

Chautauqua County
Historical Society

Box 22

Bowman Display Photos



Box22 - 5536a Bowman Display Photo

The scenic beauty of Chautauque County was the inspiration and mainstay of the photography of John O. Bowman. As he traversed the countryside, always with a box camera or two not far from reach, a rolling hillside or a sunset reflection would lead the perfect setting that he sought for his work. Regarded as a pictorialist, Bowman's photography achieved national fame and he is today hailed as "the Box Camera Champion".

It all came about in 1898 when in Mayville's Pioneer Grocery Store John happened upon a deal where for 75 cents and six coffee spoons he purchased an Eastman Kewanee box camera. Soon his photos were appearing in local columns club shows and with occasional exposure and acclaim they were displayed in galleries across the country. What was so amazing about his work was that he only used the very simple and limited box camera. Yet Bowman could work wonders within the box camera's capacity. Using the six Kewanee box camera equipped with different filters, he was able to attain striking results. A white filter was used for sun definition and a red filter accentuated the contrast between the white clouds against a darker sky. A K2 filter cut through haze and fog. Though the box camera has inferior lens quality, Bowman's use of brilliant contrasts in lighting produced sharp appearing pictures.

In an interview with "American Photography" magazine in August 1951, Bowman said he got a "hunch" when there was a picture around. He felt there must be a sense of proportion, a harmony of arrangement, and a feeling of composition in order to create a good picture. This hunch is evident in his photography whether it be the serene farmlands of the shorelines of Lakes Erie and Chautauque. Never a pretentious artist, Bowman only took pictures of people if they were incidental to their surroundings, exposed and natural. First prize for the 1938 National Newspaper Photography Contest went to John Bowman for his photograph entitled "June Plover". In 1939, 126 of Bowman's photos were featured at the New York World's Fair. Fifteen of his photographs were later commissioned by the Chautauque County Vacationsists Association to advertise the county's scenic charms as the perfect vacation spot.

The Chautauque County Historical Society's Bowman Photograph Collection contains some 4,400 images, spanning the years from the 1890's to 1977 with the majority taken in the 1930's and 40's. Approximately 25% of the collection is of Chautauque County subjects and a good deal of the remainder were taken in Ontario and Quebec, Canada where Bowman enjoyed several camping and fishing trips.

Bowman's artistic eye captured the picturesque beauty of Chautauque County and his collection has left us with a treasury of landscapes we may all appreciate and enjoy. The Chautauque County Historical Society is pleased to share this representative portion of the Bowman landscape collection with the public.

Funding of this presentation is made possible by a grant from the T. James and Hazel Clarke Foundation of Jamestown, New York.

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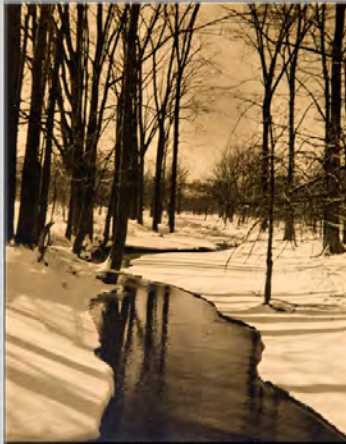
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Walter Jacob
June 2, 1945
To My Friend John O. Bowman
COVERED
BRIDGE - MILL CREEK NEAR
JEFFERSON, OHIO, BURNED IN 1950
BY THE FRENCH AS CHECKER CREEK

_MG_5516a.tif



_MG_5518a.tif

"Peace and Quiet" - I like the effect of the high arching heavens with its fluffy clouds making a canopy over the sheltering trees forming the background for these peaceful Jersey cows. It is well titled as well as being a beautiful picture.
A.S.A.
1/16/40



_MG_5519a.tif

_MG_5520a.tif

_MG_5522a.tif



24 DR. GREEN
"THE LAST FURROW"

Pix BY:
JOHN O. BOWMAN

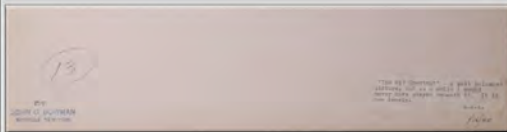
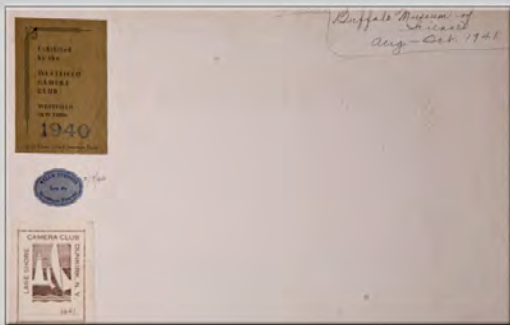
JOHN O. BOWMAN
111 W. 42ND ST.
NEW YORK 36, N.Y.



_MG_5523a.tif

_MG_5524a.tif

_MG_5525a.tif



_MG_5531a.tif

_MG_5532a.tif

_MG_5533a.tif



"Summer Time" - How often I have felt the peace of sky and tree reflecting summer stream. A truly beautiful picture. My compliments, John.
A.S.A.
1/16/40



_MG_5534a.tif

_MG_5535a.tif

_MG_5536a.tif

II 9348a

_MG_5537a.tif



_MG_5541a.tif

Water scene
June 2, 1945
To My friend John O. Bowman
COVERED
BRIDGE - MILL CREEK NEAR
JEFFERSON, OHIO, KNOWN IN 1950
BY THE FRENCH AS CHARGE CREEK

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_MG_5544a.tif

5 MFT. GREEN
"IN ALLEN PARK"
Fix BY:
JOHN O. BOWMAN
JOHN O. BOWMAN
AN APERTURE 11.5
UNIVERSITY MICRO FILMS

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_MG_5546a.tif

#27 BLUE
"LITTLE MAN"
Fix BY:
JOHN O. BOWMAN
JOHN O. BOWMAN
AN APERTURE 11.5
UNIVERSITY MICRO FILMS

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_MG_5548a.tif

Fix BY: BOWMAN
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AN APERTURE 11.5
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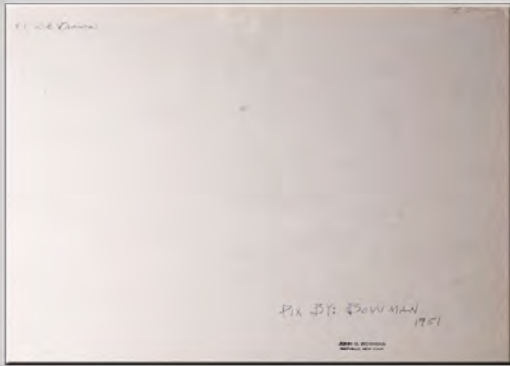
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JOHN O. BOWMAN
IN PERSON 1950
4/12
John Bowman
West Home
Maysville
OH

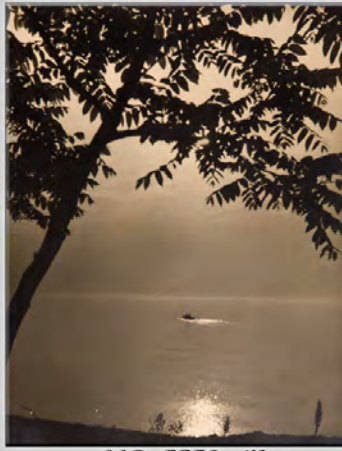
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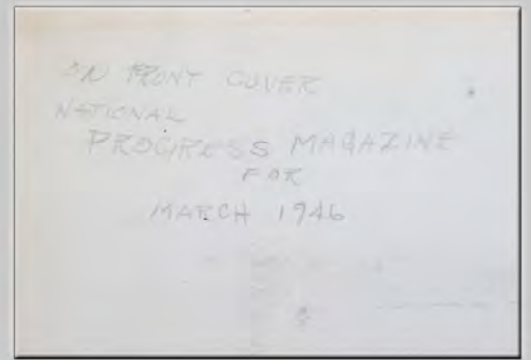
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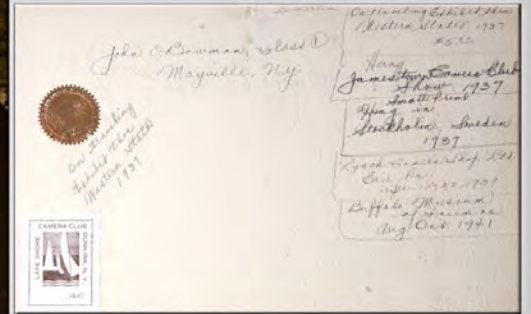
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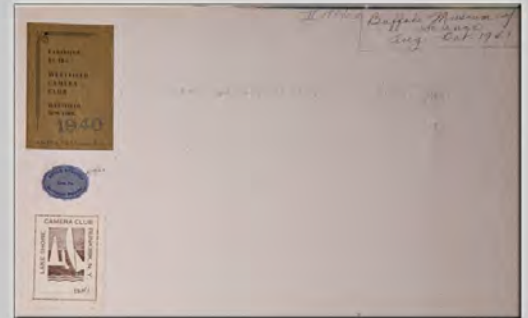
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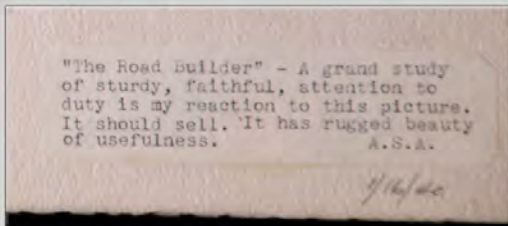
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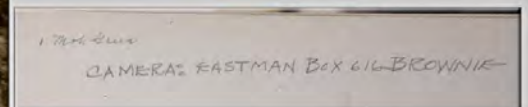
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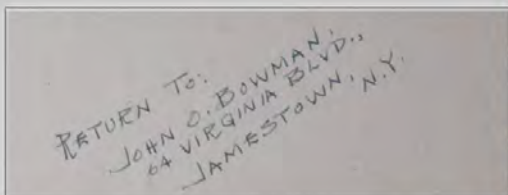
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Wild White Swan with
day old cygnets taken
near Mayville, N.Y. 1/14/40

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_MG_5590a.tif

245 B. 11000
"OLD 110A"
Fix By
JOHN O'BONNAN
MAYVILLE, NY
MAY 14 1940

_MG_5591a.tif



_MG_5592a.tif



_MG_5593a.tif



_MG_5594a.tif

White Swan
in home
John O'Bonnan
1937

_MG_5595a.tif



_MG_5596a.tif

1937
Kjork...
Buffalo...
Aug-Oct 1941

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_MG_5598a.tif

II 3016cf

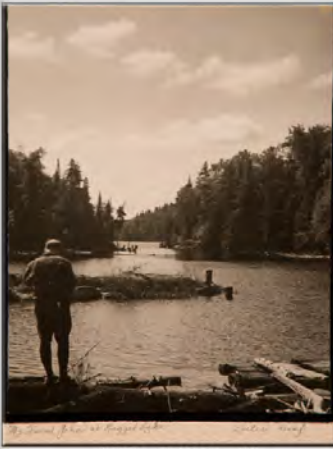
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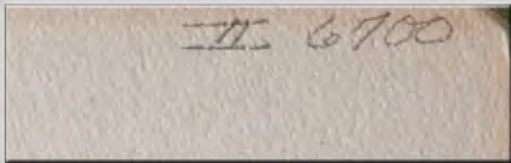
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