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Franklin White Pioneer Photographer

By Gary N. Chamberlin

Of the patriarchs of local stereoscopic photography in the White Mountain Region of New Hampshire, a direct line of descent is traced to Franklin White of Lancaster, New Hampshire. Stereoscopic photography did not suddenly appear here, nor was one man responsible for its development. Similarly other local variations on the development of stereophotography during the mid-nineteenth century reflect this trend, that this art form was being introduced by degree to every hamlet and crossroad of their known world. One cannot fully appreciate the later development of the stereoscopic industry in Northern New Hampshire to include the well known firms of Franklin Weller (1867-1876) and the Kilburn Brothers, Edward and Benjamin (1865-1909)¹ without identifying the agents of this development. With the exception of the stereoscopic artist F.B. Gage of St. Johnsbury, Vermont, Franklin White represents

the most significant influence on the early development of the stereoscopic industry of the White Mountains.

Franklin White, daguerrian artist, first appears in the business directories of Lancaster, N.H., in the mid 1850's. In this respect he was joining the ranks of many other local photographers: Sheppard, itinerant ambrotype artist of Newbury, Vt.; O.C. Bolton, ambrotype artist of Littleton, N.H., and F.B. Gage, daguerrian artist of St. Johnsbury, Vermont. He thus began in the commercial trade of portrait photography, but it was his work in landscape photography which set him apart from most of his contemporaries.

The development of the tourist industry in Northern New Hampshire brought about a favorable climate for both the artists and the audience of stereoscopic views. The early unique, local view gave way to a wider selection, and finally an attempt to distribute views. Among the earliest White Mountain attempts was the list published by the American Stereo-

scopic Company of the Langenheim Brothers in 1858. Five views were offered: **Tip Top House, Summit of Mt. Washington; The Flume; Mount Washington, from the Glen House; Scene in the Notch; and Echo Lake.** It is not presently known if Franklin White may have contributed views to the Langenheim list as did F.B. Gage to the E. Anthony list.

The viewbooks of Franklin White present one of the first comprehensive attempts to treat the White Mountain Region as a whole. The culminating achievement of his summer of wanderings in 1858 with pencil, brush, and camera was an album of oval plain and tinted views, entitled **Photographic views from Mt. Washington and Vicinity and the Franconia Range.** His first viewbook of twenty four views was published in Lancaster and bears the copyright date Jan. 1859. He subsequently published at least two additional viewbooks. **White's Photographic Views, for 1860, 2nd Series** (Cont. on page 20)



"Blacksmith Shop," from "Views in Lancaster, N.H." by Franklin White. (Richard Russack Collection).

Imprints On Stereo Views

By T. K. Treadwell

A rather unusual practice by photographers, dealers, and collectors has been the marking of stereoviews using incised or raised, non-inked, letters or designs. This technique is usually called imprinting, blind-stamping, or embossing. While never common, it was considerably more so on very early views, being used by such pioneers as Langenheim and the London Stereoscopic Company. The practice died out in the mid-1860s; was briefly revived in the mid-1870s; and persisted in limited use into the present century. Many of the large companies such as Kilburn never used the technique at all; others such as Anthony, Bierstadt, and Gutekunst employed it only for a short time.

Although the results are superficially similar, three completely different methods were commonly used to create a non-inked surface marking. The first was to mold the desired lettering into the cardboard mount during its manufacture; the maker's identification was usually a minor part of an overall ornamental design, as on the French tissue example shown in Figure 1. These molded markings are usually the only maker's identification found on this type of view.



1

Second, incised marks could be made by running the mount through a printing press, but without ink and with the spacing between type and mount set close so that the type pressed into the paper to give an incised "non-printing". Figure 2 shows the use of this technique on a rather late card from the C. H. Graves Company.



2

Finally, one could press the name or design into the mount using a hand-held or table-mounted die-stamping device. Die stamps can be bought today in any design desired, and are often used to create a personalized stationery. This type of imprint is by far the most commonly found on

stereoviews; it could be applied at any time, and indeed views are found with as many as three separate stampings. Figure 3 shows one of the six known imprints of the London Stereoscopic Company; on the other end of the same card (not shown) is an owner's imprint.



3

Marks could be incised, of course, on any material softer than the die; I have examples of an owner's mark stamped into a wooden box top, and even into the metal liner of a case for glass views. Use of dies on such hard material would naturally soon blur the image and shorten the working life.

The reasons for the early use of imprints are not at all clear. When embossing replaced printing entirely, as with the French tissues, it probably was a cost-saving device. In the great majority of cases, however, imprints were applied later, often in addition to printed material. This could only have been more expensive and troublesome. Permanency was also probably not a reason; inks of that period were adequately durable, as evidenced by the large quantities of printed cards which have survived.

However, during the revival of imprinting about 1874, the mark was almost always put on one or both of the photos, and the motivation is much more obvious. This revival followed closely on the flood of illegal copy prints, and the imprinting was certainly designed to identify (and hopefully deter) a pirate, without greatly marring the original photograph. It served this purpose well, since when an imprinted photo is viewed normally, in direct light, the imprint is inconspicuous. In the side-lighting used in photo-copying, however, the imprint is shadowed and stands out accusingly in the copy.

In the case of owners' imprints, one can only speculate that the motive was a combination of status symbol and insurance; much fancier than a written or rubber-stamped owner's name, and considerably harder to erase. Examples of personal imprints are shown in Figure 4.



4

Following is an alphabetical listing of the 91 imprints known to me; I am obliged to Rick Russack for contributing several early marks. Additions and comments from readers would be appreciated.

- F. H. Aiken, Manchester, N.H. (owner?)
- A. M. Allen, Pottsville, Pa.
- E. Anthony (Initials EA in circle)
- A. B. (French) (A. Block?)
- L. B. (French)
- J. W. B. (J. W. Black, Boston?)
- B. & D. (French)
- D. Barnum, Boston (two varieties)
- Geo. L. D. Barton, Boston
- Joseph L. Bates, Boston
- Beckel Bros., Lockport, N.Y.
- H. H. Bennett, Kilbourn City, Wisc.
- Bierstadt Bros., New Bedford, Mass.
- C. Bierstadt, Niagara Falls, N. Y. (initials in palette)
- A. Boisseau (Canadian?)
- W. E. Bowman, Ottawa, Ill.
- Cades (probably owner)
- J. Caifle, Regensburg, Germany.
- C. R. Chisholm & Bros., Montreal, Canada (probably dealer)
- L. O. Churchill, Montpelier, Vt.
- Colby (probably owner)
- Ch. D. (French)
- H. D. (French)
- T. M. V. Doughty, Winstead, Vt.
- John G. Doughty, Winstead, Vt.
- J. O. Durgan, Portland, Me.
- Edinburgh Stereoscopic Co., New York City
- J. Elliott (English) (Crown design)
- G. A. F. (French)
- W. A. Faze, Painesville, Ohio
- Ferd. Finsterlin, Munich, German.
- French & Sawyer, Keene, N.H.
- Godfray (English)
- J. Goodman (English)
- C. H. Graves Co., Philadelphia (Universal Photo Art Co.)
- F. Gutekunst, Philadelphia.
- A. H. (French)
- Harwood (probably 1890s U.S.)
- International View Co., Decatur, Ill.
- Isidor Hatschek, Vienna, Austria.
- H. W. Hayt (owner)
- J. F. Jarvis, Washington, D. C.
- J. H. Johnston, New York City
- B. K. (French)
- E. L. (French)
- J. L. (French; J. Levy?)
- John Lawrence, Dublin, Ireland.

(Cont. on page 14)

