

To Suburban  
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PHOTOGRAPHING FOR THE CIVIC GOOD

By J. Horace McFarland

President, American Civic Association

In the suburban community, or in any other community fortunate enough to have interested citizens who will work for its advance <sup>ment</sup> toward better living conditions, and therefore toward true efficiency, photography may be of remarkable aid. I say may be! For <sup>many</sup> varied and ~~often~~ <sup>often</sup> distressing ~~series of~~ experiences give ~~me~~ a feeling of considerable pessimism as to the effectiveness of photography in civic advance when there is <sup>much</sup> dependence upon the initiative of the unacquainted professional photographer, whose proficiency is solely, or almost solely, in portrait making.

A picture presents facts to the eye not only in an attractive or impressive or convincing fashion, if it is a good picture, but it makes that presentation in a very much shorter space of time than if words were used in an endeavor to convey the same facts. There is a complete ~~W~~ logical reason for both the efficiency and the economy of the photographic agency, when properly employed.

In the first place, the average human brain seems to be able to grasp more quickly and concretely an impression conveyed pictorially than by means of the arbitrary characters used to designate the symbols which make up words as parts of thoughts. A successful picture, be it photographic or made by some other form of human endeavor, is never turgid, or dry, or verbose. It speaks a language appealing alike to the lettered and the unlettered, and the enormous growth of the use of the picture - principally the photographic picture - in the past score of years, in all

forms of education, business, philanthropy and human endeavor, is sufficient evidence of the truth of this statement.

Another reason for the strength of the successful photographic picture as an agent for convincing any one is that it ~~always comes in such fashion as to~~ direct attention particularly <sup>to</sup> the principal objects intended to be presented. Concrete instances of this effect, which I may call the "framing" effect, might be cited to weariness. In a certain important Michigan city a devoted woman started to clean up the dirty streets and the no less dirty backyards. With several somewhat timid associates she visited one gentleman whose premises were maintained in a notably unsanitary and unsightly condition. To the first onslaught of the ladies he was disposed to pay little attention. He was accustomed to those backyards, and they seemed good to him. When, however, the leader brought out a photograph of the worst part of the worst backyard and laid it before the gentleman, his <sup>serious interest</sup> ~~attention~~ was ~~immediately~~ obtained, and he recognized with a start that the backyard was not so good after all. He still remained obdurate, however, as to cleaning up, until the artful lady, whose course of action had been carefully mapped out in advance, said that if he cared to permit <sup>to continue</sup> the conditions truthfully shown in the picture, he probably would not at all object to the publication of the photograph in the daily newspaper as an evidence of civic attractiveness!

Mr. Citizen capitulated at once. He did not want his ugly backyard emphasized to the people of the city in which he lived. He cleaned up that day.

Another equivalent instance occurs to me in relation to a western community, in which the local newspaper had been waging a vigorous campaign against filthy alley-ways. Its written words met with little attention, <sup>but</sup> when finally properly made photographs were obtained and printed, public interest was <sup>aroused</sup> ~~obtained~~ and public condemnation of the condi-

tions at once followed. The dirty alley-ways were cleaned up in a week.

In each of these instances, and, indeed, in all successful instances, the photograph which is to be really efficient for the civic good must be made with some attention to the main idea in mind. Let us consider, as an instance, an approach to a certain charming Pennsylvania town of suburban qualifications. The people of that town are quite properly proud of it. Its streets are wide, tree-shaded and sightly. The highways are kept in good order. The public buildings are pleasing. The public spirit is also very pleasing, because there is much of it.

When I came to see this town, however, my somewhat acquainted eyes began their investigations as the train entered the town. The object first seen was an enormous and distressing billboard on the left of the railroad track. Next <sup>then was noted</sup> a succession of filthy backyards bordering the track on either side, with ashes and litter of all sorts ~~between~~ <sup>between</sup> the fences and outbuildings and the railroad tracks.

Now my acquainted camera, which is only a little affair, carried in the hand, saw that billboard as a very prominent object. I did not go across the track from it and make one square <sup>full front</sup> general view of the surroundings. I stood as close to the billboard as I could manage to focus, while at the same time showing enough track and distance to cause the people who would later see the resulting picture to easily recognize it.

Then I passed along to the backyard conditions. I got close to one of the worst of them, and high enough to see into it, so that certain objects which looked almost as badly as they smelled were very prominent in the photograph. I did not stand in the middle of the track to produce a distorted perspective with my little wide-angle lens, but enough to one side to secure the proper vanishing effect.

If instead of making these exposures myself I had ordered the best local photographer to make even the views



a considerable section of the earth's surface, on to his possible five inches of length. *in the photograph.*

In photographing for the civic good in a community it is desired to better, the honest civic worker must forget friendships for a little while. I have encountered ~~in~~ in many instances, some of them distinctly amusing, good people who would say to me: "Please do not show these ugly things hereabout, even though they ought not to be here, because it will make Mrs. So-and-so angry." Yet I have no instance to remember in which the proper, fair and good-humored showing of such a condition has made Mrs. So-and-so or any one else angry, except in the proper fashion. I was once objurgated for a week by the entire press of a certain small Middle States city because I had printed pictures in a national periodical of some of the ~~pictures~~ <sup>pictures</sup> unsightly conditions <sup>along</sup> the river front of the community, in its principal streets, near its most important public buildings, and just where the most people who came to it could see how careless it was. All the trouble, however, died down when a thoughtful citizen broke into the newspaper assault with the suggestion that, "After all, are not the things that Mr. McFarland has shown about us true? And if they are true, ought we not to remove the disgrace?" There was but one answer, and I had the enormous satisfaction some months later of receiving the official thanks of the mayor for the jolt which had first caused only resentment.

There is, however, one point to which I ~~was~~ <sup>must</sup> especially ~~MA~~ call attention in photographing for the civic good. Not long ago I visited a small city, and was given certain <sup>local</sup> pictures to show in connection with my own assortment of beauty and ugliness ~~and a lantern slide~~ <sup>comprehension lantern-slide</sup>. I demanded to see the places of which the pictures were made, and I discovered that one of the most unsightly ~~pictures~~ <sup>views</sup> related to a building operation which was ~~under way~~ <sup>under way</sup> in process of being changed. I refused to show that picture. It is never fair to show changing conditions when they

are changing for the better, unless in *immediation*

In another case a lantern slide was ~~shown~~ <sup>offered</sup> to me which ~~showed~~ <sup>showed</sup> unpleasant conditions in a very obscure part of the town, not at all in the public eye, while there were dozens of lapses from reasonable civic cleanliness and sightliness within five hundred feet of the town's vital center. I declined to use that picture.

The photographer for the civic good must be fair. He ~~must~~ <sup>ought to</sup> observe and photographically record only conditions that are ~~bad~~ <sup>prominently</sup> and good, as the case may be, and that, ~~in the~~ <sup>the location of which will be easily recognized</sup> if of bad things, are not in immediate process of being bettered. ~~He~~ <sup>actual methods of</sup> may now properly ~~be~~ <sup>inquired</sup> as to the use of suitable photographs. ~~If we secure pictures that emphasize the bad and make distinct the good in a town, how can they be made effective?~~

Perhaps the best way, where there is to be a private endeavor, ~~as in the instance above cited of the Michigan city, to change conditions,~~ is to take prints of the photographs to the guilty people ~~in a courteous endeavor~~ <sup>making</sup> to ~~ask them to~~ <sup>in a movement</sup> co-operate for the good of the town. This is usually an effective means, ~~but it is expensive, & rather slow.~~

Another way is to make a consistent series of photographs and have them used in the local newspapers, most of which can now print halftones sufficiently well to permit the recognition of the ugly as compared with the beautiful. I have in mind one ~~really~~ <sup>(Dexas)</sup> unusual and extraordinary instance, that of the Dallas "News," which has for more than a year presented a continuous series of pictures relating to civic attractiveness. It did show bad conditions for a good while, and then it changed its line to the showing of good work in various parts of the United States. The effect on the city of Dallas has been remarkably good, and now the same newspaper is extending its service in a most philanthropic way to the whole state of Texas.

Most newspapers, as I find them, are sincerely and honestly interested in the best interests of the communities they serve. In nearly every instance the proper and

practical approach to the editor or publisher will secure his hearty interest and help. I could enlarge upon this subject, but that is "another story." It is enough to say that the newspapers, under proper approach and under fair conditions of preparation, will usually <sup>and cheerfully</sup> print pictures in a campaign for the betterment of community conditions.

The most effective means, however, toward the accomplishment of civic good <sup>through</sup> ~~with the use~~ of photographs is to make them into lantern slides, and then to show these lantern slides to the people, who will recognize the views presented.

The stereopticon, or "magic lantern," through which lantern slides are presented, enlarges a view, which in the <sup>lantern slide itself</sup> ~~slide~~ is of fixed dimensions of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  x 4 inches, to a diameter of from four to 20 feet, according to the instrument, <sup>its</sup> ~~the~~ distance from the screen and the size of the hall. <sup>Lantern-slide, shown by a well-managed stereopticon,</sup> If a good instrument is properly handled much more of a photograph is brought to attention ~~in this fashion~~ than is ever seen on the best possible print on paper. Lantern slides may also be colored so that <sup>actual hues are placed</sup> ~~nature lives~~ before the audience, ~~so fortunate as to see good representations of this kind.~~

One underlying reason for the effectiveness and usefulness of the lantern slide in promoting the civic good is that, if properly shown in a darkened room, the attention of every person present is inevitably focused upon the picture being at the moment presented. There is no chance for the attention to wander, as in looking at a newspaper or magazine, or in hearing words. The picture is the only thing that reflects light into the room, and the human eye will surely seek it.

The method for <sup>effectively using lantern slides to promote</sup> ~~producing an effective result in~~ a movement for any specific form of community betterment is comparatively simple. Satisfactory photographs need to be made, emphasizing the points to be brought to the people. These should be of dimensions suitable for lantern slide reproduction. They need not be large photographs. A lan-

tern slide can be made quite as satisfactorily from a 4 x 5 or a post-card size negative as from a much larger original. In my own practice, a little post card camera, as I have before said, serves as my civic notebook and shotgun.

From 30 to 100 pictures form a satisfactory basis for an evening's showing, except in the hands of an expert lecturer. The power of contrast is never more effective than when a local view of bad conditions is presented in ~~connection~~ <sup>Comparison</sup> with good conditions <sup>existing in another</sup> in a community of preferably the same resources and population.

These good views, I am glad to say, can now be had through several State departments of education, notably the states of New York and Pennsylvania, and through the American Civic Association. The cost for <sup>single</sup> rental is usually approximately <sup>some</sup> seven cents for each slide, though ~~the~~ state organizations furnish them free.

<sup>good</sup> Now the same difficulty comes about in the getting of lantern-slides locally from the professional photographer as is found in the getting of good photographs locally from the professional photographer. Practically any photographer will tell you he can make lantern slides, ~~most~~ <sup>yet very few</sup> of them know ~~nothing~~ <sup>make</sup> about making <sup>usable</sup> lantern slides. The work is not difficult, but does require some knowledge ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> some little apparatus, <sup>+ a little experience</sup>, <sup>Knowledge of what constitutes</sup>

A lantern-slide is nothing but a print of any specific negative on glass instead of on paper. This makes it a transparency, through which the rays of light may pass on their way <sup>to the screen</sup> <sup>or wall</sup> against which they are projected and from which they are reflected to the eyes of the audience.

There are two ways of making lantern slides. One is by "contact," in which the lantern slide plate is placed next to the negative, either glass or film, in just the same fashion as if a piece of paper ~~would~~ <sup>is</sup> placed next to either the negative or film in making a print. The limitations of this method are, first, that there is no opportunity to use all of a larger negative that one may happen to have; and,

good lantern slide is the first essential - must often be kept. Slides have been made for me in India by a local photographer that were as thin as the wafer, they did not warp, as to be needed to be kept, as to be needed a good thing because he did not know a good slide. He needed full of all a standard to work.



second, that it is exceedingly hard to get really good *contact* results by reason of particles of dust coming between the *surface* two ~~films~~ that touch, *which are enormously magnified when thrown on the screen.*

The second and almost universally followed method in good practice involves the use of a lantern-slide camera in which at one end is placed the negative to be used, whatever its size or shape, in such fashion as to permit the rays of light to shine through the negative and through the lens on to the lantern-slide plate at the other end of the camera. By means of the bellows between, the negative can be focused on to the ground-glass of the camera before the lantern plate is inserted, and any part of any negative can thus be *selected and* availed of, within the range of the apparatus.

The operation is simple, quick and cheap. It is not proper here to go into details as to its actual practice. It would be well worth while for any one interested to buy a little book known as "Photo-Miniature No. 9" from his photographic dealer, which tells in a simple and clear manner how to make lantern-slides.

When the lantern-slide is made it is finished by putting round it a standard "mat," the dimensions of which are fairly well indicated in the illustrations accompanying this article. Another piece of plain glass, called "cover" glass, is placed against *the film side of* this *to protect it,* and the whole bound together by a strip of black gummed paper. A "thumb mark," to indicate how to insert the slide in the lantern, is then placed on the lower left hand corner of the slide as one holds it up before him, with the light shining through so as to give the effect of a print in the correct position. Carelessness in placing the "thumb marks" or in leaving them off, results in some distressing reversals of pictures once in a while, *utterly destroying before a gathered audience a carefully built up impression.*

Here again the average professional photographer *man* falls down. I have had given me pieces of glass to use as lantern slides, without mat or cover glass. Sometimes they have had an image on them which was so shadowy and faint as

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to be practically invisible ~~on the camera~~ <sup>lens screen</sup>. It is the amateur who usually makes the best lantern slides, and the pursuit is fascinating, easy and ~~economical~~ <sup>inexpensive</sup>. It is good fun, entirely aside from its civic uses, and the man or woman who fits out to make locally such pictures as will do the community ~~service~~ service will inevitably find it entertaining and interesting to go on making beautiful or interesting things which he will be showing his friends from time to time at home or elsewhere. *This work may thus be made enjoyable to many.*

Recently lantern outfits have been made so completely efficient and so ~~economical~~ <sup>low in cost</sup> that any man of ordinary means, and especially any uplift organization in an ordinary community, can easily possess them. They are operated either with electric light current or with other sources of light, if necessary. The "post-card projectors" I do not speak of because that, again, is another story, and one which while it seems to be most available does not work out in practice as of anything like so much real good to the community as ~~the production~~ <sup>the use</sup> of first rate lantern-slides.

I do not go into the detail of arranging for *civic meetings* or lectures, for that again would make altogether another story. If enough readers of Suburban Life are interested in using photographs for the civic good to commend what I have here written, I may be induced to again talk to my stenographer, ~~for their benefit~~ in the way of suggestions as to uplift meetings and their conduct. *Meanwhile, I will endeavor to reply briefly to clearly expressed questions sent me in care of the Editor.*

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Faulty perspective is also a common distortion, caused by tipping the camera up or down or making a view without using the ~~smear~~ <sup>smear</sup>. *A the way to square up the image. The result shows a building falling in upon itself, or spreading out at the top.*

10B

I suggest that the civic worker contemplating the use of lantern slides obtain a good slide as a standard to which to work. One can be had of any dealer in slides at not over fifty cents, & it may be used to show the local slide worked what he must approximate to. *Right here I caution aspirants, improve against waiting until the last moment to get photographs or slides. Repeatedly I have gone to a city to lecture, upon an appointment made many miles ahead, only to find that the local pictures were not ready, & that they were therefore hastily & usually*