



The Historical  
Society of  
Pennsylvania

Collection V-29

**Keystone View Company**  
**Lantern slides**

ca. 1900-1920

**2 boxes, 16 images, 0.25 lin. feet**

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**Restrictions:** None

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**Abstract**

From 1892 to 1963, the Keystone View Company produced thousand of images of people and places from the United States and around the world. The photos are of historical, social, cultural, and geographic interest. The company was founded in Meadville, Pennsylvania in 1892 by B.L. Singley, an amateur photographer who began by selling glass slides of local interest. The slides soon became a popular form of entertainment and the company grew to include some 50,000 images. As other forms of entertainment replaced the viewing of lantern slides, the company's growth slowed. It was purchased in 1963 by the Mast Development Company. Mast retained a Keystone division for a short time that manufactured products for the optical profession.

This collection consists of sixteen lantern slides from the Keystone View Company. The first seven slides, numbered 61 through 67, contain images of industrial Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Six of these scenes relate to the city's iron and steel industry, while the seventh is a shot of the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers. The next three photographs present a coke mine and an oil well from unknown locations in Pennsylvania. Two photographs represent America's past with a scene from the Gettysburg battlefield and a still of the Liberty Bell from inside Independence Hall in Philadelphia. The four remaining photographs are also from Philadelphia. Two are industrial and are from a textile mill and a locomotive workshop. Another is of people working in a school garden, while the last photo is of the coining presses at the federal mint.

**Background note**

The Keystone View Company was founded in 1892 by amateur photographer B.L. Singley of Meadville, Pennsylvania. Singley began his venture by marketing sets of thirty stereo-cards that recorded the flooding of nearby French Creek. Eventually additional photographers were employed and the Keystone View Company became the largest company of its kind concentrating on national and international subjects under "geographic" and "social science" headings. The images capture individuals, buildings, and landscapes from around the world. While photographs of statesmen, inventors, and

industrialist were included, most of the shots of people are of industrial or rural work scenes.

The Keystone lantern slides quickly became a popular form of entertainment. The company's collection of images continued to grow and by the 1920's, the company cornered the market, having acquired the collections of several large image publishers. The advent of film and television from the 1930's through 1950's, caused the company to shift its focus from entertainment to education. In 1963 the Mast Development Company purchased the Keystone View Company. By this time there was no longer a market for the slides and production was terminated. From its peak from 1895 through the 1920s Keystone manufactured hundreds of thousands, of slides of its more than 50,000 images.

### **Scope & content**

The Keystone View Company collection contains sixteen images from Pennsylvania. Seven are from Pittsburgh, numbers 61-67; five from Philadelphia, numbers 80-84; one from Gettysburg, number 73; and three are without location, numbers 68-70. Six of the seven scenes from Pittsburgh are images of the iron and steel industry, three of which also capture men at work. The seventh image of Pittsburgh shows a boy looking down at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers. Image number 68 is a view of a couple of men working in a coke mine. Number 69 shows men preparing to blast for oil, while number 70 shows oil spewing from a well. Image 73 shows a canon perched upon Culp's Hill in Gettysburg.

The remaining scenes are from Philadelphia. Image 80 is of the Liberty Bell when it was housed in Independence Hall. 81, 82, and 84 are industrial scenes of winding yarn on to bobbins in the spinning room of a textile factory, erecting locomotives at the Baldwin Locomotive Works, and of a man making coins at the mint. The last scene shows adults and children working in a large school garden. None of the photographs are dated, but it is likely that they fall in with the bulk of the Keystone image dates of 1895-1929.

## Separation report

None.

## Related materials

Keystone-Mast Collection, California Museum of Photography, University of California -  
Riverside <http://photo.ucr.edu/kmast/>

## Bibliography

<http://www.johnsonshawmuseum.org/ourhistory.htm>

## Subjects

Allegheny River (Pa. and N.Y.)  
Baldwin locomotives  
Battlefields—Gettysburg (Pa.)  
Blast furnaces—Pittsburgh (Pa.)  
Coin presses—Philadelphia (Pa.)  
Gettysburg National Military Park (Pa.)  
Gushers—United States—Pennsylvania  
Industrial Sites—United States—Pennsylvania  
Lantern slides  
Liberty Bell  
Locomotives  
Mines and mineral resources—Pittsburgh (Pa.)  
Monongahela River (W. Va. and Pa.)  
Oil Wells—United States—Pennsylvania  
Pig-iron—Pittsburgh (Pa.)  
Pittsburgh (Pa.)  
School gardens—Philadelphia (Pa.)  
Steel—Pittsburgh (Pa.)  
Woolen and worsted spinning—United States—Philadelphia (Pa.)  
Yarn—Philadelphia (Pa.)  
  
Baldwin Locomotive Works  
Keystone View Company

## **Administrative Information**

### **Restrictions**

The collection is open for research.

### **Acquisition information**

Provenance unknown.

### **Preferred citation**

Cite as: [Indicate cited item or series here], Keystone View Company Lantern Slides (Collection V 29), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

### **Processing note**

This collection contains glass lantern slides, the images of which have been reproduced and enlarged for viewing by researchers.

Processing made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this finding aid do not necessarily reflect those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

## Keystone View Company Lantern Slides

Folder title	Slide number
Confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers, Pittsburgh	61
Plant of the Blast Furnace, Pittsburgh	62
Modern Pig Iron Machine at Rest, Pittsburgh	63
Emptying Cooled Pig Iron from moulds into Car, Pittsburgh	64
Filling Moulds with Steel, Pittsburgh	65
Steel Ingot on the "Table" of the "Bloomington Mill," Pittsburgh	66
Red-Hot Steel Beam Being Cut by Buzz Saw, Pittsburgh	67
General View of Ovens Loading Coke into the Cars, Pittsburgh	68
Filling Shell with Nitro-Glycerine for Shooting Oil Well	69
Shooting Oil Well	70
Culp's Hill, Gettysburg	73
The Old Liberty Bell, Independence Hall, Philadelphia	80
Spinning Room, Winding Bobbins with Woolen Yarn, Philadelphia	81
Erecting Shop, Baldwin Locomotive Works, Philadelphia	82
School Gardens as a Practical Educational Method, Philadelphia	83
Coining Presses, Government Mint, Philadelphia	84