In the 1850 Census, his father was born in Maryland and his mother in New York; in the 1880 Census, his father's birthplace is blank and his mother's is New York; and in the 1900 Census, his parents were recorded as born in Kentucky.

¹¹ 1850 U.S. Census, Passaic County, Paterson, lists Stephen Dutton, Baptist Clergyman, born Maryland; Emeline G., 45, born New York; William M., 25, born New York; Solomon H., 18, born Canada; Harriet F., 16, born Canada; Emeline E., 10, born Canada; and Mary A., 3, born New York. Marriage record for Harriet F. Harris, previously

States where another daughter, Mary A., was born in New York State about 1847. By 1850, Rev. Dutton had settled the family in Paterson, New Jersey, where they are recorded in the U.S. Census. According to that record, the clergyman owned \$9,000 in real estate, equivalent to more than \$243,000 in 2021 dollars, so the family was relatively well off.¹²

Listed with his parents and siblings in the 1850 census, William M. Dutton, 25, is found without an occupation, but in 1853 and 1854, he had his own daguerreotype gallery at 289 Broadway near City Hall in New York City, while living at 186 Reade Street.¹³ He subsequently relocated to 234 Railroad Avenue, now Christopher Columbus Drive, in Jersey City. According to the 1855–1856 Jersey City directory, Dutton was a daguerreotypist at this location, but in the 1856–1857 directory, he was described as an artist in the same place. (The term “artist” sometimes was used in those days for daguerreotypist but may have implied a broader range of talents.)

Dutton’s Jersey City location was across the street from the Joseph Dixon Crucible factory.¹⁴ At the time, Dixon’s factory was a wood structure, later replaced by the impressively huge brick building still extant today. Also nearby, in the area then on the outskirts of town, was

married, daughter of Stephen Dutton [sic] and Emeline Miller, born 1840 (note lower age compared to 1850 Census) in Canada, married in Brooklyn on August 23, 1871, to Charles F. Andreas, born 1840 in Germany, son of Charles Frederick and Christina Jehrle. “Stephen Dutton in entry for Charles F. Andreas and Harriet F. Harris, 1871,” New York, New York City Marriage Records, 1829-1940, FamilySearch database, 21 June 2022, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:24ZK-CHR>. Andreas, a white seaman, died in Brooklyn on July 9, 1875. “Charles Andreas, 1875, » New York, New York City Municipal Deaths, 1795-1949, FamilySearch database, accessed 3 June 2020, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:2W73-KNR>. His widow, Harriet Frances Andrews [sic], a dressmaker, died in Brooklyn on February 1, 1886. “Harriet Frances Andrews, 1886,” New York, New York City Municipal Deaths, 1795-1949, FamilySearch database, accessed 3 June 2020, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:2WSQ-RZH>.

¹² Rev. Stephen Dutton moved from Paterson to New York by 1847, where he is listed in the city directory as Rev. Stephen Dutton, “colored,” at 9 Anthony, New York. “Stephen Dutton, 1846–1852,” United States City and Business Directories, ca. 1749 - ca. 1990, FamilySearch database, accessed 15 February 2022, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:6Z1P-ZVNH>.

¹³ Craig.

¹⁴ Joseph Dixon (1799–1869), who manufactured lead crucibles and other products at his factory, is best remembered today for his graphite pencils, the familiar yellow version of which was introduced by his firm in 1913. Dixon also made contributions to the technical development of photography, including his method of filtering collodion to obtain improved glass plate negatives. See “Mr. Dixon’s Collodion Filter,” *American Journal of Photography (New Series)* 1, no. 1 (June 1, 1858): 1.

the original Colgate factory and Maxwell's Rope Walk.¹⁵ These businesses likely provided clientele for Dutton's services. After his sojourn in Jersey City, Dutton moved back to New York, where from 1857 to 1859 he operated a daguerreotype studio again at 289 Broadway while living at 288 Broadway.¹⁶ Dutton's movements around the New York metropolitan area are confirmed by the birthplaces of his five children with his wife Cornelia (née Smith).¹⁷ While daughters Eliza and Emma were born in New York in 1851 and 1853, Cornelia arrived in New Jersey in 1856, and sons Joseph and William joined the family in Brooklyn in 1859 and 1861.¹⁸

In the late 1850s, the ambrotype, a process that employed a collodion coating on glass, superseded the daguerreotype in popularity because it was much cheaper to produce, since glass was an inexpensive image support compared to copper.¹⁹ A William Dutton is listed in the 1860 U.S. Census as a mulatto ambrotypist in New Bedford, Massachusetts, living unaccompanied by a wife or children. (That census did not include a column for marital status.) He was recorded as 30 years old, born in New York. He lived with more than a dozen unrelated others, probably in a boarding house. Although the age of this Dutton is off by a few years, it probably was the same man. Perhaps he had gone to New Bedford to learn the process from an expert practitioner. Since Dutton is not known to have had his own gallery in New Bedford, and no examples of ambrotypes

¹⁵ John Beekman, Jersey City Public Library, email messages to author, July 10–11, 2022. Beekman explained that when the name of Railroad Avenue was changed to Christopher Columbus Drive, the numbering remained the same.

¹⁶ City directories, Jersey City and New York, [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) and FamilySearch.

¹⁷ Cornelia's maiden name from death record of her daughter Eliza, who died in Brooklyn on May 15, 1926.

¹⁸ "William Dutton in entry for Eliza Dutton, 1926," New York, New York City Municipal Deaths, 1795-1949, FamilySearch database, accessed 13 May 2022, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:2W5Y-W21>.

¹⁹ The younger Cornelia's birthplace helps confirm that William Dutton and William M. Dutton were the same photographer. William Dutton without a middle initial is listed in the 1865 New York State Census, FamilySearch. He was 42 years old, mulatto, born in New York, and without occupation, although his wife is listed as a laborer so it is possible the census recorded laborer on the wrong line. Mrs. Cornelia Dutton was 30, born in the District of Columbia, and they had five children: Eliza, 14, born in New York; Emeline (Emma), 12, born in New York; Cornelia, 9, born in New Jersey; Joseph, 6, born in Kings County (Brooklyn), and William, 4, born in Kings County.

¹⁹ Both daguerreotypes and ambrotypes were usually presented in the same types of cases. Although the ambrotype had less contrast than the daguerreotype, it had almost as fine sharpness of definition. Unlike daguerreotypes, ambrotypes do not have a highly reflective surface so they can be viewed from any angle, but being on glass, are breakable.

with his name are held currently by local repositories there, he likely worked for another photographer. Around 1860, New Bedford had a number of photography studios offering ambrotypes, including that of Edward S. Dunshee, who had a long career that included a later period in New Jersey, and the renowned Bierstadt brothers.²⁰

Unlike many daguerreotypists and ambrotypists, many of whose careers were relatively brief, Dutton made the transition to photographic prints from glass negatives onto paper, which became standard in the 1860s, and with some gaps, he continued as a photographer until his death in the 20th century. As William Dutton or William M. Dutton, he was listed in the Brooklyn directories as a “colored” photographer in Williamsburg at 32 Montrose Avenue in 1863 and 34 Montrose Avenue in 1864. It is possible that he moved with his family to Brooklyn to be closer to his widowed mother Emeline for help with his young children.²¹ But his photographic activities did not seem to provide adequate income. In 1870, he was included in the city directory as a “colored laborer” at Third Avenue near 10th.

Dutton’s marriage to Cornelia became troubled and, after the New York Supreme Court granted a divorce judgment on April 17, 1871, he remarried on April 23 to a widow, Sarah Paul Duncan, 38, born in Albany, New York, the daughter of Benjamin and Eliza B. (née Smith) Paul.²²

²⁰ Dutton was not included as a New Bedford photographer in Ron Polito, ed., *A Directory of Massachusetts Photographers, 1839–1900* (Camden, Maine: Picton Press, 1993). For Dunshee, noted for his portrait in New Bedford of Henry David Thoreau and who later worked in Trenton, New Jersey, see author, “Last Man Standing: E.S. Dunshee, Veteran Trenton Photographer,” *Garden State Legacy* 30 (December 30, 2015), <http://www.GardenStateLegacy.com> and “The Dunshees: Itinerant New England Photographers from Bristol, Vermont,” *The Journal* No. 174 (2016): 46–63. Regarding the photographic activities of the Bierstadt brothers (Charles, Edward, and Albert, the last best known as a landscape painter), see Robert Taft, *Photography and the American Scene: A Social History* (New York: Macmillan, 1938), 502. Edward Bierstadt, photographer and printer of photographs using the Albortype and Artotype photomechanical processes, lived in Jersey City from 1871 to 1873.

²¹ According to the 1858–1859 Brooklyn directory, Emeline Dutton lived at 48 Varet Street, a few blocks from Dutton’s Montrose Street address in the early 1860s.

²² “Divorce, Supreme Court, William M. Dutton vs. Cornelia B. Dutton,” *Brooklyn Union*, July 12, 1871, 4; “William Dutton and Sarah Paul Duncan, 1871,” New York, New York City Marriage Records, 1829–1940, FamilySearch database, accessed 21 June 2022, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:24MJ-Q37> .: The

Ex-wife Cornelia, working as a dressmaker, continued living in Brooklyn with the five children.²³ By 1872, Dutton settled down as a photographer at 1635–1637 Atlantic Avenue, where he stayed for about 35 years until his death.²⁴ His location was a short block from Fulton Avenue, the border of Stuyvesant Heights, a wealthy white neighborhood that later became a Black enclave known for its historic architecture and rich cultural traditions.²⁵

Dutton seems to have been a law-abiding citizen, but he was arrested on September 14, 1877, following an altercation with his neighbors, William and Mary Quinn, as a result of Mary's inebriation. Dutton followed the couple into their apartment and "beat them very severely about their heads and faces with his fists," according to a newspaper. Dutton and Mary Quinn were both arrested, the latter for intoxication.²⁶ What prompted the conflict was not mentioned but perhaps Mary uttered a racial slur that sparked Dutton's violent behavior.

In the 1880 U.S. Census, Dutton was described as a "mulatto" 55-year-old photographer at 1637 Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn. He was living with his wife Sarah E. Dutton, 41, born in New York to a father born in New Hampshire and a mother born in New York. According to the 1900 Census, at age 76, Dutton still lived at 1637 Atlantic Avenue as a photographer, unemployed for

1900 Census incorrectly had Dutton married to his second wife Sarah for 39 years instead of 29 years, as per this marriage record.

²³ In 1880, Cornelia and the children lived at 51 Union Avenue. The children all worked: Eliza, dressmaker; Emeline, hairdresser; Cornelia, assistant; Joseph H. and William M., barbers. Cornelia Dutton was listed at 23 Union Avenue in the 1900 Brooklyn directory, which erroneously described her as the widow of William, who was still alive. "Emeline Dutton in household of Cornelia Dutton, Brooklyn, Kings, New York, United States," United States Census, 1880, FamilySearch database, accessed 14 January 2022, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZ8Y-CC5>; citing enumeration district, sheet, NARA microfilm publication T9 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.), FHL microfilm; 1900 Brooklyn, New York, City Directory, 385.

²⁴ The site of Dutton's building, long gone, is now in Harmony Park. According to city directories, in some years, his business was at 1635 Atlantic and his home at 1637 Atlantic. There are some variations in the directory listings which could be typographical errors, including 1876 when he was listed at 1633 Atlantic Ave. In 1888, he was listed as a photographer at 489 Third Avenue, Brooklyn. In 1889, two William M. Duttons are listed at 1635 Atlantic, one an artist and the other, likely the photographer's son, a bookkeeper. Dutton is not listed in *Lain's Business Directory of Brooklyn . . . 1890–1891* or *Trow's Business Directory for the Boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens* in 1899.

²⁵ Russell Poole, "A Neighborhood in a Neighborhood: Stuyvesant Heights," City Signal, November 16, 2022, <https://www.citysignal.com/a-neighborhood-in-a-neighborhood-stuyvesant-heights/>.

²⁶ "A Colored Photographer's Diversion," *Brooklyn Union*, September 15, 1877, 4.

four months in the past year. He owned his own home without a mortgage, suggesting that he had become financially stable. According to this census, Sarah, 58, was born in September 1841 in New York, and they had no children.²⁷

Dutton continued living at 1637 Atlantic Avenue until his death from heart disease on September 19, 1907, at age 83. His death certificate gave his occupation as photographer. An obituary, which did not mention his profession, recalled, "He was widely known among colored residents in Brooklyn and had been actively prominent as a Democratic politician in the Twenty-fourth Ward. He was a Free Mason and had reached the thirty-third degree in the colored order. He was twice married and leaves a widow, Sarah Paul." Dutton was buried in Cypress Hills cemetery.²⁸ Sarah died a few years later in 1910.²⁹

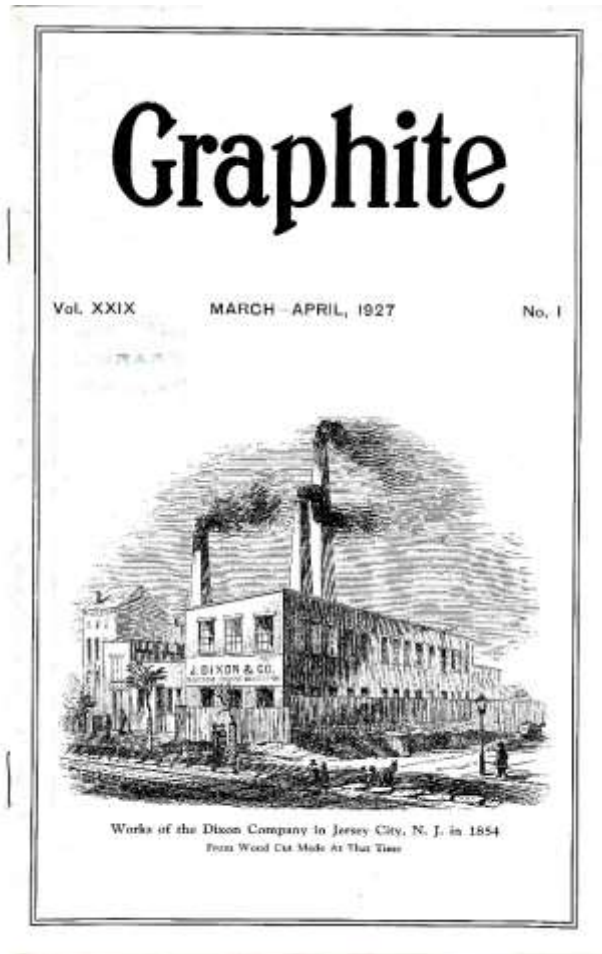
Since Dutton's photographic career spanned more than 50 years, it is surprising that no examples of his work could be located despite a diligent search. A number of explanations are possible. Many 19th century photographs do not have a maker's identification. In the case image era (predominantly daguerreotypes and ambrotypes) from 1840 to the early 1860s, relatively few of the image makers paid to have their names embossed on the brass mats or incorporated their imprint onto other case elements. In subsequent decades, when paper photographs mounted on cardboard became popular, especially cartes-de-visite and the larger cabinet cards, most

²⁷ Unlike the 1880 U.S. Census, which indicated that her father was born in New Hampshire, the 1900 census indicated that Sarah's parents were both born in New York. Dutton was only one of two residents on his block to own his home; the rest were renters. Other local residents had jobs like tailor, machinist, bartender, painter, servant, paper hanger, and janitor. The Duttons lived in a string of residences of African Americans but there was a white section nearby.

²⁸ *Brooklyn Citizen*, September 21, 1907, 4. A funeral announcement was published in the *New-York Tribune*, September 21, 1907, 7. The specific cause of death was "Mitral Disease Ascites Exhaustion." Index to Death Certificates, New York, New York, 1862–1948, ancestry.com.

²⁹ The *Brooklyn Citizen*, May 14, 1910, 9, published a legal notice searching for the heirs of the late Sarah E. Dutton, on behalf of children of her late sister Mary A. Creed, mentioning the names of several relatives, whereabouts unknown, including Alexander D. Paul, George T. Paul, Garret S. Paul, John Paul, and Thomas C. Paul, requesting them or their next of kin to appear at Surrogate's Court on June 30, 1910, to probate Sarah's last will and testament dated March 29, 1910.

photographers had their name and address printed either beneath the image or on the back of the card, or both, but there are many examples found today for which the maker is not indicated, as is the case for about 95 percent of extant tintypes. Perhaps Dutton did not think that including his name on his photos would enhance his business. Another possibility is that his output was low and



J. Dixon & Co. crucible factory, Railroad Avenue, Jersey City, on cover of *Graphite*, March–April 1927, courtesy Jersey City Public Library. William M. Dutton’s gallery was across the street from this facility, 1856–1858.

that fewer photographs by him have survived than produced by other photographers who had a higher volume of business. It is also possible that Dutton’s practice did not involve formal portraiture and that he specialized in services for local businesses, but this hypothesis could not be confirmed since ads describing his offerings were not found through online searches of newspaper databases. Perhaps Dutton worked for a business making identification photos, as did Charles Eisenmann, who after operating portrait studios in New York and Plainfield, New Jersey, became an ID photographer for DuPont.³⁰ He may also have become a law enforcement photographer like Emma Morrison of Newark, New Jersey, who had a

³⁰ Colleen Fitzpatrick, “A Photo Puzzle Case Study,” *Games Magazine* (November 2008):11, http://www.forensicgenealogy.info/images/games_magazine_november_2008.pdf.

mug shot studio at police headquarters.³¹ While in Brooklyn, Dutton was listed as a photographer in directories only in some years with a separate business address next door to his residence, so he may have worked intermittently for another photographer who got the credit. Hopefully, additional sources on this photographer and images by him will be found by other researchers.

Isaiah Burton

Though virtually unknown today, Isaiah Burton, an African American photographer of Camden, New Jersey, was likely an exhibitor at the world's fair held in New Orleans in 1884–1885. In the post-Civil War era, despite the Thirteenth amendment in 1864 that abolished slavery, the Fourteenth amendment in 1868 that guaranteed citizenship to all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and the Fifteenth amendment in 1870 that promised all citizens the right to vote, African Americans continued to be hampered in their efforts to achieve social, economic, and political equality. Their progress in the immediate postwar years during Reconstruction was followed by the gradual erosion of civil rights in the latter 1870s and early 1880s. One of the notable setbacks was in 1883 when the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the federal Civil Rights Act of 1875 that forbid racial discrimination in public accommodations, which is why New Jersey passed its own Civil Rights Act on May 10, 1884.³² Nevertheless, it was not long before separate beaches for the races began appearing at the Jersey Shore, such as in Asbury Park, where in 1887 founder James A. Bradley announced that he wanted no African Americans on the beach or in the adjoining plaza, which he owned.³³ This segregationist trend culminated in the Jim Crow laws approved by the Supreme Court in 1896 in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. During this regrettable decline in

³¹ *Plainfield Courier-News*, July 27, 1899, 6.

³² The Act is discussed in the following section about Albert Thomas Moore. In 1887, Pennsylvania passed its own similar act with a less stringent maximum penalty of \$100, compared to \$500–5,000 for New Jersey's statute, depending on the type of violation.

³³ "Handout - Debate Over Beach Segregation in Asbury Park, Summer, 1887," *New York Times*, June 26, 1887, et seq, <https://3o9d0y1wloj7e90sc37nviar-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/Handout-Debate-over-Beach-Segregation-in-Asbury-Park-Summer-1887.pdf>.

social progress for African Americans, a highlight was the World Cotton Centennial of 1885–1886, officially known as the World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition, which included a “Colored Exhibit.” It was the first world’s fair that had an exhibit of products made by African Americans from most of the states and was positively reviewed by Black newspapers.

Although this landmark world’s fair, the first lighted by electricity, was marred by opening delays, mismanagement, rainy weather, and other problems, for African Americans it was an opportunity to achieve recognition for the quality of their achievements during the decade.³⁴ Far more people of color were able to exhibit at the fair than otherwise would have been the case. As summarized by Sara S. Cromwell, “The status granted to Blacks at the Exposition was largely a reflection of African-American status in New Orleans at the time, which resulted from a mixing of the unique historical position of Blacks in the city and the flexible nature of race relations in the 1880s.”³⁵ But the exhibit was not without controversy, then and more recently. At the time, Black newspaper editors, as explained by historian Miki Pfeffer, “noted the irony of a separate department for African Americans, when the expo was celebrating one hundred years of exporting cotton, a crop that had so utterly depended on slave labor.”³⁶ Similarly, in his 2007 history of New

³⁴ Samuel C. Shepherd Jr., “A Glimmer of Hope: The World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition New Orleans, 1884–1885,” *Louisiana History* 26, no. 3 (Summer 1985): 271–290, provides a balanced summary of the successes and failures of the fair. The Louisiana State treasurer, who managed the money for the exposition, was later indicted in 1889 for embezzling more than \$1.5 million in bonds, although not from the fair’s funds. Miki Pfeffer, “Mr. Chairman and FELLOW AMERICAN CITIZENS”: African American Agency at the World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition in New Orleans, 1884–1885,” *Louisiana History* 51, no. 4 (Fall 2010): 461. Regarding delays, the *Savannah Morning News*, January 26, 1885, 2, reported, “The colored department is at a standstill, owing to the want of funds on the part of the colored commissioners to erect cases, etc., for the proper display of their exhibits. They are promised funds by the exposition as soon as the managers can raise the \$250,000 required to relieve them from present embarrassments. In order to assist the colored commissioners from Maryland and the District of Columbia, Col. Scharf, one of the Maryland commissioners, has lent them sufficient sash, glazed and stained, to make all the cases they require.” Another problem for African Americans was that some feared traveling by train to New Orleans, as discussed by R.T. Washington in the Black newspaper, *Huntsville Gazette* (Huntsville, Alabama), May 9, 1885, 2, who wrote, “The mere thought of a trip on a railroad brings to me a feeling of intense dread and I never enter a railroad coach unless compelled to do so. On account of these discriminations the New Orleans Exposition has lost many dollars.”

³⁵ Sara S. Cromwell, “Fair Treatment? African-American Presence at International Expositions in the South, 1884–1902,” (master’s thesis, Wake Forest University, December 2010) 20.

³⁶ Pfeffer, 451.

Orleans tourism, scholar Kevin Fox Gotham criticized the “separate but equal” state exhibits at the fair, a separation consistent with racial segregationist trends.³⁷ Gotham further asserted that “themes of racial progress and rising opportunity that dominated the 1884 Exposition were pretentious, patronizing, and disingenuous.”³⁸

In the 626,400 square foot United States and State Government Building, the second largest on the grounds, the fair featured submissions from the then-44 states and territories, including New Jersey.³⁹ In the north end of the Government Building, the impressively large “Colored Exhibit” officially opened on February 23, 1885, two months after the fair began. Still incomplete, it eventually featured more than 16,000 exhibits displayed in more than 34,000 square feet of space. Initially from nine states, including New Jersey, plus the District of Columbia, the final total was 35 states and territories, all except the states of Maine and Oregon, and the territories of Arizona and Dakota.⁴⁰ Some states shared a section but New Jersey, with one of the largest contributions, had its own.⁴¹ The profusion of displays in the Colored Exhibit is evident from a stereographic

³⁷ Kevin Fox Gotham, “‘Of Incomprehensible Magnitude and Bewildering Variety’: The 1884 World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition” chap. 3 in *Authentic New Orleans: Tourism, Culture and Race in the Big Easy* (New York & London: New York University Press, 2007), 45–69.

³⁸ Gotham, 62.

³⁹ Although massive, the Government Building was dwarfed by the Main Building with 1.7 million square feet covering 33 acres, the largest wooden structure in the world. It housed General Exhibits, Foreign Exhibits, Machinery, Agriculture Exhibits, and the Music Hall, which included the international photography exhibit. Among other buildings were the Art Gallery, the Horticultural Hall, Factories and Mills, the Mexican pavilion, et al. Gotham, 53; illustrations of most important buildings in Herbert S. Fairall, *The World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exhibition, New Orleans 1884-85* (Iowa City: 1885), 427–430. Most of the New Jersey State Museum’s collection was sent to the fair, a fortunate circumstance that saved it from the disastrous State House fire in 1885.

⁴⁰ Cromwell, 29. Final tally of contributing states from Herbert S. Fairall, “The Colored People, Their Exhibit,” in *The World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exhibition, New Orleans 1884-85* (Iowa City: 1885), 379. Fairall’s two-page summary does not mention Burton. About half of his text describes an embroidered silk on a sofa depicting the history of Haiti by Mrs. Sarah H. Shimm of Washington, DC, a school teacher of color. Fairall, 380, noted, “The number of articles exhibited in the colored department ranged in the thousands....”

⁴¹ In a widely published report on the exhibit in the *Crawford Mirror* (Steelville, Missouri), March 26, 1885, 1, the correspondent to the *Herald* [unidentified other newspaper] commented, “One entire side [of the Government building] is occupied by the exhibits of the colored people. Eleven Southern and nine Northern states are represented in separate sections of these exhibits, which include numberless samples and varieties of woman’s fancy work, lacing embroideries, quiltings, dress wear, etc....” This comment pertained to both the colored exhibit and the woman’s work exhibit, so at the time not all the exhibits had been installed.

view published by the Centennial Photographic Co. of Philadelphia that depicts standing panels filled with hanging items.⁴² Near the Colored Exhibit was a “Woman’s Work” exhibit from participating states and the District of Columbia.

Held in a city with more than 25 percent Black and mulatto population, races mixed freely indoors and out at the site. As concluded by Pfeffer, “For the first time at any World’s Fair, African Americans were welcomed as full participants.”⁴³ Gotham agreed, writing that “Blacks and whites could interact freely and . . . Blacks did not face rampant discrimination at the fair.”⁴⁴ The multiracial aspect of the event was conveyed in a color lithograph published in *Puck* in 1884.⁴⁵ At center right, the white “Southern Queen,” representing New Orleans, accompanied by Uncle Sam, greets a long line of women—Black, brown, and white—some of whom are carrying fans with names of countries such as Cuba, Mexico, and Peru.

The commissioner-in-chief of the Department of Colored Exhibits was Blanche K. Bruce, an African American former U.S. Senator from Mississippi (1874–1880), who had escaped enslavement in Missouri in 1862.⁴⁶ In an interview about the Colored Exhibit, Bruce claimed, “It

⁴² Kenneth R. Speth Collection. This view does not specify a particular state so it may show the area where states without their own colored exhibit displayed their items. Another view in the Historical New Orleans Collection that shows just the Ohio Colored Exhibit includes several large framed photographs.

⁴³ Pfeffer, 462.

⁴⁴ Gotham, 61.

⁴⁵ Keppler and Schwartzmann, Chromolithograph, , 1884, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2012645153/>.

⁴⁶ *Official Catalog of the World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition* (J.S. Rivers, Stationer and Printer, 1885, New Orleans), <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112045778013&view=1up&seq=25&skin=2021>. The honorary colored commissioners are listed on pages 18–20. The colored people’s exhibit for New Jersey is mentioned on page 48 of the appendix. In a report to the governor of New Jersey, Gen. C.H. Barney, the overall commissioner for the state, informed him that 8,916 square feet was provided for New Jersey’s state exhibit and about 600 square feet was allotted for the Colored Exhibit in the North Gallery of the Government and States Building. Barney continued that New Jersey’s display in the Department of Colored Exhibits included 248 specimens. However, in a subsequent report, he stated that the state exhibit covered more than 10,000 square feet and the Colored Exhibit installed by Commissioner Herbert occupied 1,800 square feet and included “240 separate contributions of mechanical and artistic contributions.” There were also individual exhibitors from New Jersey whose items were not displayed with New Jersey’s state exhibit or its Colored, Woman’s Work, and Educational exhibits. C. H. Barney, *Report of C.H. Barney, Commissioner for the State of New Jersey to the World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition at New Orleans, 1884–85* (Trenton: John L. Murphy, 1885), 7–11, 27,

is simply astonishing and is a splendid example of the industrial and aesthetic progress made by the negro race in this country since the war. . . . It comprises every branch of commerce, industry and art. . . . We have some 4,000 feet reserved for our display. . . .”⁴⁷ The Black press mostly agreed with this assessment and mentions of the exhibit in African American newspapers were for the most part very positive.⁴⁸

New Jersey’s contributions to the Colored Exhibit were described in advance by R. Henri Herbert, the founder of the state’s first African American newspaper, *The Sentinel*, and whose sister Priscilla Herbert was the first Black graduate of Trenton Normal School, now the College of New Jersey.⁴⁹ Appointed New Jersey’s honorary commissioner of the Department of Colored Exhibits, Herbert claimed, “They will equal the showing made by any State in the Union . . . We will show about three hundred and fifty exhibits [the actual tally was less], representing nearly seventy-five different industries.” Among the great variety of these items were ceramics, copper engravings, a steam engine and boiler, oil paintings, Masonic medals, chemical extracts, cloth and yarn, a steamship, brooms, baskets, wines, original music, rifle-sight covers, a cane made from a tooth of a whale, a locomotive model, blacksmith’s products, gilded picture frames, a harp made

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015068098527&view=2up&seq=2127&skin=2021&q1=world%27s%20industrial%20and%20cotton>.

⁴⁷ *Savannah Morning News*, January 16, 1885, 2.

⁴⁸ For example, at the close of the fair, in a letter to the editor of a Black newspaper, “E.P.C.” wrote that “the Negro. . . has made a wonderful display convincing the world that he is a man, endowed with faculties as other races of mankind, and just as capable if not far outstripping them considering the time he has had, and also considering that not half of those took part in the display who could have done so, and taking it all in all, the exposition could not have happened in a more opportune moment, for the advancement of the Negro.” *Western Appeal* (St. Paul, Minnesota), June 13, 1885, 1. *Savannah Morning News*, February 25, 1885, 1, reported, “Leading colored persons express much satisfaction at the success attending the opening of the colored people’s exhibit yesterday and at the generous treatment they received at the hands of the exposition management.” Writing under the pseudonym “Jack Daw,” a Black visitor wrote in March 1885, “They have not yet completed it, but I was pleased with what I saw....The paintings, needle work and *all* of the exhibits are good, and I think the colored people may have a just pride in the ‘Colored Department.’” *Huntsville Gazette* (Huntsville, Alabama), March 21, 1885, 2.

⁴⁹ Logan Nadel, “Celebrating Trenton’s Historical Figures: R. Henri Herbert,” *Trenton Daily*, May 17, 2020, <https://www.trentondaily.com/celebrating-historical-figures-from-trentons-history-r-henri-herbert/>. *The Sentinel* ceased publication several years before the fair.

of Cape May flowers, cigars, and many other display materials, including photographs by Isaiah Burton of Camden, the only photographer mentioned in Herbert's summary.⁵⁰

If Burton's planned inclusion became a reality, he exhibited with items produced by New Jersey's African Americans rather than with other photographers like William Henry Jackson, an individual exhibitor, or with the main New Jersey exhibit. Altogether, nearly 200 white photographers from the U.S. and other countries are known to have exhibited at the fair, including those from New Jersey: J. Rennie Smith of Newark, William C. Thomas of Millville, the Pine Brothers of Trenton, and the Pach Brothers who had branches in Long Branch, Princeton, New York, and other locations.⁵¹

Although no description of Burton's photographs on view in New Orleans has been found, or even confirmation that he participated, that he was even considered to be included clearly implies that he was an accomplished photographer. A modest amount of information has been gathered concerning him and his family.

Isaiah Burton was born about 1856 in Delaware. By 1876, he came to live with relatives in Camden County, where he resided with a farm laborer, Tillman Burton, and his wife Harriet, both born in Delaware according to the 1860 U.S. Census. Possibly Tillman was Isaiah's father or uncle.

⁵⁰ "Colored People's Exhibits. What Those from This State Will Show at New Orleans—An Interview with Commissioner Herbert," *Trenton State Gazette*, December 17, 1884, 3. This is the only newspaper article found by the author that mentions Burton as a photographer.

⁵¹ Photography Database (<https://photographydatabase.org/>) editor, Andrew Eskind, to author, July 10, 2022. Eskind noted that the data concerning the 196 photographers was compiled from publications at the George Eastman House (now Museum) Library but in response to a query, staff there could not locate them. The *Official Catalog*, cited above, only mentions a few of these photographers. Included among the exhibits by New Jersey photographers was "a collection of photographs of seaside resorts of our State, another of photographs of farm houses and buildings." Possibly these seaside views were by Gustavus V. Pach. For Pach, see author, "Gustavus W. Pach: A Nineteenth-Century New Jersey Photographer," *The Daguerreian Annual, 2021* (Cecil, PA: The Daguerreian Society, 2021), 140–159. The international exhibit of photography, including from the United States, Europe, India, Australia, the Middle East, and "the Arabian Desert," was in the Music Hall gallery in the Government Building but there were also many photographs within the various government exhibits. Fairall, 411.

These Burtons lived in Newton Township.⁵² In the 1860 Census, the Burtons are listed in Newton with two children, neither one Isaiah. Tillman was 38, Harriet, 35, and the children were Elizabeth, 7, born in Delaware, and Tillman, 6 months, born in New Jersey. Another child, Mary, was born to Tillman and Harriet in New Jersey on May 1, 1863.⁵³ She, like some other Burton children, likely did not survive.

Isaiah is also not listed with the Burtons in the 1870 Census. In the latter, Tillman is found in Newton with a younger wife named Hannah, 27, and two children, Elizabeth, 17, who was working as a domestic servant, and Sarah, 5. According to this census, frustratingly inconsistent with others, Tillman was born in Virginia, Hannah and Sarah in New Jersey, and Elizabeth in Maryland. In 1877, another Tillman Burton was born. He died in Camden at the age of four in 1881. The death record indicated that the parents' names were unknown. Possibly he was a child of Hannahs.⁵⁴

In 1876, the Burtons relocated to the city of Camden. By that time, Isaiah had moved in with Tillman and his family. In that year, Tillman and Isaiah are listed in the Camden directory as doctor and laborer, respectively, at 10 Mount Vernon Street, a few blocks from the Delaware River. Since Tillman was listed a few years later in the census as an herb dealer, he likely did not have a medical license and practiced herbalism. While some medical practitioners in Tillman's day disparaged herbalists as "voodoo doctors" and indeed some were quacks, enough of their patients benefited so that herbal medicine continued to be popular.

⁵² Newtown was absorbed by Haddon Township and Camden City in 1871 and is remembered today by Newton Lake. John P. Snyder, *The Story of New Jersey's Civil Boundaries: 1606–1968* (Trenton: Bureau of Geology and Topography, 1969), 108.

⁵³ "Tilman Burton in entry for Mary Tilman, 1863," New Jersey Births and Christenings, 1660–1980, FamilySearch database, accessed 14 February 2020, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:FZZ2-5SZ>. The surname in the source should have been Burton.

⁵⁴ "Tillman Burton, 1881," New Jersey Deaths and Burials, 1720–1988, FamilySearch database, accessed 19 January 2020, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:FZG8-RMS>.

In the 1878 directory, the Burtons are found farther away from the river at 1004 S. 10th Street, where for the first time Isaiah is listed as a “colored photographer.”⁵⁵ In the 1880 U.S. Census for Camden, Isaiah is found as “Isiah Berten,” 24, photographer, born in New Jersey, living with Tilman [*sic*], 65, herb dealer, born in Delaware, and Hannah, 42, born in New Jersey.

Isaiah was listed as single in the 1880 census but he married soon thereafter to Annie Green in Camden on October 23, 1881.⁵⁶ The union did not last. On February 7, 1883, he took out an ad in the *Camden Courier-Post*, stating, “Notice—My wife Anna Burton, having left my bed and board three times, I will pay no debts contracted by her, and forbid all persons harboring her. Isaiah Burton, Camden, February 5th, 1883.” About a month later, Annie had a male child who, still unnamed, died at or soon after childbirth on March 11, 1883.⁵⁷ In January 1884, likely in financial straits, she was convicted in Camden of petit larceny and received a suspended sentence.⁵⁸

Isaiah continued living with Tillman at 1004 S. 10th Street in the early 1880s. In 1883, they both are listed there in the city directory without occupation. The following year, Tillman is listed again without occupation but Isaiah is described as a laborer and a Rev. Joseph Burton (relationship undetermined) was also at that address. As will be recalled, 1884 is the year when Isaiah’s photographs were to be included in the Cotton Expo. In the 1885 New Jersey State Census, Isaiah is still residing with Tillman and Hannah, along with Jacob B. Burton, 20 to 60 years old, Elizabeth Burton, 20 to 60, and a family of four named Williams, probably boarders.⁵⁹ The 1885

⁵⁵ Currently, this address is a garage for Cooper Emergency Medical Services vehicles, near the I-676 freeway, across the street from elevated railroad tracks, and close to the Old Camden Cemetery. There are no residences nearby.

⁵⁶ Marriage record, New Jersey State Archives.

⁵⁷ “Isaiah Burton in entry for MM9.1.1/FZZH-GBY:, 1883,” New Jersey Deaths and Burials, 1720-1988, FamilySearch database, accessed 19 January 2020, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:FZZH-GBB>.

⁵⁸ *Camden County Courier*, January 12, 1884, 3.

⁵⁹ The Williams family in the 1885 Census: John, 20 to 60; Amanda, 20 to 60; Sarah E., 5 to 20; and Clarence, 5 years and under.

census did not include a column for occupation. Shortly after this census was taken, the elder Tillman died on March 6, 1885, at the age of 64.⁶⁰

The data regarding the Burtons, however incomplete and contradictory, suggests that through his twenties, Isaiah had a family life marked by personal losses. He left his home state of Delaware by the time he was about 20. Some of the children in his New Jersey home died young and likely their mother Harriet did too, although a death record for her has not been found. His wife Annie left him after about two years of marriage, her son, likely also his, did not survive, and two years later Tillman, the male head of household and possibly his father, died. The directory listings for Isaiah also indicate that although he may have aspired to have a full-time career as a photographer, he did manual labor from 1878 to 1884, the range of years when references to him as a photographer have been found. It is likely that discrimination was a factor in Burton's inability to establish a lasting career in photography.⁶¹

Burton continued living with Tillman's widow Hannah at 1004 S. 10th and directory listings indicate that he became a coachman in Philadelphia, although in 1900 he was listed as foreman of a stable. A coachman was one of the best working-class jobs available to African Americans in Philadelphia. They were an elite group, "even more likely than hotel waiters to be chosen for their bearing in uniform." According to an 1890s survey by Isabel Eaton discussed in 1899 by sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois, Philadelphia's coachmen often "doubled as butlers, at the top of the wage hierarchy, with salaries ranging from \$5 to \$14 a week and averaging \$8.58, or

⁶⁰ "Tilman H. Burton, 1885," New Jersey Deaths and Burials, 1720–1988, FamilySearch database, accessed 19 January 2020, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:FZC3-DWL>.

⁶¹ As the blues musician Big Bill Broonzy would write in 1947 in his song "Get Back": "*If you is white, you's alright, if you's brown, stick around, but if you's Black, hmm, hmm, brother get back, get back, get back.*", [elyrics.net, https://www.elyrics.net/read/b/big-bill-broonzy-lyrics/get-back-lyrics.html](https://www.elyrics.net/read/b/big-bill-broonzy-lyrics/get-back-lyrics.html).

well over \$400 a year, not including perks.”⁶² Four hundred dollars in 2021 U.S. dollars is under \$12,000, but perhaps Burton also got room and board from his employer.

Burton is a good example of an all-too-common phenomenon in this era when, due to prejudice and poverty, people of color were unable to prosper by using their skills and had to find work in the “unskilled laborer” or “domestic and personal service” sectors. Unlike European immigrants who were hired to work in the proliferating industrial factories, the vast majority of African Americans were excluded from those occupations. Historian Roger Lane concluded that “at the opening of the 20th century most Blacks in Philadelphia were still doing the kinds of jobs that had been done by the bottom layer of urban society in the Middle Ages.”⁶³ Poverty among people of color made it more difficult for a Black photographer to have enough paying customers.

Burton’s divorce on grounds of desertion was finalized in 1892 and, by 1894, he had married a dressmaker named Sidonia (also found as Sydonia), who according to the 1900 Census was born in February 1870 in Maryland.⁶⁴ While married white women in middle-class Victorian-era families usually were homemakers, married Black women more often earned money to contribute to household expenses. W.E.B. Du Bois found that only 17 percent of Black women over 21 in the Seventh Ward of Philadelphia in 1890 had “housewife” status and dressmaker was one of the most common jobs.⁶⁵ This situation likely was true for Camden and other urban areas as well.

⁶² Roger Lane, *William Dorsey’s Philadelphia and Ours: On the Past and Future of the Black City in America* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 63, 75, citing in part W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro, A Social Study* (1899, 1973), 446, 450. Lane, 66, commented that because African Americans in Philadelphia were excluded from industrial factory jobs and other occupations, “Black Philadelphia was full of men and women with skills they simply were not allowed to use.”

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ The author thanks David Lowe, New York Public Library, for finding information about Burton’s divorce. Email message from Lowe to Catie Sampson, August 16, 2022, forwarded to author.

⁶⁵ Lane, 77. For the map of the Seventh Ward that accompanied Du Bois’ 1899 book, see W.E.B. DuBois, *The Seventh Ward of Philadelphia: The Negro Distribution of Inhabitants Throughout the Ward and Their Social Conditions*

By 1900, the Burtons had three sons, Isaac, Anthony, and Isaiah.⁶⁶ In some years, Sidonia was listed without her husband Isaiah, who lived in Philadelphia where he was employed.⁶⁷ According to the 1900 U.S. Census, Burton owned his home at 1004 S. 10th with a mortgage. When he died in March 1904 in Camden, he was described as a lay preacher of the Zion M.E. Church and “one of the best known colored men down town.” He was buried at Mount Peace Cemetery on March 28.⁶⁸

In considering the arc of Burton’s career, it is clear that he definitely wanted to be a professional photographer because he self-identified as such in the 1878 city directory and 1880 U.S. Census. That he achieved a high degree of proficiency is indicated by his planned inclusion in the 1884–1885 Cotton Expo in New Orleans. At a time when most African American men were manual laborers, Burton probably benefited from having a father who was an herbalist and

[map], 1899, Boston Public Library, <https://collections.leventhalmap.org/search/commonwealth:gb19h9947>. In 1900, about 9,700 of Philadelphia’s 40,000 Black residents, the largest African American population in any Northern city, lived in the Seventh Ward.

⁶⁶ For the birth record for Isaiah J. Burton, “Entry for Isaiah J. Burton, 1895,” New Jersey Births and Christenings, 1660–1980, FamilySearch database, accessed 26 August 2020, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:2:MBMD-9ZW>.

⁶⁷ Camden City directories, 1892 and 1893, list Burton with a home at 500 Columbia Avenue, Philadelphia. At that time, he was employed as a coachman by Edward M. Cohen. Email message from David Lowe, New York Public Library, to Catie Sampson, August 16, 2022, forwarded to author.

⁶⁸ The 1905 New Jersey State Census shows that Sidonia remained at 1004 S. 10th with several offspring. She was listed as “Dolia” and the youngsters, with likely inaccurate birth dates, were Isaiah Jr., born February 1893; Buddy, born January 1900; and “Effie,” likely the same as Ethel, born June 1900. Also in the household was a widow from Delaware, Mariah Jacobs. Of significance later, nearby at 1008 S. 10th was a neighbor, George Stewart, a teamster with his wife Hannah and a widow, Malvina Toombs. By the 1910 U.S. Census, Sidonia was joined by her single niece, Minnie Leatherbury, a young seamstress. In 1912, Sidonia married her substantially older neighbor, George Stewart, who moved in with her at 1004 S. 10th. Probably, his wife Hannah had died. In the 1920 U.S. Census, the Stewarts, George, 56, a driver born in Virginia, and “Sadonia,” 40, were still at 1004 S. 10th with two of Sidonia’s children, Ethel Burton, 19, unemployed, and Anthony Burton, 22, a city street laborer, along with Minnie Leatherbury, who worked as a spinner in a worsted mill. George Stewart died in Camden in July 1924. By the 1930 U.S. Census, widow, “Sardonia” Stewart, 52, lived near her former home at 1010 S. 10th with Minnie Leatherbury, 35, who had become a servant for a private family, and a widowed son-in-law, John R. Williams, 48, a laborer in a cork factory. “Entry for Isaiah Burton, Burial, Lawnside, Camden, New Jersey, United States of America, Mount Peace Cemetery,” Find A Grave Index, FamilySearch database, accessed 5 August 2020, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:2:W758-VZ6Z>; citing record ID 204433015, Find a Grave, <http://www.findagrave.com>. “George Stewart death.” New Jersey, Death Index, 1901–1903; 1916–1929, FamilySearch database, <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2843410>. New Jersey State Archives, Reclaim the Records, California.

understood the benefits of education. But ultimately Burton was not able to succeed as a photographer and he became a coachman, one of the best available and most respected working-class jobs available to him at the time.



Colored People's Exhibit, World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition, New Orleans, 1884–1885. Stereographic view by Centennial Photographic Company. Courtesy Kenneth R. Speth. Isaiah Burton was scheduled to exhibit his photographs at this exposition.

Levi W. Bankson

Levi Wesley Bankson, who became a part-time photographer for hire, was born in August 1846, probably in or near Union Township, Camden County, to a laborer, Mark Bankson, and his wife Rebecca.⁶⁹ Levi is first documented with his parents in the 1850 U.S. Census for Union

⁶⁹ Birth year of Levi calculated from the 1850 U.S. Census, Union, Camden County, which gave his age as 4 years old, born in New Jersey. He lived with his parents, Mark Bankson, 30, laborer, and Rebecca, 25, and with his siblings Edward, 2, and Christina, one month, all born in New Jersey. Union Township was formed in 1831, when it was in Gloucester County. It became part of Camden County when Camden County split off from Gloucester County in 1844. Union was dissolved in 1868. It was located in the general area where Gloucester City is today.

Township. In the 1860 U.S. Census, he was listed as a laborer, living with his parents and siblings in Newton, Camden County. By or in 1870, Levi married Sarah Murray and the 1870 U.S. Census for Camden County found them in Delaware Township (Cherry Hill since 1961) with two young daughters, Sarah Jane, 1, and Mary E., one month. In that census, Levi was listed again as a laborer. His wife Sarah later claimed to have had a total of 14 children, only 5 of whom survived to 1900, according to the 1900 U.S. Census for Pennsauken.⁷⁰

During his lifetime, Levi lived in several places within Camden County, as evidenced by both censuses and birth records for his children. His son, Levi Jr., was born in Milford, probably about 1865 or 1866.⁷¹ As described by Paul Schopp, former director of the Camden County Historical Society, Milford “straddled the Camden County/Burlington County line. It began as an antebellum fugitive slave community originally named Pendleton. Today it is known as Kresson.”⁷² Kresson today is an unincorporated area in Voorhees Township. By the 1870s, the Banksons lived in Stockton Township, which existed in Camden County from 1859 to 1899. Stockton’s land is now divided among Camden, Merchantville, and Pennsauken. By the 1880s, the Banksons settled in Homesteadville, a primarily Black community near Merchantville in Stockton that became part of Pennsauken in 1892, after which some records such as the U.S. Census listed Pennsauken as Bankson’s home.

⁷⁰ Another child likely died in the early 1900s, as Levi Bankson only mentioned four children in his 1909 will. The 1900 U.S. Census recorded that Sarah had been married for 30 years, so she may have had some children before her marriage or she may have had children with a previous husband. But the 30 years of marriage stated by the census also may be inaccurate.

⁷¹ 1870 U.S. Census, Delaware Township, Camden County. The known Bankson children were Sarah Jane (born 1869) and Mary E. (born 1870), both listed in the 1870 Census; Levi Jr. (1864/1865–1912), not listed in 1870 or 1880 Census, birth year based on age 44 in his 1908 marriage record and 45 in the 1910 U.S. Census; Josephine, born in Stockton, Camden County, March 21, 1872 (birth record surname Banks); William Henry Joseph (1874–Aug. 25, 1878); Mark W. (born June 1876); Edgar E. (1876–Aug. 31, 1878), probably twin of Mark; James Albert (June 1879–July 25, 1879); Emma A. (1877–Sept. 3, 1878); unnamed female, died at 36 hours, June 22, 1881, 9th child; a second Mary E., born 1884 as per the 1900 U.S. Census; Jacob, died at 21 days, June 8, 1885; Esau, died at 28 days, June 14, 1885; and Lorenzo (April 17, 1889–July 1, 1889, 13th child). In part, birth and death records, New Jersey State Archives.

⁷² Email message from Paul Schopp to author, August 18, 2022.

Other than his Civil War service, discussed below, and his family, little other information has been found about Bankson until the 1880s. Probably working primarily as laborer until late in that decade, Bankson was not well off. The early deaths from malnutrition of some of his many children suggest that the family was at or near the poverty line and living in an unhealthy environment.⁷³

On December 12, 1884, the *Trenton Evening Times* reported on a Chancery Court case that involved Bankson, described as a “colored” resident of Homesteadville. The case sheds light on Bankson’s forthright personality and probably initiated his interest in the law. In a convoluted legal tangle, Bankson brought suit against his father Mark Bankson to recover ownership of real estate in Trohtown, near Merchantville.⁷⁴ According to the *Trenton Evening Times*, “with Levi’s bounty money, the father [secured] the property in his own name, which was mortgaged and sold on a foreclosure.”⁷⁵ At Levi’s request, Mark Bankson, who addressed Levi by his middle name Wesley, had purchased a house for his son with Levi’s Civil War bounty since the young soldier was a minor at time of his enlistment in Stockton on January 21, 1864, as a musician with rank of private in Company C, U.S. Colored Troops 25th Infantry.⁷⁶

Organized at Camp William Penn in LaMott, Pennsylvania, the 25th helped defend New Orleans and then was sent to West Florida where it performed guard duty at Fort Barrancas and Fort Pickens. However, Bankson was not with his unit continuously. From February 12 to June

⁷³ Among the Bankson children, William Henry Joseph died at age four on August 25, 1878, of eclampsia, a woman’s condition during pregnancy that causes seizures. Edgar E. died at two years, one month, on August 31, 1878, of paralysis, the result of eclampsia. James Albert died at 5 weeks, two days, on July 25, 1879 of syphilis with contributing bowel inflammation. Emma A., died at age one on September 3, 1878 of anemia. An unnamed female died at 36 hours on June 22, 1881, of convulsions. Jacob who died at 21 days on June 8, 1885, and Esau died at 28 days on June 14, 1885, both of inanition (exhaustion from lack of nourishment). Lorenzo died at about 2 1/2 months on July 1, 1889, of cholera infantum.

⁷⁴ Trohtown was a Black community on the Marlton Pike just east of the Camden City limits. Marlton Pike at that time was State Street, Camden, and currently is Route 70. Email message from Paul Schopp to author, August 8, 2022.

⁷⁵ *Trenton Evening Times*, December 12, 1884, 1.

⁷⁶ Bankson’s role as a musician is documented in his service record, available at fold3, [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

18, 1864, he was on sick leave in Philadelphia. On the latter date, he deserted, and, after he was apprehended less than a week later on June 22, he had his pay docked by \$30 to pay for the reward for his capture. One possible explanation for Bankson going AWOL is the birth of his son Levi Jr. Bankson was reinstated without trial on August 24, 1864.⁷⁷ In the spring and summer of 1865, about 150 men of the 25th died of scurvy in Florida but Bankson survived and was mustered out on December 6, 1865.⁷⁸

Extensive testimony by Levi Bankson about his effort to recover his real estate investment is in the court transcript at the New Jersey State Archives.⁷⁹ Bankson explained that he was already independent when he enlisted at the age of 19.⁸⁰ He got \$300 for enlisting and would get \$300 more when he was discharged. Using his enlistment bounty, he bought an eight-room, framed two-story double house for \$600, with \$270 down and a mortgage for the balance. When he was discharged, he put in another \$200 toward paying off the mortgage. The mortgage was originally held by Ellwood H. Fowler, but he sold it to Samuel A. Reeve who in turn sold half to Willis Jones. As reported by Camden's *Morning Post*, "Reeve claimed that Mark Bankson owed him \$50 for which he had a judgment, and the result was that at last Mark gave the property over to Reeve by some sort of an arrangement which . . . completely shut out the real owner [Levi Bankson]."⁸¹

Levi testified that his father met him when he was discharged at Camp Cadwalader in Pennsylvania and on their return home, Mark said,

Wesley, don't you want your deed. I said, yes, where is it. He said, it is up here in the court house. I said what is it doing there and he said to be recorded. I said how much is it. He said \$2.50. I gave him a five dollar bill to go up and get it and waited at the court house fence. He came back to me with the deed folded, as they usually are, and gave it to me. I

⁷⁷ Levi W. Bankson, military service record, fold3, [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

⁷⁸ Enlistment and discharge, U.S. Civil War Soldier Records and Profiles, 1861–1865, [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

⁷⁹ In Chancery, Bankson vs. Bankson, filed April 7, 1885, New Jersey State Archives.

⁸⁰ Bankson's military service record, cited above, mentions that he was born in Camden County and enlisted in Stockton. He was described as age 19, 5 foot, 6 inches tall, occupation farmer.

⁸¹ *Morning Post*, April 22, 1885, 1.

took it and stuck it in the breast of my coat. He also gave me the balance of the change, \$2.50. We then went on home . . . and the next day I took the deed and examined it, read it over finding to my great surprise, Mark Bankson instead of Levi W. Bankson. As soon as I discovered it I asked him about it how it was and his answer was ‘Wesley, my name was put on there through a mistake,’ that is what he told me. I told him you know what the bargain was”

Levi goes on to say that from time to time over the next 20 years he asked his father to get the name changed on the deed but he refused, even though Levi was paying the mortgage.⁸²

Represented by attorney Lemuel J. Potts, Levi triumphed in the suit, described as “a complete victory” by the *Morning Post*. On April 7, 1885, Chancery ruled that Mark Bankson merely held the property in trust for his son. It ordered that Reeve had to return \$207.55 in rent he had received since June 10, 1879, for half the house and pay all court costs. Jones also had to return \$72 in rent he had received. The property was turned over to Levi after he paid the amount due on the mortgage at the time of the foreclosure, less \$272 in rents and profits.⁸³ Perhaps if he had waited, Levi would have been able to transfer the property to his own name after his father’s death. In 1888, at the age of 75, Mark Bankson was killed by the Atlantic City mail train while he was walking to his home in Trothtown.⁸⁴

About the time *Bankson v. Bankson* concluded, the 1885 New Jersey Census found Levi and his wife Sarah in Stockton Township, living with three children, Levi W. M. (Levi Jr.), Josephine, and Mary E. Within Stockton, the Banksons lived in Homesteadville, also known as Matchtown.⁸⁵ Unfortunately, that census did not record occupations. Levi Bankson’s work as a

⁸² In Chancery, op. cit.

⁸³ *Trenton Evening Times*, December 12, 1884, 1; “After Twenty Years. A Poor Colored Man Gets a Verdict at Last,” *Camden Morning Post*, April 22, 1885, 1.

⁸⁴ “A Train’s Deadly Work,” *Camden Daily Courier*, March 16, 1888, 1, indexed in ancestry.com as *Courier Post; Morning Post* (Camden), March 16, 1888, 1. Trothtown was sometimes spelled Troughtown.

⁸⁵ Matchtown “borders Merchantville and is split between Pennsauken and Cherry Hill.” Some residents in 2004 claimed that they lived in Homesteadville and that Matchtown was a pejorative name used by outsiders. Possibly, Matchtown was named after a match factory in the area. The best known native son of the community became Arnold Raymond Cream (1914–1994), the world heavyweight boxing champion (1950–1952) who used the *nom de guerre* Jersey Joe Walcott. Thomas Bergbauer, “Residents Disagree with Origins of a Town’s Name,” *Courier-Post*, February 26, 2004, 18.

photographer first surfaces in print through a listing in the 1888 Camden County directory, in which he is found with dual occupations of photographer and music agent in the Merchantville section. (Bankson actually lived in Homesteadville but Merchantville was the nearest post office.) His dual occupations indicate that his interest in music, which dated back at least to his Civil War service, had continued for more than two decades. Bankson may have been trying to work at less physically demanding jobs in the 1880s as a result of a physical problem, for in May 1879, he had applied for an invalid pension for his Civil War service.⁸⁶ In the 1880s and into the 1890s, he tried to earn a living through photography, music, and, as will be discussed, bill collecting.

Bankson became a working photographer after the widespread introduction of gelatin dry plate negatives around 1880 made photography significantly easier than it had been in the “wet plate” collodion era, when photographers needed to coat and sensitize sheets of glass just before exposure in the camera.⁸⁷ The new gelatin-coated glass negatives, which were purchased ready to use, were also much more sensitive to light, enabling shorter exposure times and new, smaller, shutter-equipped cameras. These “detective cameras” could be handheld, although photographers with larger cameras continued to use tripods. The “instantaneous” dry plates sparked the growth of amateur photography but also were universally adopted by professionals. With the ready availability of dry plates and lightweight cameras, the number of amateur photographers grew in the 1880s and then exploded in the 1890s when even more convenient roll film cameras became

⁸⁶ Invalid Pension Card, filed May 8, 1879, [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

⁸⁷ In the United States, Albert Levy in New York in 1878 and John Carbutt in Philadelphia in 1879 were the first manufacturers of gelatin dry plates. George Eastman in Rochester, New York, began commercial manufacture of the plates in 1880. In 1881, the Photographers' Association of America tested samples and concluded that they were far more sensitive to light than collodion negatives and did not have to be developed immediately after exposure like collodion. Collodion continued to be used to make tintypes which, as a one-step process, enabled quick delivery to the customer. Taft, 368–374.

affordable to the middle class.⁸⁸ George Eastman's famous Kodak camera, the first commercially produced camera to use transparent roll film, was introduced in 1889, soon followed by competitors.⁸⁹ Another convenient innovation that appeared in the mid-1880s and would have made photography easier for Bankson was gelatin bromide printing paper, which came ready to use, unlike albumen paper that had to be sensitized in a chemical bath and then dried before printing within a few days.⁹⁰

Bankson would soon become well known regionally as a photographer through mentions in newspaper accounts of two sensational murders of white women in his neighborhood for which he supplied photographs of the crime scenes. The resulting courtroom dramas have been described as "perhaps the most celebrated trials, and certainly the most racially explosive, in that era of New Jersey's history."⁹¹ A Black suspect in both cases was Francis (Frank) Lingo, born enslaved in Maryland and with a long criminal record, including two convictions for theft and another for assault on a white woman in Delaware for which he was lashed and spent three years in jail before he escaped to Maryland, where he was given five years for burglary before relocating to Camden County. When the body of Annie E. LeConey with her throat cut was discovered in September 1889 in her farmhouse near Merchantville, Lingo was arrested but then became the prosecution's

⁸⁸ Amateurs in the late 19th century often joined camera clubs. The first camera club in New Jersey was the Camerads, which began meeting at Rutgers University-New Brunswick in 1886. The oldest continuously operating photographers group in the U.S. is the Photographic Society of Philadelphia, incorporated in 1862.

⁸⁹ The first Kodak camera of 1888 used nitrocellulose film attached to a paper support. After use, these cameras were sent back to the factory in Rochester, where the film was stripped from the paper, attached to glass, and printed for return to the customer. In 1889, the new Kodaks featured transparent roll film that could be developed by the photographer or a local processor. Douglas Collins, *The Story of Kodak* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1990), 54–68.

⁹⁰ Taft, 389–390. Albumen paper continued to be used in competition with alternatives in the 1890s, especially bromide, collodio-chloride, and, for art photography, matte salted papers. James M. Reilly, *The Albumen and Salted Paper Book: The History and Practice of Photographic Printing, 1840–1895* (Rochester, New York: Light Impressions, 1980).

⁹¹ Lane, 46. As a relevant example of the racial tension in this era in New Jersey, Lane, 46, cites the 1886 lynching in Eatontown of Mingo Jack, who was probably innocent, for the rape of a white woman, Angelina Herbert. For the Mingo Jack case, see author, "The Murder of Mingo Jack," *Olde Monmouth Times* 1 no. 7 (February 1999), <https://www.monmouthcountyclerk.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/2000-catalog-2-for-web.pdf>.

witness against the victim's uncle, Chalkey LeConey, who was acquitted in March 1890 of killing his niece for her property.⁹²

Bankson was a witness at the long murder trial in the LeConey case. On the 19th day of proceedings in February 1890, Bankson took the stand and testified about five photographs he had taken of the LeConey house exterior, a view of the kitchen, two views of "Billy" Smith's cabin in Cooper's woods, and a view of two other nearby dwellings as seen from LaConey's. On cross examination, as recounted by the *Camden Courier*, he declared under oath that he "only considered himself an amateur in photography, and in addition to doing a little work in that line he is a music agent and a collector. He said also that County Clerk Edward Burrough employed and paid him for the work done."⁹³ In a similar but not identical account of Bankson's testimony, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported, "Levi W. Bankson, a colored photographer from Homesteadville, was next introduced by the defense for the purposes of offering in evidence four large photographic scenes of the Leconey farm and its surroundings. Justice [Charles G.] Garrison refused to admit the photographs, as there was an objection from the State, until he had argument on both sides after the retirement of the jury." The judge then ruled that the photographs would be thrown out because they were not sufficiently clear.⁹⁴

The next case that involved Bankson was the murder of Annie Miller. Annie was the wife of a local farmer, John Miller, and the mother of three small children. She left her home near Merchantville to visit relatives and do some shopping but never returned. On September 25, 1890,

⁹² Lane, 46–47.

⁹³ *Camden Courier*, February 25, 1890, 1. A call by the author to the Camden County Prosecutor's office in August 2022 determined that Bankson's photographs were not currently on file. Bankson was not the first New Jersey photographer to take murder scene photographs. One who preceded him was Theodore Crane, who in 1880 photographed the site where John Meierhofer's body was found in his West Orange home. Peter J. Wosh and Patricia L. Schall, *Murder on the Mountain: Crime, Passion, and Punishment in the Gilded Age* (New Brunswick, et al.: Rutgers University Press, 2022), 141, 156–157.

⁹⁴ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 26, 1890, 3; *Camden Daily Telegram*, February 25, 1890, 1. In the latter source, Bankson was described as living in Merchantville.

two children found her body in underbrush with her throat cut and several missing fingers. They reported seeing a man of color in the area.⁹⁵ The Millers' farmhand, the same Frank Lingo, was arrested and charged with the crime.

On October 9, 1890, the *Bridgeton Evening News* reported that Levi Banks [sic] requested \$100 from the Camden Freeholders for photos taken of the body of Annie Miller for Prosecutor Jenkins. The County Board of Chosen Freeholders thought the charge was much too high and gave him \$15. Reporting on the same news, *Camden Daily Courier* declared that at the Freeholders meeting, Bankson was offered \$15, then \$20 for photos of Annie Miller's body but Bankson wanted \$100 for the negatives, stating that he had been offered \$175 by the newspapers for them and that the negatives were his own property, even though he had been hired by the county to take the pictures. The matter was referred to the prosecutor.⁹⁶ This incident shows that despite Bankson's previous assertion that he considered himself an amateur photographer, like professionals, he knew the value of his negatives and was willing to stand up for what he believed to be his rights.

During the Miller murder investigation, Bankson also got involved in an assault case in October 1890. According to the *Camden Daily Courier* on October 18, Bankson, identified as a resident of Merchantville, telegraphed the county prosecutor that a man had tried to attack three women, two Black and one white, near where Annie Miller had been murdered. Upon investigation, the women described the perpetrator as resembling Frank Lingo, who was still in jail for Annie Miller's murder. A search was made of the woods but the man was not found. The authorities thought the reports were a hoax to cast doubt on Lingo's guilt. A similar story appeared

⁹⁵ *National Police Gazette* 57 no. 684 (October 18, 1890): 2.

⁹⁶ *Camden Daily Courier*, October 8, 1890; See also *Morning Post*, October 9, 1890, 2; *Bridgeton Evening News*, October 9, 1890, 2.

in the *Morning Post*, which mentioned Bankson as a photographer and collector for an insurance company. This article suggested that the women were credible witnesses.⁹⁷

While Lingo was awaiting trial, Bankson's financial woes during the early 1890s were underscored by a sheriff's sale on January 17, 1891, of a property, 36 by 100 feet, that he owned in Homesteadville. Bankson had purchased this lot in 1882. The foreclosure was the result of his failure to pay the mortgage to the Merchantville Building and Loan Association.⁹⁸ Soon after the sheriff's sale, Lingo was tried in Camden County Court for Miller's murder. According to the trial transcripts in the *Morning Post* and the *Daily Courier* on March 12, 1891, Bankson took the witness stand and testified that he was a photographer and collector for the Equitable Beneficial Association of New Jersey, one of a number of mutual benefit associations that provided insurance so that subscribers, who paid 50 or 70 cents a week, would not starve or go to the poor house if they got sick or had an accident that prevented them from earning a living. According to historian Roger Lane, a specialist in Philadelphia-area Black history, "The better ones provided \$5 in weekly benefits to the sick and up to \$75 in funeral expenses."⁹⁹

On the witness stand, Bankson said he had been hired by the authorities to photograph Miller's corpse. He affirmed that he knew both Annie Miller and Frank Lingo, described the brush lot where the victim was found, and provided details regarding the appearance of Miller's body, which had been hidden after the woman was killed elsewhere, and the scene around it. Bankson testified that he did not see any blood and that Miller's face was "as white as a piece of paper."

⁹⁷ *Camden Daily Courier*, October 18, 1890, 1; *Morning Post*, October 18, 1890, 1.

⁹⁸ "Sheriff's Sale," Lot 176, Homesteadville, purchased by Levi W. Bankson from Helen J. Hunt, April 18, 1882, recorded in Camden County Deed Book 104, p. 650.

⁹⁹ Lane, 74. Based in Camden, the Equitable Beneficial Association of New Jersey was incorporated in 1885. By the 1930s, the premiums and benefit amounts increased. A 1938 policy for Jeanette Sample, a 30-year-old woman of Long Branch, New Jersey, provided \$10 in weekly benefits for a weekly premium of 29 cents and a death benefit of \$100 for 12 cents a week. Author's collection.

Lingo was found guilty for Annie Miller's murder on March 20. Subsequent to his conviction, Lingo's defense attorney, former judge John W. Westcott, presented testimony by a detective that Miller's husband had committed the crime with the assistance of his paramour, Annie's sister Mary Collins, in disposing of the body. The prosecution's response was to indict the detective for perjury.¹⁰⁰ But Westcott succeeded in getting Lingo tried again before the state supreme court. As reported by the *Courier-Post* on November 2, 1892, Bankson was again called as a witness in the second trial of Lingo but he was excused. The new trial concluded when Lingo was acquitted at the direction of Justice Garrison after the prosecution rested its case.¹⁰¹ Garrison so ruled because Lingo had an alibi shooting craps around the time of the murder.¹⁰² In response to the acquittal, about 300 people attended an "indignation meeting" in Merchantville at which one of the lawyers for the prosecution, John Harris, called for Westcott to be hanged in effigy.¹⁰³

Like the LeConey murder, the Miller case remained without a final conviction. As for Frank Lingo, he became a local celebrity. The twice-exonerated murder suspect became an attraction at Forepaugh's Dime Museum in Philadelphia where he sold cabinet card photos of himself for a quarter with his name printed at the bottom, produced by Philadelphia photographer Edward K. Morris Jr.¹⁰⁴ In January 1898, Lingo was sentenced to serve decades in state prison for attempting to entice and kidnap a young white Southern woman, Katherine Vassar Berry, by

¹⁰⁰ Lane, 47. The Camden County Grand Jury also considered whether the detective, James M. Campbell, should be charged with criminal libel. "Charge to Grand Jury (Camden County Oyer and Terminer, Oct. 21, 1891)" in *New Jersey Law Journal* 14 no. 11 (November 1891): 331 et seq. For Westcott, see Charles R. Bacon, "Sketch of Judge Westcott's Life," in John W. Westcott, *Woodrow Wilson's Eloquence* (Camden: I.F. Hutzinger Co., 1922). Bacon was a newspaper reporter who had covered the Miller case and recalled "the whole countryside was ablaze with the desire for vengeance."

¹⁰¹ "Lingo's Second Trial Ends in Release," *New York Times*, November 13, 1892.

¹⁰² *Morning Post*, Nov. 14, 1892; Lane, 47.

¹⁰³ "Indignation at Lingo's Acquittal," *New York Times*, November 16, 1892, 1.

¹⁰⁴ Morris was active at 2417 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, from 1891 to 1893. A cabinet card of Lingo was offered for sale by Thanatos Archive Store, <https://store.thanatos.net/products/rare-photo-of-francis-lingo-black-man-accused-of-murder-crime-sideshow-int>, last accessed August 20, 2022. Price of a quarter for Lingo's photos mentioned in "The Peppery Pot," *Camden Courier*, May 4, 1926, 10, indexed as *Courier-Post*.

responding to her ad in which she sought a position as a governess. Lingo was convicted of trying to lure her from her home in Philadelphia to the Pennsauken railroad station using the alias “Mrs. Mabel Cooper” of Merchantville.¹⁰⁵

One of the witnesses for the prosecution in the Miller case was Levi Bankson’s neighbor, Joseph Fowler. In early May 1894, the Camden press reported that Bankson was suing Fowler for \$50 for shooting his dog.¹⁰⁶ The *Camden Daily Telegram* opined that “the unpleasantness between the two neighbors may be traced to the famous Miller murder case in which Bankson figured as the photographer of the victim.” Frank Lingo, whom Fowler probably suspected as Miller’s murderer, appeared as a witness for Bankson.¹⁰⁷ At the trial, in response to a question from Fowler’s defense attorney Harry Scovel, Bankson testified that “he was an expert in determining the value and breed of dogs.” Scovel followed up by asking if the dog was a retriever and Bankson replied, “I refuse to answer the question, as I don’t know what that means and you might make me tell a lie.” The court, jury, and spectators found that amusing and Bankson’s reputation as a canine expert was tarnished. The jury returned a verdict of “no cause for action.”¹⁰⁸ Despite his lack of success in this legal proceeding, Bankson acquired further knowledge of the courts and the law that he would put to good use.

¹⁰⁵ “Lingo Under Arrest,” *The Post* (Camden), December 11, 1897, 1, indexed as *Morning Post*; “Lingo Says Good-Bye,” *Camden Daily Courier*, January 6, 1898, 1, indexed as *Courier-Post*; “But Few Left of a Famous Trial. Nearly All the Principals in the Celebrated Leconey Case Have Passed Away,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 27, 1904, 1. By 1926, Lingo was paroled. “The Peppery Pot,” *Camden Courier*, May 4, 1926, 10, indexed as *Courier-Post*, recalled the sentence as 20 years instead of 30 as given in some earlier newspaper accounts. In fact, Lingo was sentenced to 20 years but had to serve one day for every dollar of his fine of \$3,000, so it was estimated that he would serve about 30 years. In 1927, he was reported living in Virginia with his sister. Lingo’s wife Mary died on September 3, 1909. *Camden Post-Telegram*, September 6, 1909, 3, indexed as *Morning Post*; “The Peppery Pot,” *Evening Courier* (Camden), February 17, 1927, 14, indexed as *Courier-Post*.

¹⁰⁶ *Camden Daily Telegram*, May 5, 1894, 1; *Morning Post*, May 15, 1894, 1.

¹⁰⁷ *Courier-Post*, May 3, 1894, 1.

¹⁰⁸ *Courier-Post*, May 5, 1894, 1.

Bankson continued working as a collector but he also became a patent medicine agent, which was the occupation listed for him in the 1900 U.S. Census for Pennsauken. Whether he still photographed at that time is unknown. Listed as 53 years old, he was recorded as literate and owned his home with a mortgage. The census recorded that his wife Sarah was born in Pennsylvania and could not read or write. As previously mentioned, 5 of her 14 children were alive. One child still lived with them, Mary E., 16, who was literate. Also in the household was an illiterate widow from Delaware—Annie Hicks, 38—who worked as a washerwoman and whose seven children were all deceased.¹⁰⁹

By the turn of the century, Bankson apparently had become a well-known and respected member of his community because on March 11, 1902, he was elected for a five-year term as justice of the peace in Pennsauken beginning on May 1 that year. His term expired on May 1, 1907, but he was reelected on November 5, 1907, for another five years beginning on May 1, 1908. Unfortunately, he would not live to complete his second term.

Bankson is mentioned numerous times in Camden newspapers in his role as justice of the peace, often as “Squire Bankson.” A few examples will be provided here to show the type of cases with which he was involved. One of the earliest and straightforward was on May 21, 1902, when he sent a Black woman, Leona Stella Danford, to the county jail for an assault on Louisa May Hoosey, also a woman of color, who claimed Leona drew first blood.¹¹⁰ This was just one of many of Bankson’s assault cases. Another was in April 1903, when Mrs. William Lewis of Homesteadville charged her husband with assault and battery and with breaking up her furniture

¹⁰⁹ According to this census, the Banksons lived in a house at 212 Pine Street.

¹¹⁰ *Morning Post*, May 22, 1902, 5.

with an axe.¹¹¹ Three years later in April 1906, Bankson sent Mr. Lewis to jail again, this time to await the grand jury's indictment for murdering William Flamer in Matchtown, not long after the two had quarreled in a saloon. Following a confrontation on the street, Lewis went home, got a shotgun, hit Flamer over the head with the stock, and then shot him fatally in front of witnesses. Witnesses testified that Flamer was a bad character and had threatened Lewis, who was convicted for second degree murder and sentenced to 30 years in state prison.¹¹²

Bankson presided over an unusual case in July of that year after what a local paper called the "ebony elite" of Homesteadville attended a lawn party at the home of a Mrs. Pearce. In attendance were Mary A. Pritchett, her 20-year-old son Howard H. Pritchett, and his sister-in-law Mary E. Pritchett, whose husband was out of town. Howard offered to accompany the younger Mary to her home and Howard's mother became suspicious and followed the pair. Getting no satisfaction at her daughter-in-law's door, she went and got a constable and returned to search the premises. Meanwhile, the younger Mary hid Howard, who was six feet tall, in a large trunk but he was discovered when, running out of oxygen, he asked to be let out. The elder Mary filed a sworn oath with Squire Bankson that Mary A. had kidnapped her son and Bankson sent the young woman to jail.¹¹³

A more common type of case involved thefts. In August 1903, Bankson sent Maggie Haney of Homesteadville and Thomas Lawrence to jail for robbery. They were invited by Esther Paul, an Englishwoman, to spend the day at her house in Port Norris, where she alleged that Haney plied

¹¹¹ *Camden Post-Telegram*, April 20, 1903, 8, indexed as *Morning Post*. In another case involving a husband assaulting a wife, Bankson jailed Joseph Smith of Pennsauken after he threw his wife downstairs while she held her seven-month-old baby in her arms. The baby was injured. *Camden Post-Telegram*, June 25, 1905, 3, indexed as *Morning Post*.

¹¹² *Camden Daily Courier*, April 9, 1906, 1, indexed as *Courier-Post*; *Camden Post-Telegram*, May 1, 1906, 1, indexed as *Morning Post*; *Camden Post-Telegram*, May 14, 1906, 1, indexed as *Morning Post*.

¹¹³ *Camden Post Telegram*, July 23, 1902, 1, indexed as *Morning Post*; *Camden Daily Courier*, July 23, 1902, 1, indexed as *Courier-Post*. The final resolution of this case was not found in an online search of newspapers. The New Jersey State Archives may have relevant court records.

her with whiskey and while she was intoxicated, the pair took her cash and two diamond rings with a total value of \$400. Esther Paul claimed that after she was robbed, Lawrence threw her out in the street.¹¹⁴ Lawrence agreed to plead guilty to petty larceny in special sessions court and was sentenced to three months in jail.¹¹⁵

A more unusual issue brought to Squire Bankson's attention related to a debt by a man who also was accused of a violation of blue laws. In September 1903, George E. Bogle, the manager of Woodlynne Amusement Park, was charged by another justice named Schmitz with operating swings, boats, and other amusements on Sunday, as well as selling soda and cigars. Bogle was in debt and Bankson issued a writ of attachment on a piano and \$50 of receipts to satisfy the creditors.¹¹⁶ Bankson conducted a jury trial at which Bogle testified that the piano was a present for his wife and the jury gave it back to him.¹¹⁷

Not everyone was pleased with Bankson's performance as justice of the peace. In November 1903, his life was threatened by Bernard McDonald who was held in \$300 bail by Justice of the Peace Schmitz.¹¹⁸ Another dissatisfied defendant was Irene Riggs, whom Bankson jailed for biting Thomas Curry on August 2, 1904. Riggs retaliated by accusing Bankson of making an indecent proposal for \$1. The county prosecutor initiated an investigation of "the Justice's method of doing business," but apparently the matter did not go further.¹¹⁹ On the same day, Bankson arrested a mother and a daughter, Rebecca Market and Florence Harrison, for disorderly

¹¹⁴ *Camden Post-Telegram*, August 11, 1903, 1, indexed as *Morning Post*. Thomas Lawrence's residence was not published in this article.

¹¹⁵ Camden County, Special Sessions Book A, 284, New Jersey State Archives. The author searched in the minutes for quarter sessions and special quarter sessions for the other sample cases mentioned here but did not find them so they were probably either dropped or handled in Bankson's Justice of the Peace court. His docket book has not been found by the author.

¹¹⁶ *Camden Post-Telegram*, September 8, 1903, 5, indexed as *Morning Post*.

¹¹⁷ *Camden Post-Telegram*, September 28, 1903, 1, indexed as *Morning Post*.

¹¹⁸ *Camden Daily Courier*, November 16, 1903, 6, indexed as *Courier-Post*. Men named Bernard McDonald were listed in Newark and Elizabeth in 1903 directories.

¹¹⁹ *Camden Post-Telegram*, August 3, 1904, 1, indexed as *Morning Post*.

conduct and sent them to jail for 30 days since they did not pay a \$3.75 fine. The prosecutor found no evidence against the women, who apparently were just sitting on the front steps of their home, and ordered their release.¹²⁰

Bankson got into difficulty again in July 1905 when Mary Emma Waters accused him of extorting money from her illegally. Bankson had fined Waters \$5.75 for disorderly conduct and she had been released from jail upon paying an installment. Subsequently, she claimed that Bankson had threatened her to secure the balance and made her turn over a carpet as security. As a consequence, Bankson was held in \$500 bail and he countercharged her with perjury. In reporting the case, the *Morning Post* described Bankson as “the most dignified citizen of Matchtown, the negro settlement on the outskirts of Merchantville” and commented, “No Squire ever commanded more respect from the humble citizens of a village.”¹²¹

The most negative press Bankson received was in February 1907. Bankson’s mother Rebecca, who was nearing 80, was found sitting in a chair on the pavement in Homesteadville, after she was committed to the county almshouse. The *Camden Daily Courier* commented that she was

facing a stern reality and was experiencing how cold and unsympathetic the world is at times, and how ungrateful humanity appears when one has outlived their usefulness and are surrounded by those whose gratitude should be a blessing when such a ripe old age overtakes their lifetime benefactor What made the blow much harder and made the world seem more cold and uncharitable to poor old ‘Mammy Bankson,’ as she was familiarly known was the fact that her own son, Levi Bankson, Justice of the Peace, had made out the papers and that it was upon the application of her own son that she was sent over the hills to the poor house to spend the last days of her life as a pauper and with a probability of eventually resting in Potter’s Field. Shame!”¹²² Rebecca was taken to the

¹²⁰ *Camden Daily Courier*, August 3, 1904, 1, indexed as *Courier-Post*; *Camden Post-Telegram*, August 3, 1904, 3, indexed as *Morning Post*.

¹²¹ *Camden Post-Telegram*, July 12, 1905, 10, indexed as *Morning Post*.

¹²² *Camden Daily Courier*, February 28, 1907, 6, indexed as *Courier-Post*.

almshouse in Blackwood on February 27. “Tears coursed down her cheeks as she bade her neighbors farewell.”¹²³

It is unknown why Bankson refused to support his aged mother but one possible reason was his own health issues. At the age of 63, Justice of the Peace Bankson died on March 16, 1909, from organic heart disease—after an illness of about two years—and was buried at Mount Zion United Methodist Church Cemetery in Lawnside, where his tombstone memorialized his Civil War service. Bankson left his estate, valued at \$200, to his wife Sarah except for one dollar each to four children: Levi W.M. Bankson, Josephine Price, Edward Bankson (known as Edward Kemble), and Mary Ella Bankson. Bankson apparently owned the house his son Levi lived in, for another provision of his will was that his son could live there rent free until his death. Bankson left title of his real estate to “my kind friend Adolph Hoffman” in exchange for \$3 per week, payable to Bankson’s estate, until Hoffman’s death.¹²⁴ The younger Levi died without surviving children on November 27, 1912, and his mother Sarah succumbed to pneumonia at age 68 on February 15, 1913.¹²⁵

Considering Bankson’s photography in the context of his entire career, he was one of many Americans who took advantage of the greater convenience of photographic technology introduced in the 1880s. Photography must have appealed to him as it did to others, and he was able to make some money by taking pictures beginning in the late 1880s up to at least 1890, but he considered himself primarily an amateur and pursued other means of earning a living.

¹²³ “Sent Mother to Poorhouse: Merchantville’s Colored Squire Refuses to Support His Aged Parent,” *Camden Post-Telegram*, February 28, 1907, 2, indexed as *Morning Post*.

¹²⁴ Will and estate papers, D1775, New Jersey State Archives; *Camden Post-Telegram*, July 22, 1909, 1, indexed as *Morning Post*. Levi Jr. died November 27, 1912, of heart failure at 33 Pine St., Homesteadville. The death of “a young colored child” in Homesteadville named Levi Bankson, described as a twin, was reported in the *Courier-Post* (Camden), June 9, 1885, 1. The given name of this child was incorrectly reported; his name was Jacob, probably twin brother of Esau.

¹²⁵ Death record, New Jersey State Archives.



Levi W. Bankson tombstone, Mt. Zion United Methodist Church, Lawnside, Camden County. Bankson, a Civil War veteran, died March 16, 1909, at age 63. Photo by Sandy Boyd, Find-A-Grave.

Albert Thomas Moore¹²⁶

In 1913, the Pennsylvania Emancipation Exposition was held in Philadelphia to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. The exhibition, supported by \$95,000 in government funding, was held in three buildings constructed at City Plaza, later renamed Marconi Plaza, in an area adjacent to today's Sports Complex.¹²⁷ Black photographer

¹²⁶ Thanks to Brian Armstrong and Stephanie Bartz, authors of "A.T. Moore: Prominent African American Photographer," *South River Historical and Preservation News* 103 (April 2020): 4-5, for their research and cooperation in sharing photographs by Moore.

¹²⁷ Charlene Mires, "Race, Place, and the Pennsylvania Emancipation Exhibition of 2013," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 128, no 3 (July 2004): 257-278. Five buildings are mentioned in some preliminary reports on the construction of the facilities.

Albert Thomas “Tom” Moore, who had a substantial career in New Jersey, was selected to be the official photographer for the Emancipation Exposition but his completion of this assignment is not confirmed. Nevertheless, his selection constituted a significant honor and sign of respect for his abilities.

Tom Moore was born the son of Jesse and Caroline Moore in Virginia on February 22, 1879.¹²⁸ On some documents, Moore’s birth is also found as 1878 or 1880, and there is no birth record for him in Virginia’s vital records.¹²⁹ However, he was listed twice as one-year-old Thomas Moore in the 1880 U.S. Census, so 1879 seems likely to be correct. In the U.S. Census taken June 4–5, he was living in the Bacon District, Charlotte County, Virginia, with his illiterate widowed mother, Caroline Moore, 40, and two older siblings, Berta, 11, and Winnie, 7, in the home of Caroline’s married daughter, Ellen, 26, and her husband Isaac Venable, 37, a farm laborer. Then on June 28, he was recorded again in Bacon with his mother and siblings on a farm where his mother Caroline was the cook for the white family of Reps Barnes, 55, and his wife Minerva, 45. Also living there were Tom’s siblings, Burton, 12, a farmhand, and Winnie, as well as two unmarried nieces of Reps Barnes, Mynah Dodson, 21, and her sister Virginia, 19. All these people were born in Virginia to Virginia-born parents.

Charlotte County is in southcentral Virginia and the Bacon District is along Kings Highway (US 360), not far from the nearest post office in the unincorporated community of Wylliesburg.

¹²⁸ The name of Tom’s father, Jesse Moore, is from Tom’s marriage record, June 4, 1906, New Jersey State Archives. On this marriage record, his mother’s maiden name was Venable, the same surname as Tom’s brother-in-law Isaac, and his birthplace was given as Mecklenburg County, Virginia, the same as his wife’s. Mecklenburg is adjacent to Charlotte County, where Tom and his mother lived in 1880. His May 5, 1957, death record also states that he was born in Mecklenburg. Regarding his mother’s widow status, some women whose husbands had left them were listed as widows in census records, so the 1880 U.S. Census does not confirm the death of Tom’s father before 1880. In his World War I Draft Registration, September 12, 1918, Tom Moore’s birth year was February 22, 1878. It was given as February 22, 1880, both in his World War II Draft Registration, April 27, 1941, and on his death record, in which his father’s name is written “No record.” [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com); [FamilySearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org). It is possible that Moore knew his birthday but was unsure about the year of his birth.

¹²⁹ Virginia Vital Records, 1715–1901, were searched using the FamilySearch Database.

Then and now, Charlotte County is quite rural with a 2020 population of 11,529 and no towns of one thousand or more residents. It is noted for its flue-cured bright-leaf tobacco farms, some of which, like the Toombs Tobacco Farm, date back to the 19th century.¹³⁰ In 1880, the county population was 16,653, the highest it has been since the first U.S. census in 1790. Most of the decline can be attributed to Black migration. In 1880, just 15 years after slavery was abolished in the U.S., Blacks outnumbered whites by about two to one.¹³¹ By 2021, the county was almost 70% white.¹³²

In the 1880s and 1890s, career opportunities for an ambitious young African American living in a lightly populated region must have been quite limited. The prevalence of lynching in the South, including Virginia, may also have been a motivating factor that prompted young men of color to head north.¹³³ Tom Moore did not go alone. His brother-in-law Isaac Venable was likely the first of the family to settle in New Brunswick, New Jersey, and did so no later than 1886. By 1895, and possibly as early as 1890, Tom and his mother Caroline were living in New Brunswick with or near other family members.¹³⁴ Instead of growing and processing tobacco in Virginia, Tom Moore had the opportunity of entering the photography profession as a teenager.

¹³⁰ The Toombs Tobacco Farm, established in the 1830s, is on the National Historic Register: <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/019-5146/>.

¹³¹ *1880 Census: Volume 1. Statistics of the Population of the United States. Population, By Race, Sex, and Nativity*, 416. The 1880 totals for Charlotte were 5,704 white and 10,949 Black: https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1880/vol-01-population/1880_v1-13.pdf.

¹³² United States Census, Quick Facts, Charlotte County, Virginia, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/charlottecountyvirginia>.

¹³³ At least 76 Black men were lynched in Virginia between 1880 and 1930. "Lynching in Virginia," *Encyclopedia of Virginia*, <https://encyclopediaofvirginia.org/entries/lynching-in-virginia/>. There were also vigilante executions in New Jersey but far fewer.

¹³⁴ 1895 New Jersey State Census, Middlesex County, New Brunswick, Ward 2, [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com). Caroline and Tom Moore lived in the household of her son-in-law Isaac Venable. City directories reveal that Isaac Venable was in New Brunswick by 1886, living at Lee Avenue corner Delevan. In 1890, he was listed as a hod carrier at 131 Lee Avenue. A widow, Caroline Moore, possibly Tom's mother, is listed that year at 106 Lee Avenue. Caroline is listed in the 1899 New Brunswick city directory as widow of Jesse, at 193 Delevan. In 1903, Isaac Venable's widow lived at 193 Delevan but not Caroline Moore. The 1905 New Jersey Census found Thomas Moore, 27, photographer, at 198 Delevan with Jesse Venable, laborer, 24, and his wife, another Caroline, laundress, 28, both born in Virginia, their daughter Rosabelle, 8, born in New Jersey, and a boarding couple.

In 1897, about four years after he completed eighth grade, his highest level of formal education, Moore began working for a traveling portrait company based in New Brunswick.¹³⁵ Where he traveled is unknown but this job ended by 1903 when he established the Brunswick Studio in the Parker Building at 379-381 George Street with a partner, George J. Bennett, a white photographer about 26 years old.¹³⁶ There they competed with a few other local photographers including, at 355 George Street, the skilled young Isaac Van Derveer, who in November 1902 had succeeded his late employer, the 50-year veteran David Clark.¹³⁷

Bennett and Moore were partners by April 1903 when the *Daily Home News* reported that the pair had hired an experienced photographer, William Davis, a “specialist in retouching negatives and in background work.” After two weeks employment, Davis took Moore’s view camera worth \$50 to execute some landscapes. This large format camera used 8 by 10 inch negatives that enabled highly detailed contact prints. To the partner’s surprise, Davis did not come back but went to Philadelphia, pawned the camera for \$15, entrained for Chicago, and sent back

¹³⁵ Moore’s eighth grade education is from 1940 U.S. Census, Wilmington, Delaware. References of Moore’s work as a traveling photographer are from *New Brunswick Sunday Times*, March 30, 1924, 12. Moore likely was traveling in 1900 and could not be located by the author in that year’s U.S. Census.

¹³⁶ George J. Bennett’s parents, Miles and Phoebe, and his oldest brother Sheldon H. were born in Pennsylvania. The family relocated to New Jersey in the 1860s by the time their son Theodore C. was born about 1867. Born about 1877, George grew up in his native New Brunswick and, until his marriage in 1903, lived with his parents, siblings, and nieces as per the 1900 U.S. Census. At that time, his father and older brother Allen H. were bookkeepers. George is first listed as a photographer in the 1899 New Brunswick city directory with just his home address, but in 1900 he opened his own gallery at 131 George Street, one of the main commercial thoroughfares in the city. After a brief period working with Moore, Bennett reestablished his sole proprietorship at 145 Commercial Avenue. By 1919, he moved his photography business to 339-343 George Street, where his business featured “High Class Commercial and Amateur Finishing,” which meant that he developed and printed negatives. Bennett was still there in 1923 but gone by 1926. In the 1920 U.S. Census, he lived in Highland Park with his wife Anna (born 1877), whom he married in 1903, and when he died at Newark Hospital on March 14, 1950, he was survived by his son Louis, born in 1906, his brother Alan H., and a sister, Mrs. Charles Mundy. U.S. Census records; New Brunswick city directories; obituary, *Central New Jersey Home News*, March 15, 1950, 14.

¹³⁷ “Obituary Notes,” *New York Times*, November 23, 1902, 7. Clark bought J. H. Vail’s gallery at 21 Peace Street, New Brunswick, in 1852 and moved his business several times during his long career. Born in 1880, Van Derveer worked in photography from about 1894 to about 1958 and died in Atlantic City at age 95 in 1975. Obituary, *New Brunswick Home News*, July 3, 1975. A Vanderveer photo collection is at Rutgers Special Collections and University Archives, <http://www2.scc.rutgers.edu/ead/manuscripts/vanderveerb.html>.

the pawn ticket with a message that he was not planning to return for some time. Presumably, Moore was able to retrieve the camera.¹³⁸

In 1903, in addition to photography, Moore served as an instructor of drawing and penmanship at the Colored Industrial Literary Institute at Ebenezer Baptist Church.¹³⁹ These skills certainly would have served him well in his business, as photographers in this era often offered enlarged “crayon” photographs on paper finished with hand-applied color or charcoal and routinely retouched portrait negatives to remove facial blemishes before printing. In 1904, Moore established his own gallery, the Ideal Photo Company, also called the Ideal Studio, at 78 Church Street, with just \$100 in capital.¹⁴⁰ Settling down, on June 4, 1906, Moore married Nanney (Nancy, Nanny) Bell Wood, 23, a ladies maid and native of Mecklenburg County, Virginia.¹⁴¹ It was the first marriage for both and they remained together until Moore’s death 51 years later. Nanney continued to work and had many different jobs during her employment career.

At the Ideal Photo Co., Moore initially specialized in inexpensive Ping Pong photos and became known as “The Ping Pong Man.”¹⁴² With a bit of hyperbole, the *New Brunswick Home News* enthused, “[Moore’s] Ping Pong pictures have made a hit and they are in nearly every

¹³⁸ *Daily Home News* (New Brunswick), April 29, 1903, 1, indexed as *Central New Jersey Home News*.

¹³⁹ “Anniversary at the Colored Institute,” *New Brunswick Home News*, June 24, 1903, 5, indexed as *Central New Jersey Home News*. The institute was celebrating its sixth anniversary and Moore is mentioned as one of seven faculty members.

¹⁴⁰ The similar name, Ideal Photo Studio, previously had been used in late 1897 for a short-lived business at 381 George Street, New Brunswick, managed by G.F. Gavard. That Ideal Photo Studio succeeded John H. Holler, who disappeared in October 1897, leaving behind debts, after a failed suicide attempt in Union Square in New York when he shot himself with a .38 caliber revolver. *Rochester Democrat & Chronicle*, October 5, 1897; *New York Herald*, October 4 and 5, 1897; *New York World*, October 4, 1897; and *New Brunswick Daily Times*, October 4 and October 23, 1897. The 1904 establishment date is inferred from the *New Brunswick Daily Times*, January 28, 1913, 4, which mentioned that Moore started on Church Street nine years ago with \$100 capital. The name Ideal Photo Studio also had been used by a firm in Boston in 1896. Ad, *Boston Globe*, April 19, 1896, 18.

¹⁴¹ According to the marriage record in the New Jersey State Archives, Nanney was the daughter of Walter Wood and L.W.P. Watkins. In the 1900 U.S. Census, they lived on the farm of Walter’s aged parents, Gaines P. and Virginia Wood, in Fulkerson, Scott County, Virginia. Tom and Nanney Moore were childless.

¹⁴² *New Brunswick Sunday Times*, March 30, 1924, 12.

home.”¹⁴³ Although a price for Moore’s have not been found, in 1904, Frederick A. Dennett, a traveling photographer based in Woodbury, New Jersey, offered his Ping Pongs at a cost of 10 cents for 16.¹⁴⁴

The 1909 manual, *Commercial, Press, Scientific Photography*, explained, “Ping Pong Pictures are smaller than the penny pictures, and are usually made in strips of a half dozen, delivered unmounted or what is known as a ‘slip mount.’ The aim of the photographer should be to sell mounts to his patrons for these pictures, they oftentimes bringing more money and more profit than the pictures themselves.”¹⁴⁵ The Ping Pong strip was 1 1/4 by 5 1/2 inches, as compared to the Penny Photos, which were mounted on cards about 2 by 2 1/4 inches and were wildly popular around 1900.¹⁴⁶ To make a Ping Pong strip, the photographer would use a camera with a multiplying back that could expose up to 15 images on one glass plate negative. Ping Pong photographers often had amusing accessories available for customers to wear, such as odd hats and fake mustaches. The Ping Pong photo strips were the precursors to the self-portraits made in the first automated photo booth, the “Photomaton,” introduced in New York by Anatol Josepho in 1926.¹⁴⁷

One example of the Moore studio’s larger format portraiture from around this time is an oval photo of an unidentified middle-aged white woman mounted on a 6 by 8 inch heavy gray card. The photographer captured her from a low camera angle, making the subject look more imposing, and with an attentive and thoughtful expression she looks directly into the lens, creating

¹⁴³ *New Brunswick Home News*, April 14, 1909, 2, indexed as *Central New Jersey Home News*.

¹⁴⁴ *Woodbury Daily Times*, January 15, 1904, 1.

¹⁴⁵ *Complete Self-Instructing Library of Practical Photography*, ed. James Boniface Schriever, vol. 9 (Scranton, Pennsylvania: 1909), 397, 401.

¹⁴⁶ The *Bridgeton* (New Jersey) *Evening News*, January 10, 1899, 2, reported that local photographer William E. Service was having up to 100 sittings per day for Penny Photos.

¹⁴⁷ “New Marvels of Ingenuity,” *Popular Science* (June 1927), 15.

a powerful personal connection to viewers both then and now. At the bottom right of the mount is a blind stamp with “Ideal Photo” and the Church Street studio address.¹⁴⁸

In addition to photography, Moore continued to be active in his community in other ways. In 1908, he started a Black baseball team, the New Brunswick Colored Giants. In 1910, with two Black friends, Benjamin F. Wyche, a teacher, and young Edward Schenck, he sponsored an excursion to Coney Island for African Americans. By the following year, this “Royal Trio” opened a pool hall at 18 French Street that became the headquarters of the Royal Social Club, incorporated in 1912 and managed by Moore to serve Black youth.¹⁴⁹

Moore’s popularity at his Church Street location was such that he moved to a larger gallery at 409 George Street in 1909. He regularly ran ads that year in the *Home News*, reading, “Latest and Finest Photos, Portraits in Oil, Water Color, Pastel, India Ink, Sepia and Crayon, Ping Pongs, Amateurs’ work finished.”¹⁵⁰ After his move, the *Home News* noted in a complimentary piece on April 14: “Mr. Moore is now doing a larger and better class of work, as can be seen by the fine collection of various pictures at his studio.”¹⁵¹

Moore appears to have been thriving in his businesses. In the 1910 U.S. Census for New Brunswick, he and his wife Nanney were living at 16 Albany Street, after moving from 193 Delevan, with a boarder Bertha Williams, 19, who worked cleaning a theater. Theaters in New Brunswick had segregated seating, despite the aforementioned New Jersey Civil Rights Act of 1884, which Moore’s attorney cited in a civil rights case that predates by many years the successful desegregation cases in the 1950s and early 1960s.

¹⁴⁸ Author’s collection.

¹⁴⁹ Armstrong and Bartz, 4; New Brunswick City Directory, 1911.

¹⁵⁰ *New Brunswick Home News*, April 23, 1909, 4, et al, indexed as *Central New Jersey Home News*.

¹⁵¹ *New Brunswick Home News*, April 14, 1909, 2, indexed as *Central New Jersey Home News*. A portrait of Moore accompanies this article but is barely legible on the microfilm copy.

The “Act to protect all citizens in their civil and legal rights” of May 10, 1884, stated that “all persons within the jurisdiction of the state of New Jersey shall be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of the accommodations, advantages, facilities and privileges of inns, public conveyances on land or water, theatres, and other places of public amusement; subject only to the conditions and limitations established by law, and applicable alike to citizens of every race and color.” It also specified that violators would be fined between \$500 and \$1,000 and that no citizens could be disqualified from jury service “on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude” and that violators of this provision could be fined up to \$5,000.¹⁵²

In April 1911, Moore bought three orchestra seats for his wife, a Black friend, and himself to see a movie at the Liberty Street Opera House.¹⁵³ The tickets were picked up at the box office by a messenger. When they arrived for the event, they were shown to their seats but then, to their embarrassment, exacerbated by the laughter of white patrons, they were asked to leave because, as recounted in the *New Brunswick Daily Times*, “no colored persons could be admitted to that part of the house.”¹⁵⁴ Moore hired a busy and respected Perth Amboy attorney, John A. Coan, born in New Jersey in 1877 to Irish immigrants. On behalf of Moore, Coan brought suit for \$500 for violation of the Civil Rights Act.

Moore’s action started in district court against Feiber & Shea, whom he assumed were the owners of the theater. But at the trial on April 19, 1912, where Moore’s wife testified about the ridicule to which her party was subjected, the manager of the opera house, a Mr. Dunbar, asserted that he was paid by Henry M. Feiber, treasurer of the Bijou Circuit Company, not Feiber & Shea.

¹⁵² *Acts of the Legislature of the State of New Jersey*, Chapter 219, May 10, 1884 (Camden, New Jersey: Sinnickson Chew, 1884), 339–340, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b3683735&view=1up&seq=7>.

¹⁵³ Photographed in 1938 by New Brunswick photographer Isaac Van Der Veer. Glass plate negative, Item #9600 [B] in the Isaac S. Vanderveer Collection, Rutgers Special Collections and University Archives.

¹⁵⁴ *New Brunswick Daily Times*, July 24, 1912, 1. This article named Moore’s attorney “Cohn” in error. Coan became Middlesex County Solicitor and then Assistant Prosecutor in 1914. *Daily Home News*, November 16, 1914, indexed as *Central New Jersey Home News*.

Coan then entered a “voluntary non-suit” and the matter was not further pursued.¹⁵⁵ In July 1912, the New Jersey Supreme Court, in its role as the Court of Errors and Appeals, affirmed a judgment for a Black woman, Minerva Miller, who had been awarded \$500 in district court in 1911 for racial discrimination by a Passaic theater that charged 25 cents admission for “colored” and 5 cents for whites.¹⁵⁶ With this precedent, Moore seemed to have been in a good position to pursue the matter but no record that he did so has been found.

A major change in Moore’s career occurred in 1913 when he was chosen to be the official photographer for the Pennsylvania Emancipation Exposition, which celebrated the 50th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln’s proclamation that freed enslaved people in areas controlled by the Confederacy during the U.S. Civil War. While the newspaper report of his selection did not mention it, quite possibly Moore was hired to help develop just New Jersey’s contributions to the displays. Unfortunately, no archival collection for the exhibition has been located, so what Moore actually contributed, if anything, is unknown.¹⁵⁷ When he was appointed in January 1913, the *New Brunswick Daily Times* reported that his assignment was to take photographs in Atlantic City, Camden, Asbury Park, and Long Branch to show what African Americans had achieved in the past half century.¹⁵⁸ He planned to travel in his five-passenger Maxwell automobile, the brand later immortalized by the comedian Jack Benny who in his TV show in the 1950s often featured his 1923 model chauffeured by Eddie “Rochester” Anderson.¹⁵⁹ Moore’s role may have been impacted

¹⁵⁵ *New Brunswick Daily Times*, March 21, 1912, 1, and July 24, 1912, 1.

¹⁵⁶ *Morning Call* (Paterson), November 25, 1911, 1; *Passaic Daily Herald* (Passaic), July 22, 1912, 1; *New Brunswick Daily Times*, July 24, 1912, 1.

¹⁵⁷ Records of the Exposition Commission appointed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are not at the Pennsylvania State Archives. Mires, 264.

¹⁵⁸ *New Brunswick Daily Times*, January 28, 1913, 4.

¹⁵⁹ Moore had his Maxwell D.A., 30 H.P., the top of the line model, by December 1912, when he drove to Jersey City in a little more than an hour, with men from the Royal Social Club, Charles A. Mason, J. Herbert Rice, and Everett Stives, to visit friends, including Fred D. Dixon. *New York Age*, December 5, 1912, 3. Later that month, he “motored” to New York, accompanied by Schuyler Schenck, Will H. Stives, and J. Herbert Rice, and after being joined by H.D. Golden, enjoyed the “white lights of Harlem.” *New York Age*, December 19, 1912, 3.

negatively when the New Jersey Commissioners “decided to cut loose from the Pennsylvania Commission, as was originally planned.”¹⁶⁰

The expo in Philadelphia ran from September 14 to October 4, 1913.¹⁶¹ It opened with a religious congress attended by almost 20,000, and 2,000 voices sang the Hallelujah Chorus. The next day, 5,000 African Americans paraded down Broad Street to the site.¹⁶² Marred by delays, three new buildings were constructed for the exhibition: the main exhibit building, an agricultural building, and a concert hall, and the grounds were decorated with flags and banners.¹⁶³ Philadelphia was a logical place in Pennsylvania to hold the expo because its Black population had increased from 39,371 in 1890 to 84,459 in 1910, the largest concentration in any Northern city.¹⁶⁴ Its celebration, with \$95,000 in state funding, dwarfed those in other parts of the country, including those of Atlantic City, New York, Chicago, and Washington, DC.

Although no mention of Moore’s photographs in the Philadelphia exhibits has been located in press coverage, some information about the content was published. The *Washington Herald* exclaimed, “More than twenty inventions, many of which have made their inventors rich men, a library containing 800 books of every description, written by colored authors; exhibits educational, medical, industrial and social, are shown at the Philadelphia exhibit, which is not by any means

¹⁶⁰ *Trenton Evening Times*, September 27, 1913, 6.

¹⁶¹ The area was also used for the Sesquicentennial International Exposition. All physical evidence of the 1913 exposition is gone.

¹⁶² “Emancipation Jubilee Opens in Quaker City,” *New York Age*, September 25, 1913, 1; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 12, 1913, 7, and September 15, 1913, 5. Mires, 266, reported an estimate that “more than 5,000” attended the opening.

¹⁶³ Mitch Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom: Memory and Meaning in African American Emancipation Celebrations, 1808–1915* (Amherst & Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 250, citing among other sources, “Exposition at ‘Philly’ a Dismal Failure,” *Age*, October 9, 1913. Some sources indicate that five buildings were planned. The opening was put off for a few weeks because the buildings were not completed on schedule. One of the three lacked “finishing touches” at the opening. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 19, 1913, 7. The Administration Building, the largest, was two floors, 84 by 176 feet, with an auditorium, dining room, and exhibit space. The Amusement Building featured a concert and lecture hall. The smallest of the three was the Agricultural Building that resembled a barn. There was also an athletic field on the grounds. Mires, 266.

¹⁶⁴ Mires, 261.

national in character.”¹⁶⁵ With comparable praise, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* stated, “The exhibits comprise everything which can show the religious, industrial, educational and social progress of the colored race [and were] solicited from schools, churches and social organizations” and called the opening “one of the greatest days in the history of the race in this country,”¹⁶⁶ Citing an account in the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, historian Charlene Mires, who has written the most extensive article about the Pennsylvania Emancipation Exposition, wrote,

Photographs of Black churches and Black homeowners through Pennsylvania showed the material and spiritual rewards of diligence.”¹⁶⁷ But not all commentators were so positive. The African American newspaper *New York Age*, edited by T. Thomas Fortune, reported that while the speeches were “credible,” “the exhibit was a dismal, gloomy and disappointing failure and no honest person can use any other words in characterizing it . . . There was practically nothing that could be classed as an exhibit and what little there was not properly put up.”¹⁶⁸

Supporting evidence is lacking but quite possibly Moore contributed to the more modestly funded but still substantial emancipation celebration held October 6–13, 1913, in Atlantic City, where a week-long series of speeches, concerts, meetings, and other events were held to mark the anniversary.¹⁶⁹ Officially entitled “Golden Emancipation Jubilee of New Jersey,” among the many speakers were New Jersey governor James Fairman Fielder, Booker T. Washington, and formerly

¹⁶⁵ *Washington Herald*, September 22, 1913, 3.

¹⁶⁶ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 15, 1913, 5.

¹⁶⁷ Mires, 268, citing *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, September 16, 1913. This comment leaves open the question of whether similar photos taken by Moore were also on display, whether his work was repurposed for the Atlantic City exhibit, or whether his services were terminated when New Jersey ended its planned involvement in the Philadelphia event.

¹⁶⁸ *New York Age*, October 9, 1913, 1.

¹⁶⁹ Charlene Mires, “Race, Place and the Pennsylvania Emancipation Exhibition of 1913,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 128, no. 3 (July 2004): 257–278. Mires explains that the regional exhibits developed after a failed attempt to secure Congressional funding. The Atlantic City conference, which opened on October 6, is described in “Negroes Observe Semi Centennial,” *Camden Daily Courier*, September 11, 1913, 3, indexed as *Courier-Post*. The names of the Commission members, four white men and three Black men, who planned the Atlantic City event and financial problems are detailed in “New Jersey Commission Now Seeking Funds,” *New York Age*, July 10, 1913, 1–2.

enslaved persons.¹⁷⁰ On opening day, Rev. W. S. Smith of Jersey City gave a stereopticon lecture, “Up the Ladder to Freedom,” which gave an overview of “the negro from when he landed at Jamestown to the present day.”¹⁷¹ A “Grand Parade” featured civic and military groups, as well as fraternal orders, such as the Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias, and Knight Templars, marching to 50 Black bands.¹⁷² Located primarily at Exposition Hall on the boardwalk at Kentucky Avenue, the celebration also featured “an exhibit showing the progress of the negro along agricultural and industrial lines.” Perhaps Moore’s work found a place in it; he may also have taken photographs during the week, but no Moore photos connected to the exhibit have been found. The Exposition Building had hundreds of exhibits in its 10,000 square feet of floor space. Details about them are lacking in press reports that more than once complained that the celebration could have been better if the budget had been fully expended.¹⁷³ The Atlantic City celebration organizers, under the

¹⁷⁰ Among the formerly enslaved persons were Edward C. Richardson, who recalled escaping from servitude and joining the Union Army, and a Mrs. Reid who worked with Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass and who had known Harriet Beecher Stowe. *Atlantic City Press*, October 8, 1913, 1, 3, and October 10, 1913, 1. Booker T. Washington was scheduled to speak at the Hippodrome on Young’s Million Dollar Pier. *Atlantic City Gazette Review*, September 6, 1913, 2.

¹⁷¹ *Jersey Journal*, September 20, 1913, 2; *Atlantic City Press*, October 7, 1913, 7, indicated that this presentation was scheduled only for October 6, while the *Atlantic City Gazette Review*, October 1, 1913, 5, stated that it would be held daily.

¹⁷² *Atlantic City Press*, September 10, 1913, 4, and September 20, 1913, 1, 14. The September 10 issue mentions that the chair of the New Jersey Emancipation Proclamation Commission was George Hampton, while the September 20 article identifies Rev. Solomon Porter Hood as the chief organizer of the event. Moore may well have marched with one of the fraternal orders. His involvement in these groups is discussed below.

¹⁷³ *Trenton Evening Times*, October 14, 1913, 12; *Atlantic City Gazette Review*, October 1, 1913, 5; *Atlantic City Press*, October 7, 1913, 7. The last source includes an ad with a detailed but incomplete program for the seven days. In brief: October 6, Opening Ceremonies and Governor’s and Fraternity Day; October 7, Governor’s and Fraternity Day; October 8, Home and Women’s Day with the Mothers’ Congress, and Grand Civic Parade with prizes; October 9, Grand Negro Historical Day, including address by Rev. M.C.B. Mason, D.D., ex-slaves and piano contest; October 10, Booker T. Washington on Agricultural and Business Men’s Day, also Professional and Educational Day, including typewriting contest; October, 11, Address by former New Jersey Governor Edward Casper Stokes, on the progress of African Americans since Emancipation, after which he toured “the many exhibits”; and October 12, Jubilee Sunday, with religious speakers. There were also musical performances each day by African American bands, orchestras, and choruses. Stokes’s address was not listed in the program published on October 7; accounts are in *Atlantic City Gazette Review*, October 13, 1913, and *Sunday Gazette*, October 12, 1913, 1.

direction of Rev. Solomon Porter Hood, spent \$13,000 of \$20,000 adopted for the purpose by the New Jersey State Legislature; the remainder of the allocation lapsed before it could be spent.¹⁷⁴

When Moore obtained employment for the Emancipation Exposition in Philadelphia, he sold his business at 409 George Street in New Brunswick to Hungarian-born photographer Julius Kuchma, who had a photography store at 14 Plum.¹⁷⁵ At Moore's former location at 409 George, Kuchma kept on Carl C. Francis, who had been working there since April 1912.¹⁷⁶ Francis, a young white photographer born in 1891, later opened up his own store with a specialty in film processing at 414 George Street.¹⁷⁷ As previously evidenced by Moore's partnership with Bennett, Francis's employment at Ideal Photo suggests that Moore had excellent social skills enabling him to interact effectively with different types of people. With regard to Moore's other responsibilities in New Brunswick, Edward Linsley succeeded him at the Royal Social Club. A few days after Linsley took over, the club was raided and he was fined \$100 for keeping a gambling house.¹⁷⁸

With his affairs settled in New Brunswick, Moore and his wife moved to a Black neighborhood at 1612 Arctic Avenue, Atlantic City, where he was listed in the 1914 city directory as a photographer and Nanney as a nurse. In 1915, he had a pool hall at the same address, one of 38 firms listed in the city business directory under "Billiard and Pool Rooms and Bowling Alleys."¹⁷⁹ By that year, he and Nanney had moved to 161 Mt. Vernon Avenue, a few blocks

¹⁷⁴ *Bridgeton Evening News*, September 30, 1913, 1; *Trenton Evening Times*, September 26, 1913, 18. To raise funds for a 500-voice children's chorus at the event, a fundraiser was held on June 11, 1913. The chorus performed on October 10. *Atlantic City Press*, June 10, 1913, 2, and October 7, 1913, 7.

¹⁷⁵ New Brunswick city directory, 1911; 1920 U.S. Census, Middlesex County, New Brunswick. Kuchma was born in 1887 in Hungary to Hungarian parents and emigrated in 1898.

¹⁷⁶ *Central New Jersey Home News*, January 28, 1913, 4. Before working for Moore, Carl C. Francis had been employed by Frank H. Cole, a photographer in Asbury Park.

¹⁷⁷ 1915 U.S. Census, Middlesex County, New Brunswick, lists Carl Francis, single, 24, photographer living with others at 119 Albany Street. He is found with his business at 414 George Street in New Brunswick city directories, 1921, 1926, and 1930. In 1937, he was a photographer at 24 French Street, with a residence at 420 George Street. In 1944, he lived at the same address with the occupation of shipping clerk.

¹⁷⁸ *New Brunswick Daily Times*, February 19, 1915, 1.

¹⁷⁹ In 2022, there were no billiard parlors or bowling alleys in Atlantic City. The closest of each were in Egg Harbor.

nearer the boardwalk, and, contrary to the city directory, the 1915 New Jersey Census identified him as a photographer. His primary reported occupation changed again the following year. The 1916 directory recorded him as a chauffeur at 1612 Arctic Avenue. These various jobs suggest that full-time photography was not an option for him in Atlantic City. In both the 1915 and 1916 directories, Nanney is listed at 1612 Arctic as the landlady for furnished rooms but she probably also managed the pool room when her husband was out driving.¹⁸⁰ With its numerous hotels, Atlantic City needed housing for a small army of Black waiters, waitresses, porters, and others who worked in personal services, especially in the summer vacation season.¹⁸¹ Among tenants at 1612 Arctic, a waitress, Ella Nansen, rented a room from the Moores in 1915, according to the city directory.

After several years in Atlantic City, Tom and Nanney returned to Middlesex County, where Tom established a photography partnership in South River, a town with about 6,500 residents, many of them from Poland.¹⁸² Moore's partner was Benjamin M. Trzaska, also known as Bronislaw or "Benny," who owned the One Price Store clothing shop at 1 Ferry Street on the corner of Jackson. Trzaska was born in Poland, probably in 1890, and immigrated in 1906.¹⁸³ One of two photographs attributed to the firm at the South River Historical and Preservation Society shows a large patriotic rally in support of the United States in World War I, held in front of Saints

¹⁸⁰ In 1914, John B. Dykes is listed with the pool hall at 1612 Arctic, so it is likely that Moore took over his business. There were also several residents at this address as there were in subsequent years. The Moores likely rented a room from Dykes before moving to 161 Mt. Vernon. The pool room was not listed in the 1916 business directory. By 1918, Bayard A. Tasker had a restaurant, Doc's Cafe, at 1612 Arctic.

¹⁸¹ Lane, 320. September was the most popular month for African Americans to visit Atlantic City.

¹⁸² In the 1920 U.S. Census, South River had 6,596 residents. The Moores likely arrived in South River in 1917.

¹⁸³ Birth of February 15, 1893, U.S. World War II Draft Registration Card, 1942, for Benjamin M. Trzaska. The card mentions that, in 1942, Trzaska worked for the Board of Education in South River and lived at 183 Whitehead Avenue with his wife Anna. The Social Security Death Index and Trzaska's Department of Veterans Affairs death record gives his birth as February 22, 1890, and his death as August 3, 1983. Immigration year, 1930 U.S. Census, Middlesex, South River, [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

Peter and Paul Church.¹⁸⁴ Trzaska and Moore's 28 Ferry Street studio was continued by Moore alone when Trzaska enlisted on February 25, 1918, to serve in the army.¹⁸⁵ Trzaska "was a member of the 307th Machine Gun Battalion, Company A, of the 78th Division, and saw active service during the war. He was on the firing line several months and took part in the famous drive made by the American Army at Chateau Thierry."¹⁸⁶ When Trzaska was discharged on May 9, 1919, he briefly resumed his partnership with Moore at 28 Ferry Street, which also was Trzaska's residential address in 1919.¹⁸⁷ Meanwhile, in February 1919, Nanney Moore had opened a hairdressing shop at the Moore's residence on Jackson Street.¹⁸⁸

The Trzaska and Moore partnership dissolved sometime in the fall of 1920 and Moore continued alone.¹⁸⁹ On February 24, 1921, the Ferry Street studio was destroyed by a suspicious fire and Moore's photo studio moved to 45 Obert, where the couple was already living after purchasing the building in October 1920.¹⁹⁰ While he offered a range of services there, Moore promoted specialties of "Oil Paintings, Crayons, Water Colors, and Wedding Groups."¹⁹¹ Group photos produced by Moore from his Obert Street studio included the Polish Giants A. A. baseball team and Willett School children dressed as toy soldiers for a parade.

Within a few years of his arrival in South River, Moore was well established with many social connections through memberships in fraternal groups. The 1920s marked the tail end of

¹⁸⁴ Reproduced in Armstrong and Bartz, 5.

¹⁸⁵ Armstrong and Bartz, 4–5. The banners read, "Might is Right, despotism and barbarism, that is what the despotic German government is fighting for" and "Right is Might, freedom of humane life, that is what the noble [sic] independent country of the U.S. is fight for."

¹⁸⁶ *Sunday Times*, January 25, 1920, 5, indexed as *Central New Jersey Home News*. "Benny" Trzaska married Anna Czyzewska, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. George Cyzewska, on January 25, 1920.

¹⁸⁷ New Brunswick city directory, 1919.

¹⁸⁸ *Daily Home News*, February 28, 1919, 17, indexed as *Central New Jersey Home News*.

¹⁸⁹ Armstrong and Bartz, 5.

¹⁹⁰ Armstrong and Bartz, 5; New Brunswick city and business directory, 1921, which includes South River. After Trzaska left the partnership, he opened a dry goods store at 1 Ferry Street.

¹⁹¹ "Moore's Photo Studio," South River directory in New Brunswick directory, 1921, 813. For details on the process, see "Crayon Portraits," Truth in Photography, <https://www.truthinphotography.org/crayon-portraits.html>.

what W. S. Harwood, writing in 1897, called “The Golden Age of Fraternalism”¹⁹² and Moore was described in 1924 as “a very enthusiastic lodge man” with “a host of friends.” He had become Worshipful Master of Progressive Lodge, No. 17, Free and Accepted Masons in New Brunswick, and King of Zarubbabic Chapter, No. 5, Royal Arch Masonry of Plainfield. He also was a charter member of Bright Hope, No. 36, Knights of Pythias of New Brunswick.¹⁹³ During this era and for many years thereafter, such national fraternal organizations and secret societies had separate chapters and lodges for African Americans. His wife Nanney also was an officer in several lodges of women’s organizations. In a 1925 article about the Moores’ 19th wedding anniversary party, a New Brunswick paper commented, “Mr. Moore has been the leading photographer in South River for many years and has built up a large patronage.”¹⁹⁴

During the Great Depression, the Moores’ finances took a downturn and they lost ownership of 45 Obert, although they continued living there until the late 1930s.¹⁹⁵ Between 1938 and 1940, likely closer to the latter, they moved to Wilmington, Delaware, where Moore established a photography business at 722 N. French Street on the corner of W. Eighth Street that he continued to operate until at least 1946.¹⁹⁶ According to the 1940 U.S. Census, Nanney contributed to the couple’s finances by cleaning private homes.¹⁹⁷ In 1943, the Moores purchased the three-story building. It became their long-term home and business location. Subsequently, they

¹⁹² William D. Moore, “Introduction,” in William D. Moore and Mark A. Tabberts, eds., *Secret Societies in America: Foundational Studies of Fraternalism* (New Orleans: Cornerstone Books, 2011), vii, <https://web.archive.org/web/20160304121058/http://www.cornerstonepublishers.com/ssoc.pdf>

¹⁹³ *New Brunswick Sunday Times*, March 20, 1924, 12. It is likely that Moore’s membership in these organizations predated his move to South River.

¹⁹⁴ *Daily Home News*, June 6 1925, 7, indexed as *Central New Jersey Home News*.

¹⁹⁵ Armstrong and Bartz, 5.

¹⁹⁶ *Wilmington, Delaware, City Directory, 1940*; 1940 U.S. Census, New Castle, Wilmington. The Moores are not listed in the 1938 Wilmington directory, nor in the January 1938 and April 1939 Wilmington telephone directories. In 1940, Moore lived at and had his photo business at 713 French Street according to the city directory but at 720 French as per the U.S. Census. Subsequent directories: 1942, 722 French Street; 1946, photo business at 720 French Street and residence at 722 French Street; and 1948, residence, 722 French, no occupation listed.

¹⁹⁷ 1940 U.S. Census, Delaware, New Castle, Wilmington.

bought other properties in Wilmington for investment and rental income.¹⁹⁸ Their residence was convenient to Mt. Bethel Baptist Church at 713 French Street, where Moore was a speaker at an evening service on July 13, 1941.¹⁹⁹

Moore soon became involved in Democratic Party politics in Delaware. In August 1940, the chairman of the National Colored Democratic Association appointed him to the Advisory Committee for the 1940 electoral campaign and chair of the Housing Committee.²⁰⁰ In August 1944, he served as an alternate delegate at the state Democratic Convention that nominated Franklin D. Roosevelt for a fourth term.²⁰¹ Moore then ran for city council in the Sixth Ward and won the Democratic Party nomination in the May 1945 primary election with 51 votes, soundly beating Mrs. Irma Lawson, who had 20.²⁰² However, in the June 2 election, he lost to the Republican, Edward R. Bell, 1,439 to 164, according to the unofficial returns.²⁰³ In 1946, Moore again was a delegate at the state Democratic Convention.²⁰⁴

Although they were listed without occupations in the 1948 city directory, in the 1950 U.S. Census for Wilmington, Moore, 70, was listed at 722 French Street as a restaurant owner and

¹⁹⁸ Deed, Michael and Sophie Ostro and Joseph and Frieda N. Barsky conveyed to Albert T. and Nancy Bell Moore, September 20, 1943, “a piece or parcel of land, with the buildings thereon erected . . . beginning at the intersection of the Southerly side of Eighth Street with the Easterly side of French Street; thence Southerly by said side of French Street, Twenty feet. . . .” The price was \$10. On May 10, 1944, the Moores purchased another property for \$600 at 711 Wollaston Street from Julius S. and Bella Wahl. The Moores still owned the Wollaston Street property in 1954, when they got a building permit for \$500 in alterations. *News Journal* (Wilmington, Delaware), September 21, 1954, 19. On June 25, 1946, from James T. and Katie M. Crozier, they purchased a still extant brick two-story row house at 505 Shearman Street for \$2,500. On August 27, 1948, they sold 505 Shearman for \$3,000 to Francis T. and Marie M. Monaghan. Delaware, U.S., Land Records, 1677–1947, ancestry.com. A photo of 722 N. French is in *Morning News* (Wilmington, Delaware), August 1, 1959, 1, in an article about its proposed demolition as part of a plan for a farmer’s market and parking lot.

¹⁹⁹ *News Journal* (Wilmington, Delaware), July 12, 1941, 7.

²⁰⁰ *Morning News* (Wilmington, Delaware), August 23, 1940, 16.

²⁰¹ *News Journal* (Wilmington, Delaware), August 14, 1944, 4.

²⁰² *News Journal* (Wilmington, Delaware), May 14, 1945, 11.

²⁰³ *Morning News* (Wilmington, Delaware), June 4, 1945, 2.

²⁰⁴ *Morning News* (Wilmington, Delaware), August 3, 1946, 3.

Nanney, 67, as the cook and waitress.²⁰⁵ The census also indicates that they derived income from renting rooms at that location.

The Moores' activities in the 1940s and 1950s clearly indicate that this able, respected, versatile, and enterprising couple had done well in Wilmington. Consequently, they could afford installing a fire escape at 722 French Street in 1950 for \$500 and spent another \$4,500 for



Parade of Wooden Soldiers, children for Willett School field day, 1923. Photo by Moore, Obert Street, South River. Courtesy South River Historical and Preservation Society.

alterations in 1952, perhaps to expand the restaurant.²⁰⁶ By 1954, they had sold “Broadway Lunch” to Angelo Karas, an immigrant from Samos, Greece, but the Moores continued to live in the building so they

likely rented space to Karas.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ The census also shows that they rented rooms to six other African Americans: Gladys Willets, 40, a domestic servant, and her son Ernest, 11; Leonard Flamer, 30, laborer; William Brown, 66, no occupation; Sarah James, 61, domestic servant; and Oscar Mosely, 27, truck driver. In 1947, one of their tenants, Louis Jones, was arrested for the fatal shooting with a shotgun of Joseph Banks of Philadelphia. The shooting, claimed by Jones and two witnesses to be accidental, occurred in Jones’s room at 722 French Street. *Morning News* (Wilmington, Delaware), September 22, 1947, 1, 4; *News Journal* (Wilmington, Delaware), September 22, 1947, 9.

²⁰⁶ *News Journal* (Wilmington, Delaware), November 22, 1950, 17; September 25, 1952, 5.

²⁰⁷ “Thieves Get \$25,” *News Journal* (Wilmington, Delaware), September 27, 1954, 4. Broadway Lunch, headquartered in Washington, DC, was chartered in Delaware in 1949. There were many restaurants with this name in the eastern United States. *Morning News* (Wilmington, Delaware), July 21, 1949, 10. Karas’s birthplace is included

Moore died of heart disease on May 5, 1957. He may have retired in the 1950s but on his death certificate, his “usual occupation” was “Photographer.” After Nanney’s death on December 17, 1958, her remains joined those of her husband at Mt. Zion Cemetery.²⁰⁸

Discussion

The few known African American photographers in the 19th and early 20th centuries faced significant challenges, including racial prejudice and competition from white photographers for both white and the relatively few Black customers.²⁰⁹ The New Jersey photographers examined here were no exception and this may help explain why images by an artist with a long career, William M. Dutton, are so hard to find today and why others like Isaiah Burton and Levi Bankson worked only briefly in the medium before moving on to other, more remunerative occupations: Burton a coachman in Philadelphia, and Bankson an insurance collection agent and justice of the peace in Matchtown.

The growth of the potential Black customer base for New Jersey photographers grew toward the end of the century as a result of migration from the South that accelerated during World War I. This population movement, sparked in part by the prevalence of lynching in the former Confederate states, may have provided more opportunities for Black photographers like the celebrated portraitist James Van Der Zee, who opened his studio in Harlem in 1916, but New

in passenger lists for the *Nea Helias*, departing New York, March 17, 1950, and returning from Piraus, Greece, October 9, 1950. Born in 1891 and naturalized in Cambridge, Crawford County, in northwest Pennsylvania, Karas had a café in New York City in 1950. Early in life, he shortened his name from Karamanolakis. Various records, ancestry.com.

²⁰⁸ Albert Thomas Moore, Certificate of Death, ancestry.com. The primary cause of death was cardiac decompensation, with hypertension and atelectasis as contributing factors. At the time of their deaths, the Moores still lived at 722 French Street. Nancy Bell Moore was survived by two cousins, Alice (Mrs. Paul) Snead of New Brunswick and Mary Lou (Mrs. Robert) Schenck of South River, both born in Virginia as per the 1950 U.S. Census. Obituaries for the Moores in *News Journal* (Wilmington, Delaware), May 7, 1957, 28, and December 18, 1958, 55.

²⁰⁹ White photographers in New Jersey who photographed African Americans in the 19th or early 20th century included William A. Apgar, Somerville; John Bainbridge, Trenton; Philip C. Colden, Newark; Frederick A. Davis, Long Branch; Columbus S. Gernert, Somerville; Robert H. Green, Newark; Edgar P. Greisamer, Flemington; Phoebe E. Marsh, Camden; Jacob Rieck, Millville (work crew on trolley line); George W. Tichenor, Burlington; William R. Tobias, Perth Amboy; and Morris Yogg, Newark.

Jersey did not have African American neighborhoods comparable in size and prosperity. Most Black photographers could only succeed if they were able to attract white clientele.²¹⁰

Because extant examples of the work by New Jersey's early Black photographers are scant, it is difficult to generalize what these men photographed. Dutton likely was a portraitist before 1860 and possibly thereafter. What Burton photographed is purely a matter of speculation. We only know of Bankson's forensic work but it is likely he made other kinds of photographs. Portraiture was the specialty of Tom Moore, who certainly depicted white people in New Brunswick and South River, the latter populated largely by Polish immigrants. Moore's success in the photo business in these municipalities can be attributed not only to his expertise gained as a traveling photographer and his multitalented spouse Nanney, but also to his ability to cross the racial divide. He integrated his galleries in New Brunswick and South River through white partners and employment of a white photographer and became established and respected in both towns. But Moore was not able to sustain a photographic career in segregated Atlantic City, where he lived on the north side in a Black neighborhood, operated a pool hall, sublet rooms, and worked as a chauffeur. As for his photographic work in Wilmington, Delaware, that has yet to be discovered but he supplemented his photo income there with rentals and a restaurant and became well known in the state through active involvement in the Democratic Party.²¹¹ Moore's career exemplifies what was possible for a Black photographer during his lifetime but very few of his generation achieved as much as he did.

²¹⁰ Commenting on the Leon DeVoux studio near the corner of 14th and U streets in an upscale Black neighborhood in Washington, DC, a Black newspaper stated, "Although Prof. DeVoux's studio would be regarded as a colored institution, and he does cater to the high-class colored trade, it is a remarkable paradox that so far the bulk of his customers have been of the Caucasian race, each drawn to him through the commendation of others who had come out of curiosity." DeVoux was a man of color, born in Jaipur, India, who emigrated in 1893. "Washington Photographer and His Successful Work; Skilled Colored Operators Are Achieving Satisfactory Results," *New York Age*, November 7, 1907, 1.

²¹¹ Delaware repositories checked did not have photographs indexed with Moore as creator when contacted in 2022.

Gary D. Saretzky, archivist, educator, and photographer, worked as an archivist for more than 50 years at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Educational Testing Service, and the Monmouth County Archives. Saretzky taught the history of photography at Mercer County Community College, 1977–2012, and served as coordinator of the Public History Internship Program for the Rutgers University History Department, 1994–2016. His website, <http://saretzky.com>, includes his photos, history of photography resources, and an online photo bookstore. Saretzky has published more than 100 articles and reviews on the history of photography, photographic conservation, and other topics, including several in New Jersey Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal.