

Hillyer Family:

An Inventory of its Literary File Photography Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Hillyer Family
Title:	Hillyer Family Photography Collection
Dates:	late-19th-early-20th century
Extent:	63 items
Abstract:	Black and white studio portrait photographs (including eleven glass plate negatives) primarily of members of the H. B. (Hamilton Brisco) Hillyer family. Many of the photographs were created by studios in Texas that were owned by H. B. Hillyer and his son, C. Ernest Hillyer. In addition, the collection includes a photograph of the headstone of H. B. Hillyer and a newspaper article about John Freeman Hillyer.
Call Number:	Photography Collection PH-02639
Language:	English
Access:	Open for research. Researchers must create an online Research Account and agree to the Materials Use Policy before using archival materials. Please note: Negatives cannot be accessed without curatorial approval.
Use Policies:	Ransom Center collections may contain material with sensitive or confidential information that is protected under federal or state right to privacy laws and regulations. Researchers are advised that the disclosure of certain information pertaining to identifiable living individuals represented in the collections without the consent of those individuals may have legal ramifications (e.g., a cause of action under common law for invasion of privacy may arise if facts concerning an individual's private life are published that would be deemed highly offensive to a reasonable person) for which the Ransom Center and The University of Texas at Austin assume no responsibility.
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Administrative Information

Acquisition: 958:0089:0003-0004 and 958:0402:0001-0049: Acquisition information not available; 979:0073:0001-0011: Gift of Mrs. Alton M. Compton, 1979 (G119).

Processed by: Deborah Marks, 2016

Repository: [Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin](#)

Biographical Sketch

The Rev. John Freeman Hillyer (1805-1894), a prominent Baptist minister and educator, moved his family, including his son, H. B. (Hamilton Biscoe) Hillyer (1835-1903), from Georgia to Texas in 1847. Father and son shared a common interest in photography and John taught H.B. how to create daguerreotypes. H.B. began making his own daguerreotypes as early as 1857. H. B. Hillyer later operated successive studios in Austin, Texas, from 1867 to 1887, becoming well-known for his photographs of local sites and events as well as his portraits of Texas State government officials. H. B. Hillyer married Mary Emma Storey (died 1885) in 1858, and they had four children: Theodore, C. Ernest, Julia, and Jessie. In 1886, H. B. Hillyer and C. Ernest went into business together, establishing H. B. Hillyer & Son. This studio failed during the recession of 1887, but H. B. Hillyer soon opened a new studio in Dallas, Texas. In 1889, H. B. Hillyer moved to Belton, Texas to join C. Ernest. Together they operated studios in Belton and Bowie, Texas until H.B.'s death in 1903. C. Ernest Hillyer operated his own studios in Bartlett and Belton, Texas, but he is believed to have left the photography business around 1912. C. Ernest Hillyer married Hattie Hillyer and was the father of Louise and Elizabeth ("Betty") Hillyer.

Sources:

Palmquist, Peter E. and Thomas R. Kailbourn. *Pioneer Photographers from the Mississippi to the Continental Divide...1839-1865*. Stanford:Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006.

Young, William Russell III. "Hillyer, Hamilton Biscoe". In *Handbook of Texas Online*. Accessed June 22, 2016. <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fhi30>

Scope and Contents

62 black and white studio portrait photographs from the late 19th century and early 20th century (including four ambrotypes and seven glass plate negatives). These photographs primarily document four generations of the Hamilton B. Hillyer family: Hamilton B. Hillyer and his wife, Mary Emma, and their children: daughters Jessie and Julia, and sons Theodore and C. Ernest Hillyer; Hamilton B. Hillyer's father, John Freeman Hillyer; and son C. Ernest Hillyer's wife, Hattie, and daughters, Louise and Elizabeth ("Betty"). The photographs were mostly taken by galleries in Texas owned by Hamilton B. and/or C. Ernest Hillyer as evidenced by the gallery names found on the prints. The later photographs were taken by the Thompson gallery (Waco, Texas) and Gray's Studio (Belton, Texas). The collection contains four ambrotypes, seven glass plate negatives (of which five have corresponding prints) and many card photographs including boudoir,

imperial and cabinet card sizes. Two cabinet cards created by the H.B. Hillyer gallery contain portraits of one unidentified man and one woman identified as "Libbie". In addition, the collection includes a late twentieth century photograph of the tombstone of H. B. Hillyer in Bowie, Texas, and a newspaper article about John Freeman Hillyer.

The photographs have been arranged by family member from oldest to youngest generation. Photographs of unidentified individuals and non-photographic materials follow. Dates have been estimated and titles derived by the archivist based on inscriptions found on the photographs, where available, as well as from biographical information.

Index Terms

People

Hillyer, C. Ernest.
Hillyer, Elizabeth (Betty).
Hillyer, H. B. (Hamilton Biscoe), 1835-1903.
Hillyer, Hattie (Mrs. C. Ernest Hillyer).
Hillyer, John Freeman.
Hillyer, Louise.

Document Types

Albumen prints.
Card photographs.
Gelatin silver prints.
Glass negatives.
Photographic prints.
Portrait photographs.
Wet collodion negatives.

- Accession Number: 958:0402:0001-0002** Two portrait photographs made from the same negative of John Freeman Hillyer, circa 1887-1893. Both photographs are mounted, one of which is a boudoir card. **Location**
1.1
- Accession Number: 958:0402:0003-0004** Two portrait photographs made from the same negative of Hamilton Biscoe Hillyer, circa 1887-1903. Both photographs are mounted. One is a cabinet card, and the other is a Paris card. **Location**
1.2
- Accession Number: 979:0073:0001** Glass negative (wet collodion) of a half-length portrait photograph of Mrs. H. B. Hillyer, circa 1860s. **Location**
Cabinet storage
- Accession Number: 979:0073:0002** Glass negative (wet collodion) of Mrs. H.B. Hillyer with her daughter, Jessie, seated on her lap, circa 1860s.
- Accession Number: 958:0402:0005-0010** Six portraits (four variant poses) of C. Ernest Hillyer, circa 1887-1915 **Location**
1.3
- Accession Number: 979:0073:0003** Glass negative (wet collodion), with masking, of Julia Hillyer, likely 1860s-1880s. **Location**
Cabinet storage
- Accession Number: 979:0073:0004** Glass negative (wet collodion) of man who may be Theodore Hillyer, likely 1860s-1880s.
- Accession Number: 958:0402:0011-0015** Five portraits of Hattie Hillyer, one of which is a cabinet card, circa 1885-1915. **Location**
1.4
- Accession Number: 958:0402:0016-0034** 19 portraits (15 variant poses) of Louise Hillyer from the time she was an infant to when she was a young woman, circa 1890-1912. She appears both alone and with her mother, Hattie Hillyer. Ten of the portraits are card photographs. **Location**
1.5
- Accession Number: 979:0073:0005** Glass negative (dry plate) for 958:0402:0033, 0045, 0048. **Location**
Cabinet storage
- Accession Number: 979:0073:0006** Glass negative (dry plate) for 958:0402:0034.
- Accession Number: 958:0402:0035-0043** Nine portraits of Elizabeth "Betty" Hillyer as an infant with her mother and as a young girl, circa 1890-1912. **Location**
1.6
- Accession Number: 979:0073:0007** Glass negative (dry plate) for 958:0402:0040, 0046, 0049. **Location**
Cabinet storage

Accession Number: 979:0073:0008 Glass negative (dry plate) for 958:0402:0041.

Accession Number: 958:0402:0044-0049 Two duplicate trifold paper frames containing individual photographs of Hattie Hillyer and her daughters, Louise and Elizabeth “Betty”, circa 1903-1912.

Location
1.7

Accession Number: 979:0073:0009 Glass negative (dry plate) for 958:0402:0045, 0048.

Location
Cabinet
storage

Accession Number: 958:0089:0003-0004 Two cabinet card portraits of unidentified individuals (one male and one female) created by H.B. Hillyer gallery, late 19th century.

Location
1.8

Accession Number: 979:0073:0010 Glass negative (dry plate) of unidentified male, late 19th century.

Location
Cabinet
storage

Accession Number: 979:0073:0011 Glass negative (dry plate) of unidentified female, late 19th century.

Accession Number: 958:0402:0046 Photograph of Hamilton B. Hillyer headstone in Bowie, Texas, likely late 20th century.

Location
1.9

Clipping of article by C.G. Carter. “John Freeman Hillyer, A Texas Giant”. *Baptist Standard*, May 24, 1958.

Location
1.10

Index of Photographers

- Gray's Studio (Belton, Tex.)--958:0402:0032
- Hillyer, C. E. and/or H. B.--958:0402:0030, 0033-0036, 0044-0049; 979:0073:0005-0009 (attributed to)
- Hillyer, C. E.--958:0402:0016-0028
- Hillyer, H. B. (Hamilton Biscoe), 1835-1903--958:0402:0001-0006, 0011-0013; 959:0089:0003-0004; 979:0073:0001-0004 (attributed to)
- Thompson (Waco, Tex.)--958:0402:0010