

*History is our mission ...
To illuminate and preserve.*

History Museum of Mobile
111 South Royal Street

Phoenix Fire Museum
203 South Claiborne Street

Historic Site at Fort Condé
150 South Royal Street



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HISTORY MUSEUM OF MOBILE PRESENTS ‘BOTH SIDES OF THE LENS: PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE SHACKELFORD FAMILY’

A 40-image photographic exhibition of people in Fayette County, Ala., in the early 20th century, “Both Sides of the Lens” offers a unique look into the lives of rural northwestern Alabamians during the time of Jim Crow law and the Great Depression.

The History Museum of Mobile is pleased to present “Both Sides of the Lens: Photographs by the Shackelford Family,” a photographic exhibition of people in Fayette County, Ala., from 1900 to 1935.

The 40-image exhibit was curated by the Birmingham Public Library and will be on display at the History Museum until April 14, 2013.

In a time when posing for a photographic portrait was an opportunity for people to make meaningful visual statements about themselves, the Shackelfords captured images of local residents and travelers, including individuals, families, school groups and civic organizations. Their subjects usually posed with objects they held dear, such as a book, a pocket watch, a gun or a musical instrument.

Mitch and Geneva Shackelford and their children were multi-talented African American artists, farmers and landowners in Covin, Ala., who left behind a collection of more than 850 glass-plate negatives that are now preserved in the Birmingham Public Library Archives.

“These remarkable photographs provide us with an unprecedented glimpse into the daily lives of African Americans in rural Northwest Alabama during the first three decades of the 20th century,” said History Museum Director David Alsobrook, Ph. D.

When he first saw the Shackelford photographs, Alsobrook said, he was immediately struck by the subjects’ wide range in ages – from infants to elderly. The photos are also quite different from many of the formal studio portraits of that time, he said.

The Shackelfords captured their subjects as they gathered in front of their homes in the midst of various celebrations of fraternal orders and other social organizations, he said.

One young child from around 1910 is shown holding a bundle of schoolbooks, while another photograph shows a fashionable young woman from the Depression Era casually lounging on a blanket with her suitcase nearby. Two men stand on either side of a newspaper headline proclaiming “Victory!” at the end of World War I in 1918.

The Shackelfords’ photography also provided blacks a vehicle for self-representation during a time when demeaning and stereotypical depictions of African Americans were prevalent in the U.S.

“Despite the oppression of Jim Crow laws and the hardships of the Great Depression, these Alabamians gaze at us over the years with pride and self-confidence,” Alsobrook said. “We once again deeply appreciate this opportunity to partner with the professional staff of the Birmingham Public Library Archives to bring this phenomenal collection to Mobile.”

HISTORY MUSEUM OF MOBILE: Located in the Old City Hall/ Southern Market at 111 South Royal Street in downtown Mobile, the History Museum of Mobile documents the 300-year history of Mobile and the surrounding region. The History Museum is open Tuesday through Saturday 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. and Sunday from 1 p.m. – 5 p.m. Admission to the museum is \$7 for adults, \$6 for senior citizens, and \$5 for students. For more information, call (251) 208-7508.

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