

The New Circular

Showcasing historic writings and photographs of the Oneida Community and its legacy.

June 2015

Issue 6

In this issue:



Oneida Community Women, about 1865

Commercial Photographers at the Mansion House, 1863-1871

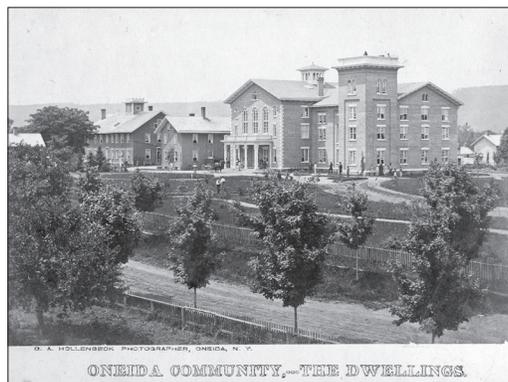
by Tony Wonderley

This article documents the “artists” who came into the Oneida Community from the outside world to photograph Perfectionist life. The list is compiled from descriptions or advertisements in Community writings, and from an inventory of stereoscopic views done by Kathy Garner. I tried to identify the photos alluded to in Community descriptions. However, not all of the images mentioned there seem to be in our collection.

In general, the photographers reviewed here were responsible for the earlier images of the Community. Most later pictures probably were taken in-house by Oneida Community member D. Edson Smith.

Two specialized kinds of photographs are described in the ads quoted below. A “stereoscopic view” (see figure 3b) was a strip of cardboard on which were mounted two photographs taken from slightly different vantage points. When viewed through the lenses of an optical device (stereoscope), the photos seemed to blend into one three-dimensional scene. Taking stereo views required a special set of equipment.

A “carte de visite” (see figure 2b) was a portrait in the form of an albumin print glued to a cardboard backing of standardized dimensions. About the size of business or calling cards, cartes de visite were enthusiastically collected, displayed, and traded during the 1860s like baseball cards.



1a. *Dwellings of the Community*

1. Hollenbeck, June 1863

The making of photographs began in June 1863 with the visit of O. A. Hollenbeck and assistants from a studio in Oneida (city). The Community had already thought about marketing the photographs

themselves as souvenirs of Perfectionist life.

The front (east) porch of the Mansion House was completed the day before. Hence, the Community evidently scheduled this session to show off the new look of their home.

Community Journal, June 25, 1863:
A company of artists here from Oneida, Mr. Hollenbeck, Mr. Moulton and a Mr. French formerly from Dummerston Vt. They spent nearly the entire day here taking photographic and stereoscopic views of the Community House, grounds and groups of persons. They took several of the Band and one of nearly the whole of the Community. We shall probably make an arrangement with the artists, so as to sell the pictures here, most of them if not all.



1b. *Group No. 1*



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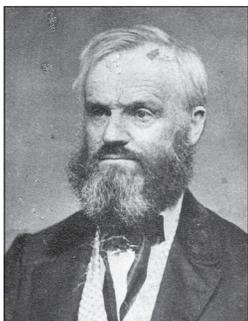
1c. Group No. 2

Circular, July 2, 1863

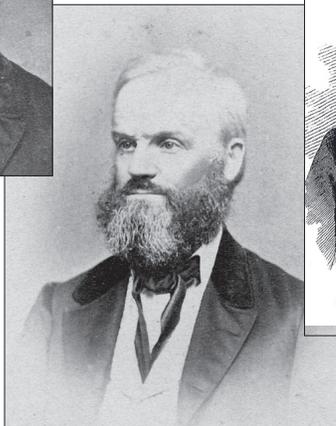
[Recently] some Daguerrian artists spent a day here taking views. Four large-sized Photographs (measuring 7 1/2 inches by 5 1/2) were made, one giving a capital view of the Community dwellings and a part of the grounds, and the others representing open air groups. In one of these nearly the whole Community were taken, with a distinctness and fidelity such that the members are easily recognized. Besides these four large pictures, the same number of stereoscopic views were taken. As the artists, Messrs Hollenbeck & Co. intend to multiply copies, any one of them can be obtained after a few days by remitting the price to the publishers of the Circular.

Circular, July 9, 1863 (first advertisement for photographs):

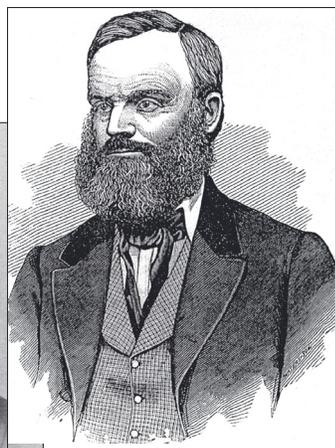
We can now furnish the following Photographic views of the Community:



2a. Early Photo of Noyes



2b. Carte de Visite of Noyes by M. A. Hollenbeck, Oneida



2c. Print of the Photo

1. *Dwellings of the Community, size 7 1/2 inches by 5 1/2. Price 75 cents.*
2. *Group No. 1., Showing nearly the whole Community family, size 7 1/2 inches by 5 1/2. Price 75 cents.*
3. *Group No. 2. Similar to Group No. 1 but showing a less number of persons, size 7 1/2 inches by 5 1/2. Price 75 cents.*
4. *The Community Orchestra, a group of twenty-three persons, size 7 1/2 inches by 5 1/2. Price 75 cents.*

The following stereoscopic views can be furnished, price 50 cents each:

The Dwellings. Group No. 1. The Orchestra. Rustic Seat.

Small pictures, carte de visite size, of the Dwellings, Group No. 1, and of the Orchestra, will be furnished for 25 cents each. All of these pictures are beautifully executed. The larger sized ones are suitable for framing. Any of them can be sent by mail post-paid at the prices named.



1d. The Community Orchestra

2. Moulton and French, August 1863

Hollenbeck's assistants showed up with a portrait of John Noyes, perhaps this one. This image, at any rate, is one of the very few photos of Noyes datable to about this time and the only one done locally.

Several years later, the Oneida Community offered this picture to the *Phrenological Journal* to illustrate an article about Noyes. That publication had the photo made into a wood engraving. The print done by the *Phrenological Journal* (published November 1866) was reprinted in the *Circular* on November 26, 1866.

Community Journal, August 2, 1863:

The Artists Mr. Moulton and Mr. French brought up a very fine large photograph of John H. Noyes, cost of same \$ [amount of payment not given].

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3a. Community Buildings



3c. Summer House Group



3d. Bag Bee on Lawn



3b. Buildings and Grounds (stereoscopic view)



3e. Summer House & Short Dress Group



3h. Children in Playground

3. Moulton and Dopp, Late Spring, 1865

Another photographic session, documented only in an advertisement in the *Circular* (see below), took place two years later. The name of the studio, in Rome, is given on one of the photos. Although all the identifications are my interpretations, figures 3b, 3f, and 3j are more tentatively suggested than the others.

Circular, June 19, 1865 (advertisement):

New Pictures

The following Photographic views of the Oneida Community can now be furnished on application:

The Community Buildings—size, 8 inches by 10—price 75 cents.

Buildings and Grounds—size, 14 inches by 16—price \$3.00; the same view 8 inches by 10—price 75 cents.

Rustic Summer-House and Group—size, 8 inches by 10—price 75 cents.

Bag-Bee on the Lawn—size, 8 inches by 10—price 75 cents.

The following stereoscopic views can also be furnished—price 40 cents each:

Buildings and Grounds;

Summer-House and Short-Dress Group;

Butternut Tree and Group (men);

Trout-Pond, Grotto and Group (young men);

Flower-Garden and Arbor;

Children and Play-ground;

Bag-Bee in the Hall;

South View from the Tower.



3f. Trout Pond



3i. Bag Bee in Hall



3g. Flower Garden & Arbor



3j. South from Tower

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Small pictures, of *carte de visite* size, may be obtained at 25 cents each, of
The Buildings and Grounds;
Summer-House and Short-Dress Group;
Butternut Tree and Group of Men;
Bag-Bee in the Hall;
South View from the Tower.

Most of the above pictures are well executed. The largest one, 14 by 16, is thought the best ever made of the Community buildings and grounds. That of the "Rustic Summer-House and Group," is a fine view—the group including men, women and children. "Bag-Bee on the Lawn" will be interesting to some as indicating how Communism renders labor attractive.

Of the stereoscopic and *carte de visite* sizes, particular attention may be called to the "Summer-House and Short-Dress Group" (giving a view of the costume which for seventeen years has been popular with the women of the Community); "Butter Nut Tree and Group," featuring some of our most faithful soldiers; and the "South View from the Tower," which gives a glimpse of buildings, persons and scenery, which is pleasing. The other small pictures are also good, particularly that of the buildings and grounds. That of the "Children and Play-ground," gives a view of nearly all the small children; and would be particularly interesting were not a few of the smallest faces somewhat blurred.

Any of the above pictures will be sent, post paid, at the prices named. Address, "Oneida Community, Oneida, N. Y."



4. *Newhouse in the Woods*

4. Unknown Photographer, April 1867

Published by the Community in 1865, *The Trapper's Guide* remained in print for fifty years. Beginning in 1867, the book carried a print showing Sewell Newhouse in his tent (Jessie Mayer, *Oneida Community Journal*, December 2002, p. 15). That engraving was done from a photograph taken on this occasion.

Daily Journal, April 11, 1867:

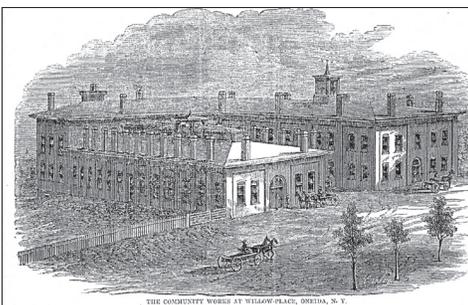
We had an artist here yesterday, to take a photograph of the tent on the lawn, its interior arrangements, furniture &c., &c., with Mr. Newhouse, his dog and his traps. There were three different views taken, all of which are said to be very good.

5. Oneida Photographers, April 1867

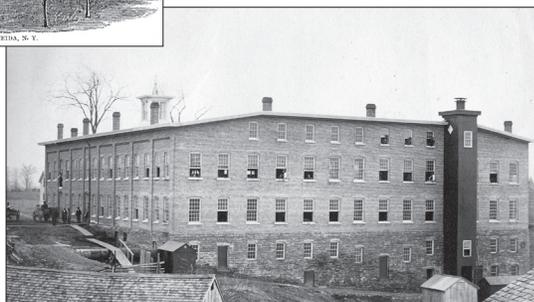
We have the "north view" (described below) only in the form of the engraving made from it (*Circular*, August 19, 1867).

Daily Journal, April 16, 1867:

The photographic artists from Oneida, were at work over our way [Willow Place] yesterday. One view was taken from the ridge-pole of the old barn, north of the shop, and another from a platform in the field south-west of us. We caught a glimpse of the 'negative' of the north view; it really looked grand.



5a. *Print of the Trap Shop*



5b. *Back of the Trap Shop*

6. Moulton, June 1867

Among the images illustrated from this session, 6c and 6d are more tentatively identified than the other two.

Daily Journal, June 13, 1867:

We have Mr. Moulton & Co. from Rome, here today, taking pictures of different portions of our grounds. They are now, (half past nine), taking a view of the buildings, from the top of the horse-barn.

Daily Journal, June 14, 1867:

A picture of the [croquet] ground with persons playing the game, and others looking on, was taken yesterday. Several other groups of men, women and children were taken in the course of the day, but it was windy, and some of the efforts at picture taking, did not succeed. At nearly sunset however, most of the family were gathered en masse on the lawn, the wind having lulled, when, we are told, a very good picture was taken. We shall see. It was a day of considerable confusion and weariness particularly at the children's house, as the children had to be fixed, and taken out several times. It is said that the best photograph was that of all the children grouped together, taken near the lamp-post.



6a. Croquet



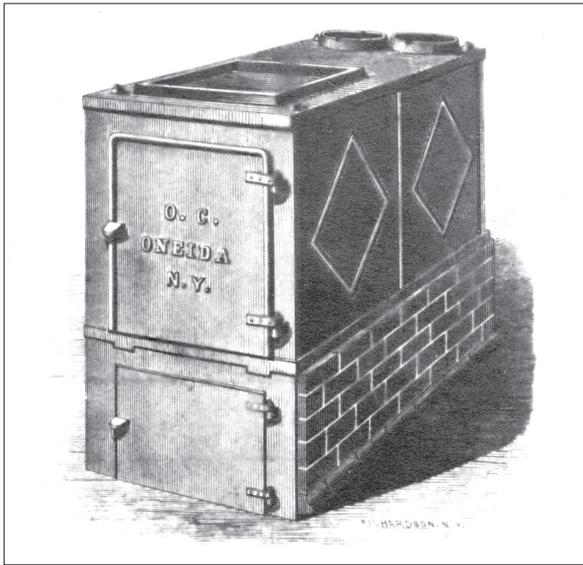
6b. Children at Lamppost



6c. Group Scene



6d. Raking Bee



7. Print of Oneida Community Hop Stove

7. Oneida Photographers, Spring 1868

Once again, we have only an image of the engraving done from the photographic session described here.

Daily Journal, March 24, 1868:

Two photographers from Oneida were here this forenoon taking pictures of our hop stoves. The pictures are to be engraved for a poster which the Foundry folks are getting up.



8a. South Lawn Group

8. Ranger & Austen, September 1871

The iconic image of the south lawn group is identified as "Ranger & Austen" on one of our prints. Given that provenance, I think that the other staged scenes, posed in a similar fashion, must have been done on the same occasion. Two additional photos reproduced here (landscape and north lawn views) are also stamped "Ranger & Austen."

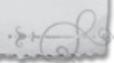
Oneida Circular, September 11, 1871:

Mr. Ranger, of the firm Ranger & Austen, Photographers, Syracuse, N. Y., was here the greater part of last week, taking views of our place and people. Mr. R. was chosen by the government two years ago to head its part of photographers who went to Iowa to get pictures of the great lunar eclipse. Some

account of this expedition will be found in "Our Visitors" column. At our place he was assisted by his friend, Professor Muth of Syracuse, who is we believe an expert in music. They succeeded in taking a number of very fine pictures.



8b. East Lawn Group, 1st View



8c. East Lawn Group, 2nd View



8d. Quadrangle Group



8e. North Lawn Group



8f. Landscape View

Oneida Community
**MANSION
HOUSE**
A National Historic Landmark

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North Lawn by Ranger & Austen, 1871