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# Picturing and Preserving the War: Herbert Hahn's World War II Photograph Album

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PICTURING AND PRESERVING THE WAR:  
HERBERT HAHN'S WORLD WAR II PHOTOGRAPH ALBUM

by  
Samantha Schwarz

A Thesis Submitted in  
Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts  
in History

at  
The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

May 2018

## ABSTRACT

### PICTURING AND PRESERVING THE WAR: HERBERT HAHN'S WORLD WAR II PHOTOGRAPH ALBUM by

Samantha Schwarz

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2018  
Under the Supervision of Professor Jasmine Alinder

Following his return from World War II, Herbert Hahn assembled an album using photographs he had taken during the war, photographs he had collected, and other materials that he had acquired during his time overseas. This thesis addresses questions posed by the album in Hahn's collection, including: What was the purpose of the photographs taken by Hahn? Why did he assemble them into an album, which he then kept hidden? And, finally, what can the photograph album contribute—beyond understanding Hahn's experiences—to larger discussions regarding soldiers' personal photograph collections. While there is no single answer as to why Hahn created the photograph album, the album appears to have been a vehicle used by Hahn to grapple with his experiences in World War II and the resulting stress and trauma. Although incomplete, the album presents a historical record of Hahn's experiences during World War II that shed light on broader issues of provenance, soldier photography, and the processing of trauma.

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My friends were a constant presence during the writing process and I am thankful for their patience and support. They put up with my rambling about my topic and offered feedback when asked. I could not have asked for better friends during this process.

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## Preface

In many ways, writing this thesis has been a process of fact-checking my family and the stories that make up our history. At the heart of this thesis is my grandfather, the creator of the brown photograph album that serves as my primary subject of this thesis. In examining the album and its larger themes, I had to take a critical look at my grandfather and the stories surrounding him. I had to determine the validity of family stories that I had long believed in and trusted to be true, stories that shaped how I remembered my grandfather. My memory of my grandfather is not entirely my own, rather, it is an amalgamation of a few personal memories and the stories my mother told me about him. While I can remember my grandfather, these “firsthand” memories are limited as he died when I was ten years old. My clearest memory of him is of him dying, confined to a hospital bed that had been brought to their house and placed in the living room. This, however, is not how I remember him. Instead, I remember him as a figure from my mother’s stories which cast him as a dynamic and clever protagonist.

One of my mother’s favorite stories to tell was one that my grandfather had told her and that she passed down to me. It involved my grandfather, his brother Oscar, and a car. As the story goes, when my grandfather was young—his exact age wasn’t important, only that he wasn’t yet a teenager so maybe ten or eleven—he and his brother Oscar, who was older by two years, found an old car that their father had been taking apart in a shed. The pieces had been hung on the wall with the intent of using them as spare parts later and the frame was in the process of being stripped down so that it could be repurposed as a trailer or small hay wagon. When my grandfather and his brother found it, they decided that they preferred it as a car and set about rebuilding it. Using the parts that had already been removed, they reassembled it as best as they could until all that was missing was the gas tank—the gas tank had either already been

repurposed or too damaged to keep. My grandfather and his brother, however, were not deterred and set about devising a way that they could still drive the car. They decided that one of them would drive while the other poured the gas directly in, rendering the missing gas tank moot. They also decided that they would switch off who drove and who poured so that both could enjoy the fruits of their labors. When they put their plan into action, it was a success and they were able to get the car driving down the road. They seemed poised for triumph, in that they had reassembled the car and gotten it driving without anyone noticing, when an unforeseen problem reared its ugly head. As they were driving down the dirt and gravel road, the car became stuck in mud. Neither boy knew what to do as they could not free the car themselves and they were a short distance from home. In the end, they decided they had to tell their father. After explaining the situation to their father, he brought the team of horses and dragged the car back home. Both boys expected to be punished as they had not only undone their father's work on the car, but also taken him away from his work on the farm. Yet, as my grandfather had told my mother, their father did not punish them—at least, not directly—and, instead, seemed proud of them for their ingenuity and resourcefulness. His only comment to his sons was that if they were going to drive the car, they really should have found a gas tank. When my grandfather told this story to my mother, he said he had been surprised and relieved that they had not been immediately punished for their actions and, upon thinking back on it, my grandfather said that, in a way, they had been punished. By showing their aptitude for putting things back together and getting them running, both he and Oscar were given additional chores and repair work following the incident.

When my mother first told me this story, I did not question its truthfulness. The way my mother told it and the way she referenced my grandfather made it seem completely plausible. Given other stories that I had heard about my grandfather and his family, I could believe that this

happened exactly as it was said to have. I didn't doubt there was honesty in the telling of this story. Looking back, there are places where the story may be exaggerated, but I don't think that matters. With stories like these, accuracy is not as important as the meaning. When they are being passed down as family lore, the purpose of these stories is to preserve memories and the essence of people who have passed. They do not need to be completely factual because sometimes a metaphor or exaggeration can make a point that accuracy might not. Like a tall tale or folk tale, there is more to the story than a simple recounting of events exactly as they occurred. There is exaggeration for suspense or humor and there are meanings and messages embedded in the story that tell the listener something about the person involved or pass on a lesson that was learned. Stories like these are part of my family's history, serving as each generation's inheritance from the last. They keep us from forgetting the people we have lost and let us remember where we have come from. With each subsequent retelling, these stories allow those who have died to live again as their memory is passed on to the next generation. They are important regardless of whether or not they are true.

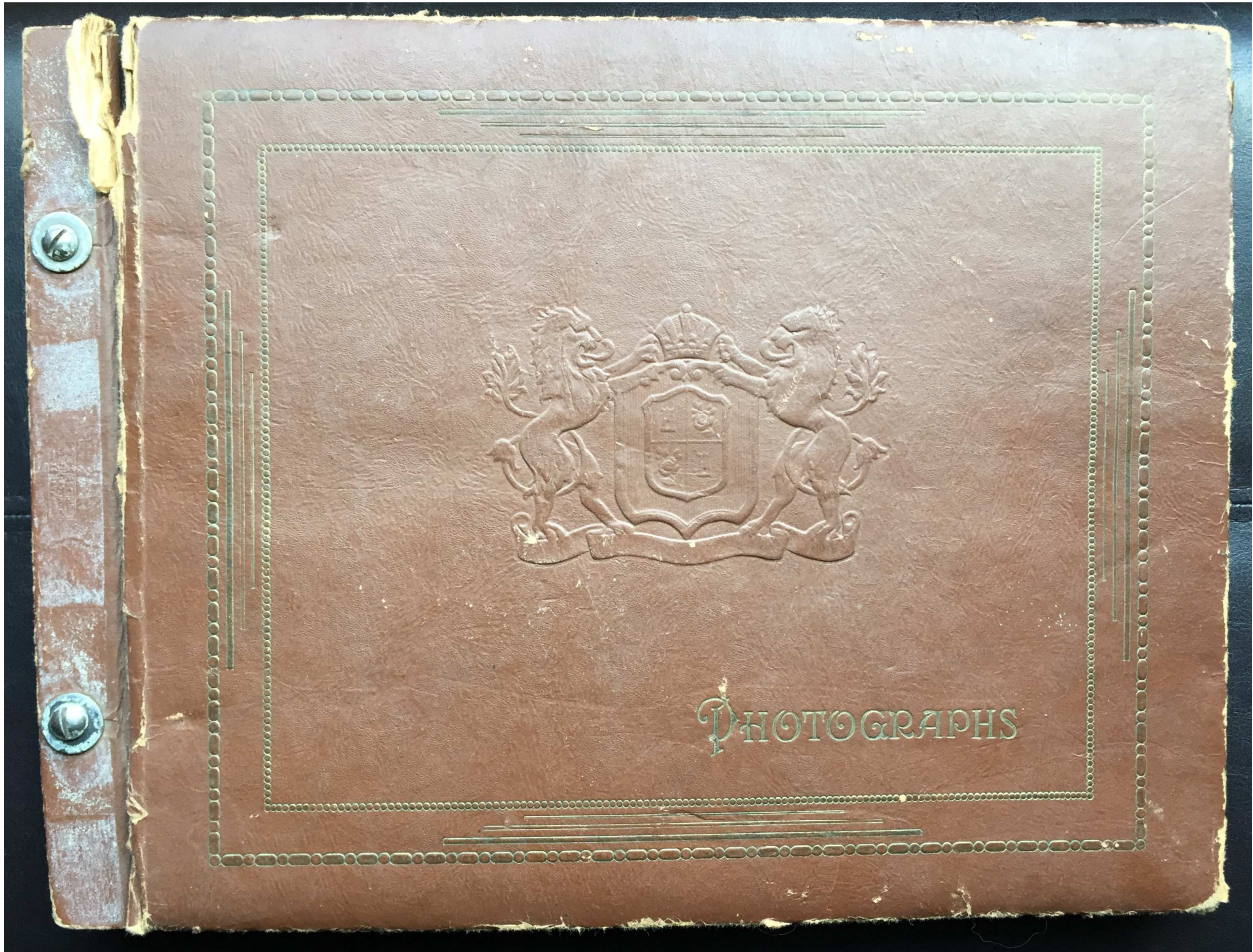
In the case of my thesis, however, the truth mattered. I needed to be critical of the stories my family told and the explanations they gave. I could not blindly trust what they said to be true because the resulting impact was greater than just a misremembered family history. With this thesis, I had more at stake than with my previous writing. This thesis is not only a reflection and representation of my ability to research and write about history, but it is also about my family. This thesis centers around the brown photograph album produced by my grandfather which documents and reflects his experiences during World War II. As such, my grandfather is a major part of my thesis in that it is necessary to know who he is, what he did, and what happened to him in order to understand and analyze the album he produced.

Due to this personal attachment to my subject, I chose to handle the discussion of my subject as I would in any other circumstance. In my thesis, I do not refer to him as my grandfather, rather, he is Herbert Hahn and I do not express any personal attachment to him in the primary body of this thesis. He is a historical subject like any other and he is handled accordingly. Similarly, my mother and her family and their relationship to me is not discussed in the thesis itself. These topics, instead, arise in the included appendix where I reflect upon my experiences writing this thesis. My intention in doing this was to allow me to approach as an outsider—or, at least, as much as I could—and critically examine the materials and people involved.

Despite this disassociation, it is impossible for me to cleave myself entirely from this project. As Herbert Hahn's granddaughter, I had access to materials and people that I would not otherwise have had if I had been anyone else. My research was made a little easier in that I knew where to start looking for information and I did not have to start from scratch. Additionally, this thesis allowed me a chance to learn more about my grandfather beyond what family stories had told me. In completing this thesis, I gained a new perspective of my grandfather wherein he was a young man sent to war who experienced trauma that he could not quite express to his family.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction



*Figure 1.1.* Front cover of the brown photograph album. Herbert Hahn Album, Herbert Hahn Collection, in author's possession.

When Herbert Hahn died in 2003, among the many possessions he left behind were three photograph albums—one with a black cover, one with a red cover, and one with a brown cover. The three albums, for the most part, contain photographs relating to the same time period—the late 1930s to the early 1950s—in Hahn's life and are all similarly incomplete in their creation. The black photograph album is the thinnest of the three, with only twenty-two pages between its covers and only fifteen of them still bound. The album is in a general state of disarray with loose pages, loose photographs, and pages on which there are photograph corners, but no photographs

in them. The red album is in slightly better condition than the black album with its only notable damage being the back cover has fallen off. Like the black album, the red album has loose photographs tucked in between the pages, although, it does not have pages with photograph corners that are empty. Additionally, the red album has pages in which photographs have been “quickly” included, in that several photographs have been lined up edge to edge and a single strip of tape adheres them to the page. Both of these albums depict life in the Hahn family from the late 1930s to the early 1950s, with photographs documenting situations like graduations, daily chores on the family farm, and the time three of the boys spent in the military. Unlike the black and red albums, however, the brown photograph album does not encompass such a wide swath of time and, instead, focuses on one particular event in Hahn’s life. The brown photograph album focuses on Hahn’s experiences during World War II and demonstrates an initial effort on Hahn’s part to create a narrative. Through manipulation of the album itself and the beginning collection of photographs, Hahn used the brown photograph album to encapsulate his experiences as an army soldier drafted during World War II.

On its surface, the brown photograph album, owned by Hahn (Figure 1), appears indistinguishable from any other produced during the time. Its simple brown cover and standard black pages do not provide the viewer a clear indication that they might contain anything out of the ordinary. Despite its mundane appearance, the album contains a surprising collection of photographs that Hahn took during World War II and arranged in an attempt to produce a narrative of his experiences during the war. That narrative grapples with issues of violence as well as events that Hahn refused to discuss during his lifetime. The album registers his experience of the war in a way that he did not feel comfortable expressing verbally and preserved his experiences even when he chose not to later in life.

It is this single album that drives many of the questions investigated by this thesis. Why did Herbert Hahn keep the brown photograph album hidden and what did he not want the viewer to see? What was the purpose of the photographs taken by Hahn? What was the purpose of the photograph album assembled by Hahn and how did it compare to his purpose regarding his personal photography during the war? And, finally, what can the photograph album contribute—beyond understanding Hahn’s experiences—to larger discussions regarding soldier’s personal photograph collections?

The brown photograph album, in many ways, inspires more questions than it answers. This is due, in part, to its lack of completion and lack of supporting documentation. The narrative attempted by the album is framed by violence, both implied and explicit. Photographs carefully placed in the beginning of the album depict Hiroshima following the atomic bomb and the photographs at the end of the album depict the more gruesome and violent aspects of the war, including human casualties. And, yet, while the album has a carefully constructed beginning and ending, its middle indicates abandonment mid-project. Loose photographs are collected between the pages and the intentions indicated with the careful arrangement and captioning of the photographs on the first page are not continued throughout. While the photograph album appears initially to be a well-arranged and put-together object, it quickly becomes apparent that Hahn’s original purpose was never fully realized and the album’s narrative lacks a middle. Despite this, a partial narrative can be drawn from the brown photograph album and examined, due to other materials in Hahn’s collection.

The brown photograph album benefits from not being the only item present in Hahn’s collection. In addition to the brown photograph album, there are a selection of letters, additional loose photographs, and assorted media including newsletters and church bulletins that Hahn kept.



These additional items provide some context and information that is not always found in the brown photograph album due to its incomplete nature. Similarly, the presence of duplicate photographs bearing alternate captions allow for other explanations and additional details to emerge about the same image. With the addition of these items, the brown photograph album is more complete and is able to tell a more complete narrative regarding Hahn's experiences during World War II. This is particularly important as, later in his life, Hahn chose to maintain a practice of silence regarding his experiences during the war. This silence led to gaps in his personal historical record and left the understanding of what Hahn experienced during World War II to be a source of speculation among his family. Without the brown photograph album—and, by extension, Hahn's collection—it would be difficult, if not impossible, to reconstruct Hahn's experiences during World War II.

The brown photograph album is even more necessary to fill in these gaps due to a lack of official records regarding Hahn's service. In 1973, a fire in the military personnel records facility destroyed many of the records that the National Archive had for U.S. Army personnel discharged from 1912 through 1959.<sup>1</sup> Some records were recovered, however, these numbered less than 4 million of the over 22 million that had been stored there.<sup>2</sup> While the National Archive attempts to reconstruct these destroyed records, not all of the documents contained in these files are easily recreated.<sup>3</sup> In addition to the lack of personnel records at the National Archive, there is also a lack of information about X Corps—in which Hahn was a member of its Headquarters Company—during World War II. While there are histories of X Corps, these focus on X Corps involvement in the Korean War, rather than World War II. With a lack of official documentation,

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<sup>1</sup> Norman Eisenberg, "20<sup>th</sup>-Century Veterans' Service Records: Safe, Secure—and Available," *Prologue Magazine* 37, no. 1 (Spring 2005): n.p. <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2005/spring/spotlight-nprc>.

<sup>2</sup> Eisenberg, "20<sup>th</sup>-Century Veterans' Service Records," n.p.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

the brown album, in combination with items found in Hahn's collection, becomes the only record of Hahn's service and movement during World War II. In this way, the album replaces official military records, somewhat out of necessity, and becomes an informal record of not only Hahn, but also X Corps' Headquarters Company.

### **Contributing to Larger Discussions**

While the brown photograph album speaks specifically to Hahn's experiences during World War II, it also contributes to larger discussions related to album theory and the significance of the photograph album in contributing to the historical record. While this topic has been the subject of discussion in numerous other works,<sup>4</sup> the brown photograph album provides a specific example of how the narrative present in a photograph album can inform the historical record. In the case of Hahn, his album allows for some of the silences left by Hahn to be filled in through studying and dissecting the contents of the brown photograph album.

Additionally, the brown photograph album contributes to the discussion of soldier photography and the handling of soldiers' personal photograph collections. While there has been some discussion of soldier photography during World War II, there has been limited examination of the practice of photograph exchange as it occurred between soldiers, including the commodification of photographs depicting violence. Additionally, as archives and other historical repositories acquire soldiers' personal photograph collections, they face several challenges including creating the associated provenance—also referred to as the history of an

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<sup>4</sup> The importance and significance of photograph albums regarding the historical record is discussed in more detail in: Elizabeth Siegel, *Galleries of Friendship and Fame: A History of Nineteenth Century American Photograph Albums* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2010), Barbara Levine and Stephanie Snyder, eds, *Snapshot Chronicles: Inventing the American Photo Album* (New York City, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006), Martha Langford *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums* (Montreal, Quebec and Kingston, Ontario: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), Annabella Pollen "'Historians in Two Hundred Years' Time Are Going to Die for That!'" *Historiography and Temporality in the "One Day for Life" Photography Archive*, *History and Memory* 25, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2013): 66-101, and Colette Apelian "Reading a Family Photo Album," *Getty Research Journal* no. 3 (2011): 189-200.

object or collection—as these collections have different layers of creatorship or authorship present.<sup>5</sup> Recording the provenance of photograph collections held by soldiers can be difficult as these soldiers often collected photographs taken by others. Hahn’s brown photograph album includes not only photographs that Hahn took, but also other materials that he collected during the war, including photographs from other sources. This leads to difficulties in determining provenance for archives and other repositories due to the layers of creatorship. The owner of the collection may have created the collection itself, but may not have created the individual components of the collection. The provenance attached to the collection may not reflect this as an archive or other similar repository may accidentally blur these distinct layers of creatorship. In creating the collection’s provenance, the repository may label the collection’s creator as the creator of all components attached to the collection. This practice does not provide proper credit attribution to the distinct creators of the materials. By examining Hahn’s brown photograph album and acknowledging the materials with unclear attributions, the album demonstrates how easy it can be to misattribute levels of creatorship, but also the impact of providing incorrect creatorship by authoritative historical repositories. In this way, the album provides a case study of how determining the provenance of soldiers’ personal photograph collections can be difficult and why it is necessary archivists be careful when dealing with them.

### **Organization of Thesis**

In answering the questions raised by the brown photograph album, this thesis, for the most part, takes a chronological approach with regard to the lifecycle of the album and the photographs taken by Hahn. The first chapter focuses upon the photographs themselves and Hahn’s original purpose behind photographing the war while he was in the army. In addition to

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<sup>5</sup> Laura Millar, *Archives: Principles and Practices* (Chicago, Illinois: Neal-Schuman, 2017), 47.

providing some background on Hahn himself, this chapter examines several photographs taken by Hahn and places them in the context of his time in the army. Using captions and letters written by Hahn, the photographs, themselves, are explained while contributing to the argument that Hahn used photography to document and communicate his experiences abroad during the war. Additionally, this chapter includes a discussion of vernacular photography which describes the photographs taken by Hahn. As Hahn was not a trained professional and use photography to capture his “everyday” surroundings, Hahn’s photographs fall under this broad term which some also refer to as amateur photography, although the latter term carries with it a negative connotation and has been used previously in discussing types of photography.

The second chapter of this thesis focuses upon the brown photograph album itself. Unlike the first chapter which focuses only upon the photographs taken by or of Hahn, this chapter examines the entirety of the brown photograph album, including images and materials that Hahn included, but did not have a hand in creating. This chapter addresses several of the questions raised by the album including what the album’s purpose was and how did its initial purpose compare its later purpose. In doing so, it includes a discussion of Hahn’s practice regarding silence and its impact upon the understanding of the album. Additionally, this chapter seeks to determine and interpret what narrative is present in the brown photograph album. Also included in this chapter are several broader discussions including that of censorship during World War II and album theory as both are directly related to Hahn’s brown photograph album.

The third chapter of this thesis considers the impact of the brown album on larger discussions including that of informal soldier photography—notably the difference between soldiers assigned to take photographs for the military and soldiers who chose to take photographs during the war for personal reasons—and the personal photograph collections of soldiers. With

regards to the latter, I examine both how these collections came to be as well as the impact of these collections on archives and other historical repositories as the photographs included in these collections can create problems for repositories when they attempt to establish provenance. While the album itself is a constant presence in this chapter, it is not the only collection discussed. In this way, the brown photograph album is placed into the larger context of other soldiers' personal photograph collections and the ways in which soldiers presented their experiences of World War II.

This thesis investigates Hahn's brown photograph album and the questions it raises are addressed with each chapter taking on a particular aspect. Additionally, this thesis, by extension, argues the importance of photograph albums in providing histories and narratives that have been otherwise lost and illustrates the power of this medium to fill in gaps and silences present in the historical record. When Hahn died in 2003, he left an incomplete record of his life as he never discussed his life during World War II with his wife or his children. With his death—and the death of his siblings—the history regarding this period of time during his life was lost. Histories, such as these, are generally irreplaceable as they cannot be easily recreated without some kind of personal documentation, be it letters, a diary, or photographs. Unlike government documents which can provide some contextualizing information, these personal items can provide a more intimate picture that formal documents alone cannot. While the brown photograph album presents an incomplete narrative—in that it has a defined beginning and ending, but no middle—the content of the album allows fills some of the gaps present in Hahn's personal historical record that Hahn left.

## Chapter 2

### Hahn and His Camera



*Figure 2.1.* Herbert Hahn standing in front of Lake Michigan. Includes the caption: “Taken near shore of Lake Michigan in Chicago May 8 1942. I went with Herb to Chicago where he was inducted—Herb was tired—drove all night before arriving. We tried to see a big league baseball game there but no game—called off for rain.” Herbert Hahn Brown Album, Herbert Hahn Collection, in author’s possession.

On May 8, 1942, Herbert Hahn and his brother, Walter, arrived in Chicago, Illinois. They had left their hometown of Lamont, Iowa the day before and spent the night driving. When they arrived, they were tired and trying to make the best of a day that they knew would end with Herbert’s induction into the army. However, their efforts—including seeing a baseball game—were thwarted by bad weather and, at the end of the day, Herbert was inducted and Walter

returned home alone. During their time in Chicago, this photograph, shown in Figure 2.1, was snapped of Herbert Hahn standing in front of Lake Michigan. Standing slightly off-center, Hahn wears a creased suit and has his hands in his pockets. Despite the wind, Hahn seems a solid force, prepared for his fate. The purpose of this photograph appears to be documenting Hahn prior to his induction, recording him for posterity. The choice to place him in a park with the lake in the background emphasizes the focus on him as there is nothing else to distract the viewer from seeing him. The setting, in this way, is anonymized without clear landmarks, so that Hahn is the only focal point for the audience.

While the setting seems insignificant, the choice to depict Herbert standing in front of the lake is telling. Rather than depict Hahn in front of the building where he was to be inducted or outside of the baseball field, he is placed in an empty setting. This removes context from the photograph and makes it initially unclear where this photograph fits in time. It is not clear, initially, to the viewer whether this photograph was taken during Hahn's induction or upon his return or at some other point. Rather than the context for this photograph being provided in the content of the photograph itself, the context is disclosed in the caption included on the back of the photograph. The caption, written by Walter, places the photograph in the timeline of Hahn's life and discloses how it relates to other photographs taken around this same time. Without that caption, it appears simply to be a photograph of Hahn standing in an empty park.

Over the course of the war, Hahn would take and appear in many photographs which remain in his collection. These photographs document his experiences during the war as well as convey these experiences to his family who he remained in constant contact with during the war. This particular photograph marks the beginning of Hahn's experiences, capturing him at the beginning of his journey when he is set to be inducted into the army. In this way, the image sets a

starting point—May 8, 1942—and marks the last image of Hahn as a civilian, for the time being. While this particular photograph was almost certainly taken by Walter, it provides a beginning for the narrative that Hahn creates via photographs for his family while he is at training camp and abroad. Ultimately, Hahn’s purpose in taking these photographs was not only to document his experiences, but also to communicate his experiences to his audience which was, primarily, that of his family.

### **Hahn Enters the Army**

When Hahn was drafted in May of 1942, he was the second son to be drafted. Earlier that same year, his brother Frederick had been drafted into the army and sent to Camp Wolters in Texas to train. Following Hahn’s induction, he was also sent to Camp Wolters, although his time there did not overlap with his brother’s. Instead, he arrived just as his brother, Frederick, was leaving. The two met briefly as Hahn walked with Frederick to the train on which Frederick would travel to California prior to his deployment overseas. It was this brother, Frederick, who ensured that Hahn had a camera during the war as Frederick passed along the camera that he had purchased while at Camp Wolters. According to Frederick, in a letter to their brother Oscar, he had purchased a larger camera prior to his leaving Camp Wolters, but had never found the time to develop any photographs.<sup>6</sup> Given Frederick’s recognition that he would be unable to use the camera, he sent it to Hahn.<sup>7</sup> While Hahn had a camera, Frederick assumed that Hahn had already sold the camera as he had previously talked about it and he was, per Frederick’s description, “getting quite close of change,” and would need the money made in the sale of the camera.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Frederick Hahn, Frederick Hahn to Oscar Hahn, June 1, 1942, letter, in author’s possession.

<sup>7</sup> Frederick Hahn, Frederick Hahn to Oscar Hahn, June 1, 1942, letter, in author’s possession.

<sup>8</sup> Frederick Hahn, Frederick Hahn to Oscar Hahn, June 1, 1942, letter, in author’s possession.



With camera in hand, Hahn entered the army set upon capturing his surroundings and himself encountering these surroundings. He would often send these images home in the form of negatives and developed photographs with accompanying letters.<sup>9</sup> Hahn's lack of formal training in photography, in addition to his not being formally assigned to take photographs for the army, meant that Hahn participated in and produced vernacular photography, or amateur photography, in which he captured the "everyday."

### **Vernacular Photography**

Vernacular photography, also referred to by some as amateur photography, is generally used to describe used to describe photographs taken by non-professionals armed with a personal camera.<sup>10</sup> The rise of vernacular photography directly corresponds to the introduction of easily obtainable and useable cameras such as those produced by Kodak starting in 1888.<sup>11</sup> With the introduction of a camera that the "everyman" could afford and use, everyone had an opportunity to become their personal photographer. These small, portable cameras allowed individual to capture their domestic settings, which would have been otherwise unseen as they could not be depicted in studio settings.<sup>12</sup> In this way, vernacular photography generally includes private, family snapshots which depict the more common or everyday experiences of ordinary people.<sup>13</sup> However, images depicting domestic experiences are not the only photographs included in vernacular photography. These photographs can include a wide range of subjects in which the

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<sup>9</sup> Herbert Hahn, Herbert Hahn to Walter Hahn, July 21, 1945, letter, in author's possession.

<sup>10</sup> Vicki Goldberg and Robert Silberman, *American Photography: A Century of Images* (San Francisco, California: Chronicle Books, 1999), 15. Stacey McCarroll Cutshaw and Ross Barrett, eds., *In the Vernacular: Photography of the Everyday* (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 2008), 7-8.

<sup>11</sup> Goldberg and Silberman, *American Photography*, 15. Mia Fineman, "Kodak and the Rise of Amateur Photography," *The Met*, October 2004, [https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/kodk/hd\\_kodk.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/kodk/hd_kodk.htm).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Cutshaw and Barrett, *In the Vernacular*, 7-8.

commonality they share is who took the photographs.<sup>14</sup> In general, vernacular is applied based upon who is taking the photographs rather than the subject of the photograph itself. While it can be applied based upon the subject, it is more often used to describe the relationship of the photographer with the professional world of photography. Individuals taking photographs “in the vernacular” are considered to be “outsiders” or “self-taught” and their subjects are more commonplace.<sup>15</sup> Vernacular, in this way, is used to categorize photographs that do not fall within the realm of art or professional images taken by an individual who has honed their craft.

While some historians of photography apply the term “vernacular” to these photographs, others use the term “amateur” to describe the same thing. Unlike the term vernacular, however, which provides a more elevated term and encompasses what lies at the core of these photographs—that they are domestic or indigenous—the term amateur reflects more harshly upon the photographer.<sup>16</sup> In their book, *American Photography: A Century of Images*, Vicki Goldberg and Robert Silberman use the term amateur when referring to photographs taken by non-professionals. While the term is not seemingly intended as derogatory, it creates a clear distinction between the images taken by professionals and non-professionals with a slight negative implication towards those who are non-professional. Unlike the photographs taken by professionals, these “amateurs” are able to “construct ideal family myths and reinforce them by keeping the evidence in view.”<sup>17</sup> Instead of depicting the harsher realities, these amateur photographers could depict “happy families” who appear removed from the situations surrounding them.<sup>18</sup> While Goldberg and Silberman most likely intended the term to be neutral,

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<sup>14</sup> Bernard L. Herman, “Vernacular Trouble: Exclusive Practices on the Margins of an Inclusive Art,” in *In the Vernacular: Photography of the Everyday*, eds. Stacey McCarroll Cutshaw and Ross Barrett (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 2008): 29.

<sup>15</sup> Herman, “Vernacular Trouble,” 29-30.

<sup>16</sup> Cutshaw and Barrett, *In the Vernacular*, 7.

<sup>17</sup> Goldberg and Silberman, *American Photography*, 15.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

it carries a negative connotation in addition to being a term already used to define a type of photographer.

The term “amateur” has its own history and defines a particular photographer. According to Marcy Silver Flynn, “In the late nineteenth century, the term amateur photographer implied an artistic, non-commercial photographer as opposed to a studio or commercial photographer who focused the camera on standard subjects.”<sup>19</sup> In her article, “Amateur Experiences: Julius Sachse and Photography,” Flynn uses this term and definition to discuss Julius Sachse and his contributions to photography. Sachse, an amateur photographer per Flynn’s definition, would not fit under Goldberg and Silberman’s use of the term “amateur.” The subject of Sachse’s photographs and his methods of capturing these subjects would, instead, correspond to Goldberg and Silberman’s understanding of a professional photographer, in that he documented historic sites and buildings.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, Sachse did not rely upon others to develop his photographs as he took and developed his own photographs akin to a professional, although he did not operate a commercial photography studio.<sup>21</sup> In this way, Sachse was an “amateur photographer” per the definition used during his time, rather than the definition that modern historians, Goldberg and Silberman, use.

Due to the complicated nature of the term “amateur,” the application of the term vernacular seems more suitable. In their book, *In the Vernacular: Photography of the Everyday*, editors, Stacey McCarroll Cutshaw and Ross Barrett define what it means for a photograph to be “in the vernacular” as well as provide a brief discussion of the photographs that fall under this definition. According to Cutshaw and Barrett, vernacular photography represents “the kind of

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<sup>19</sup> Marcy Silver Flynn, “Amateur Experiences: Julius Sachse and Photography,” *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 64, no. 2 (Spring 1997): 333.

<sup>20</sup> Flynn, “Amateur Experiences,” 337.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

photographic production that permeates daily existence.”<sup>22</sup> Per their definition, vernacular photography is not limited to family photographs, but also includes “public photographs that we might possess or encounter, such as news, advertising, or souvenir images.”<sup>23</sup> While this definition may seem rather broad as it extends to images outside of those taken by non-professional photographers, it is based upon the fact that vernacular refers to the everyday and, according to Cutshaw and Barrett, encompasses “that which is domestic or indigenous.”<sup>24</sup> With this in mind, these additions of more “professional” images make sense as they are images that, while not produced by the “common man,” would have been part of his everyday existence and part of his domestic sphere.

As Hahn did not have professional training or a formal assignment to take photographs, the photographs he took during the war fall under the term vernacular. While his images do not depict the “domestic” in that they do not capture his life at home, in a setting that most would associate with the term “domestic,” they do depict what was, at then, his current, everyday life. Due to the war, Hahn experienced a new “normal” and this is captured in the photographs. His photographs depict the men he served with, his living arrangements while overseas, and the people that he encountered as he island hopped across the Pacific with his company.

Additionally, these photographs directly depict his perspective of the world around him. Rather than being produced by another and Hahn taking them and applying his own meaning, Hahn produced these images to capture his experiences. Hahn controlled the production of these photographs and was able to ensure that the experiences reflected his actual experiences during the war. With this layer of control, Hahn was able to ensure that the content of each photograph

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<sup>22</sup> Cutshaw and Barrett, *In the Vernacular*, 8.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Cutshaw and Barrett, *In the Vernacular*, 7.

was directly relevant to him, rather than him having to discern some kind of meaning or representation in the image. By having this control, Hahn could produce photographs that relayed a particular experience to his audience which consisted, primarily, of his own family to whom he wrote letters and mailed home photographs.

### **Hahn's Photography as Documentation and Communication**

While Hahn was abroad during the war, he used photographs to share his experiences with his family back home, who served as his primary audience for the photographs that he took. These images, in combination with letters, were used to not only document his experiences, but also to communicate these experiences. By including an image of something he experienced abroad, he could communicate to them in a way that the written word did not allow.

Photographs, with their “visual language,” allowed Hahn to communicate his experiences in a way which allowed the viewer to experience it themselves, to an extent.<sup>25</sup> Rather than forcing his audience to imagine what he was describing or experiencing, photographs allowed for Hahn to show his audience exactly what he was referring to. The use of both photographs and letters provided Hahn an opportunity to present his experiences in detail as he could not only describe them via letter, but also visually capture them in a photograph that could be referred to.

In addition to communicating his experiences, the photographs served as entries in a travelogue. While the photographs produced by Hahn are generally intended for others' consumption, they also function as his own log of events in that they document particular experiences akin to how one might document a day or particular experience in a journal while traveling. Martha Langford discusses the concept of travelogues in her book, *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums*. According to Langford, the

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<sup>25</sup> Martha Langford, *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums* (Montreal, Quebec and Kingston, Ontario: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 123.

travelogue was a popular form of documenting experiences during the Victorian and Edwardian periods.<sup>26</sup> While the components of a travelogue share a similar theme, such as a destination or vacation, the photographs themselves vary in terms of subject.<sup>27</sup> The focus of the photographs, instead, is to capture a combination of the “interesting extremes” witnessed as well as more personal and intimate aspects of these new experiences.<sup>28</sup> For example, the photographer, during their time abroad, might capture things that they consider foreign or unusual to them in addition to documenting their presence in these new locations. The photographs share a similar overarching theme, such as time spent in a particular location, but what the photographs capture individually can vary in extreme ways.

The manner in which Hahn records and reports his experiences demonstrates the way in which he uses his photographs to document his “travels” in the army. For example, more often than not, Hahn includes brief backstories—or vignettes—on the back of photographs, indicating not only who is present, but also something about what is going on or the person involved. In one photograph, Hahn captured the company baker, Albert Riscosky, standing in front of his bake shop called “Anne Mae.”<sup>29</sup> On the back of the photograph, Hahn gives the viewer an insight into why the shop is named “Anne Mae,” stating that it was named after Riscosky’s wife, Anne Mae. These vignettes inform the reader on the content of the image as well as record the experience for posterity. Additional examples of Hahn’s recording of experiences can be seen other photographs that he took abroad, in which experiences are recorded, not only to be shared with his family in letters, but also to present a narrative of his time in the army.

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<sup>26</sup> Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 87.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 87-88.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>29</sup> Herbert Hahn Album, Herbert Hahn Collection, in author’s possession.

## Hahn in the Army



*Figure 2.2.* Herbert Hahn (right) and Frederick Hahn (left) at Camp Wolters. Frederick Hahn Collection, in Larry Hahn's possession.

During his time in the army, Hahn took many photographs in which he captured his experiences. His documentation began when he was in training camp at Camp Wolters and, later, at Camp Sherman. Among the first photographs taken was the photograph, shown in Figure 2.2. This photograph depicts Hahn and his brother Frederick crouching with a radio between them. Camp Wolters can be seen in the background as well as numerous other soldiers. The photograph

marks Hahn's arrival at Camp Wolters as well as his brother Frederick's departure. The soldiers seen standing and sitting in the background are most likely soldiers also being shipped out like Frederick. For the two brothers, this meeting marked their first time seeing each other since Frederick had been drafted and the two are shown shaking hands while smiling for the camera. Other images taken at the same time depict them together or in conversation with this depiction of shaking hands being the most physical contact between them shown in this sequence.



*Figure 2.3.* Frederick Hahn on train to depart Camp Wolters. Includes the caption: “This picture was taken inside the train Fred left in on a dark rainy day. Due to the vibrations and because a time exposure was used, it turned out a bit blurred.” Frederick Hahn Collection, in Larry Hahn’s possession.

When the photograph was taken, neither was aware that they would meet each other again once deployed abroad. At the time, they only knew that Frederick was leaving Camp Wolters as Hahn was arriving, something that disappointed both of them. While they attempted to maximize their time together with Hahn accompanying Frederick to the train—even capturing a photograph of Frederick on the train as shown in Figure 2.3—their time was still cut short when



Frederick and his company were shipped out. However, the two brothers would meet again when both were stationed in the Pacific Theater.

#### Encountering Frederick Abroad



*Figure 2.4.* Frederick Hahn (left) and Herbert Hahn (right) on Leyte. Includes the caption: “Fred and I on our first reunion overseas in Leyte. What a happy and unexpected meeting it was.” Herbert Hahn Brown Album, Herbert Hahn Collection, in author’s possession.

While Hahn was stationed in the Pacific Theater, he was fortunate enough to be stationed close to his brother’s unit. This close proximity allowed Hahn and Frederick to reunite several times during their time abroad which Hahn captured in several photographs including the one shown in Figure 2.4. In addition to being the subject of several photography by Hahn, these encounters were also documented in letters written home. In a letter to their brother Walter, Frederick described two of these encounters stating:

Herb had come up to see me at the place you probably heard and read a bit of. He had seen me twice within the month of November. Quite a boy, Herb is. He gets around and goes places. He was up two different times for the overnight stay. First time it was a bit busy yet on the business end, but the second time we was a taking it easier and of course some of the tales of adventure were exchanged.

They took us far into the night as you may guess. And more unfinished. It was really a pleasant surprise and a happy reunion after so long a time past. Of all places that was one of 'em. Had me dumbstruck at the time to believe that the fellow was Herb. Had put the thought of his meeting all aside being in such a place.<sup>30</sup>

This experience reported by Frederick was reflected in the photographs that Hahn took of the two of them.

Set on the island of Leyte, the photograph shown in Figure 2.4 depicts Frederick and Hahn with their arms around each other. While they are not caught in an embrace, the two have their hand on the other's shoulder. Both are shown smiling with only Frederick looking at the camera while Hahn is focused on Frederick. Of the two, Hahn appears neater in his appearance with his uniform appearing relatively clean and his shirt buttoned up. Frederick, on the other hand, looks more unkempt with ruffled hair, an unbuttoned shirt, and a darker, most likely dirtier uniform. The two, in this way, appear to be opposites of each other with Hahn the neater of the two and Frederick the messier of the two.

The dichotomy between the two exemplified their different positions in the army. When he was sent abroad, Hahn was assigned to Headquarters Company of X Corps where he served, in official capacity, as a "cooks [sic] helper."<sup>31</sup> Frederick, on the other hand, served with the 19<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment where he was a machine gunner.<sup>32</sup> Unlike his brother Frederick, Hahn was kept in relative safety. While he was not entirely removed from combat, he was not part of many campaigns to take islands nor was he among the first to be deployed onto an island. For example, in a letter to their brother Lawrence, Hahn stated, "We made another landing with Fred's outfit, the 24<sup>th</sup> division, my outfit coming ashore the following day. I watched the naval barrage, real

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<sup>30</sup> Frederick Hahn, Frederick Hahn to Walter Hahn, January 19, 1945, letter, in author's possession.

<sup>31</sup> Herbert Hahn Discharge Papers, Herbert Hahn Collection, in author's possession.

<sup>32</sup> Frederick Hahn Discharge Papers, Frederick Hahn Collection, in Larry Hahn's possession.

torpedoes, artillery on the beach. It was intense but only lasted a few minutes.”<sup>33</sup> While Frederick experienced combat regularly, for Hahn it was a more distant experience—although he would later receive a bronze star for his participation in the military operations on Leyte and Mindanao between October 1944 and June 1945.

### Bronze Star

While he served overseas, Hahn was part of the campaign to secure Mindanao and Leyte. In 1944, the United States reached the Philippines and began to secure its islands, starting with Mindanao, the southernmost island.<sup>34</sup> From 1944 to 1945, the United States secured both Mindanao and Leyte in preparation to invade and liberate the larger island of Luzon.<sup>35</sup> Initially, Mindanao was expected to be a major campaign, but after successful air strikes, attention shifted to Leyte.<sup>36</sup> Beginning in October, the United States initiated the first of three phases by which they would secure Leyte.<sup>37</sup> While Leyte was considered “secure” in December, the army continued to fight remaining Japanese soldiers until May of 1945.<sup>38</sup> The campaign to secure Leyte resulted in a total loss of 15,584 American casualties with 3,504 killed in action.<sup>39</sup> The Japanese, in their failed effort to defend Leyte, lost 49,000 soldiers.<sup>40</sup>

While it is not clear what Hahn did during this campaign, his participation was such that he earned the bronze star. Per the official record, Hahn received the bronze star for “meritorious achievement in connection with military operations against the enemy in Leyte and Mindanao, Philippine Islands, during the period 21 October 1944 to 30 June 1945.”<sup>41</sup> He was one of eight

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<sup>33</sup> Herbert Hahn, Herbert Hahn to Lawrence Hahn, May 4, 1945, letter, in author’s possession.

<sup>34</sup> Charles R. Anderson, *Leyte* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1994), 3.

<sup>35</sup> Anderson, *Leyte*, 7.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Herbert Hahn, Herbert Hahn to Walter Hahn, July 27, 1945, letter, in author’s possession.

men in X Corps' Headquarters Company to receive this honor and, as Hahn did, he photographed his receiving the bronze star.



*Figure 2.5.* Herbert Hahn's receipt of the bronze star in the field. Includes the caption: "Me shaking hands with the general at the far end." Herbert Hahn Brown Album, Herbert Hahn Collection, in author's possession.

Several photographs in Hahn's collection document the recognition his company received as well as his being awarded the bronze star. One of these photographs, shown in Figure 2.5, depicts his company meeting General Franklin C. Sibert<sup>42</sup> and his staff. In this particular photograph, Hahn is shown shaking hands with the general. While this event is the focus of the photograph—or, at the very least, Hahn's narration of it—the distance from which the photograph is taken causes it to be towards the background rather than presented in the foreground of the image. Additionally, the image is such that without Hahn's included caption indicating that he is the one shaking the general's hand, it would be impossible to discern who

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<sup>42</sup> Hahn identifies Sibert as a general, whereas his actual rank at the time would have been Major General.

was who. While the photograph captures the event, it is the caption that distinguishes this image from another similar image in which another member of Hahn's company is shaking the general's hand. Additionally, in several of the photographs documenting this event—including this photograph—names are not included. Per Hahn's caption, he is "shaking hands with the general." Similarly, in other photographs General Sibert is only identified as "the General" with only one photograph including his name as well as the names of those with him.

While these photographs can be viewed individually, they tell a more complete story together. In Hahn's collection, seven photographs document this ceremony and Hahn's receipt of the bronze star. Individually, the photographs with their accompanying captions do not tell the complete story. The captions included on each image are, for the most part, brief and do not explain what is going on. With the photographs combined, the ceremony in its entirety and the importance of the moment can be better discerned. For example, one photograph depicts lines of soldiers all saluting while a man photographing the event can be seen in the foreground. This photograph is simply captioned, "parade formation," which tells what the soldiers are doing, but does not indicate why they are doing it. This is not the only time that Hahn documents a single event across multiple photographs that rely upon each other to tell a more complete story.

### Wedding

A popular subject for Hahn to photograph included people whom he encountered while abroad. Hahn photographed Filipinos who worked in the camp such as the women who did the soldiers' laundry. Hahn would also photograph people who he saw walk through camp and, in one case, Hahn photographed a wedding that, per Hahn's description, he had been invited to. In documenting the wedding, Hahn took three specific photographs which each contained a different component to the story.



*Figure 2.6.* Filipino bride and groom. As two of the same image are present in Hahn’s collection, two alternative captions are present. Caption one includes: “This couple invited me to their wedding. I took this picture after a dance ceremony they had where guests showered coins in bowl in middle of floor and pinned Philippino money on them.” Caption two includes: “During ceremony following wedding in church the bride + groom danced a Philippino special wedding dance where guests showered coins in bowl in middle of floor and pinned Philippino money on them as token of friendship.” Herbert Hahn Brown Album, Herbert Hahn Collection, in author’s possession.

In Figure 2.6, a Filipino bride and groom are shown standing in front of a doorway in which a sheet, acting as a door, has been pulled aside. They are dressed similarly to what one might expect a couple in the United States to have worn for a wedding, in that the groom appears dressed in a white suit, while the bride wears a white gown. Between them, the couple holds a

bowl filled with contents that have been blurred in the development of the photograph, but, according to the caption are coins. More notable than the bowl, is the fact that the couple has money pinned to them with the bride appearing to have received most of it. The caption informs the viewer that this was done following a dance that was particular to the Philippines and was a “token of friendship.”



*Figure 2.7.* Filipino bride and groom standing in front of cake. Includes the caption: “Here they are cutting their wedding cake. Rations the army issued Philipinos had to be used to make cake. They were also allowed use of army field range to bake it on. They have practically nothing to cook with themselves. Most everything had been taken and destroyed by Japs.” Herbert Hahn Brown Album, Herbert Hahn Collection, in author’s possession.



The same bride and groom are depicted in Figure 2.7, although in this image, there is no money pinned to them. Similar to the image shown in Figure 2.6, they are in the same room, although the curtain is drawn across the doorway and a table with a white tablecloth has been placed in front of them. On the table, there is a diminutive wedding cake and what appears to be another form of pastry. The couple is carefully posed with the bride holding her bouquet of flowers in one hand while holding the knife to cut the wedding cake in her other. The groom's hands enclose the bride's hand holding the knife and they appear poised to cut into the wedding cake the moment after the photograph is taken. The overall depiction of the cutting of the cake appears to follow the same structure of an American wedding. While the photograph does not indicate anything is amiss, the caption reveals the circumstances in which the cake, set in front of the bride and groom, was created—that it was made with rations issued by the army and baked in the field range.

The cake made from army rations reflects the conditions present in Philippines when the United States resumed control. Prior to the war, the Philippines had been a strong agrarian country, although it focused on exports, such as sugar, rather than actual “food” production.<sup>43</sup> While the country's general food production was usually enough to sustain the country, it was not unusual for the Philippines to import food from elsewhere.<sup>44</sup> In the years leading up to the war, food production had suffered due to natural disasters and was suffering when the Japanese invaded the Philippines.<sup>45</sup> The situation was made worse for the Philippines when the Japanese seized all available foodstuffs for feeding and supplying their army without regard as to how this

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<sup>43</sup> Francis K. Danquah, “Japan's Food Farming Policies in Wartime Southeast Asia: The Philippine Example, 1942-1944,” *Agricultural History* 64, no. 3 (Summer 1990): 62.

<sup>44</sup> Danquah, “Japan's Food Farming Policies in Wartime Southeast Asia,” 62.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 62-63.



would impact the Filipinos.<sup>46</sup> In addition to the harsh treatment inflicted upon the Filipinos by the Japanese, this practice left the Filipinos without much on which to sustain themselves.<sup>47</sup> When the Americans reclaimed and resumed occupation of the Philippines, they found what Hahn describes in his caption—a country with “practically nothing.” Hahn’s attribution of the Filipino situation to the Japanese is correct in that the Japanese occupation of the Philippines exacerbated what was already problem and left the Filipinos without much to sustain themselves. This food shortage then led to the Filipinos depending upon the United States until they could alleviate the situation.



*Figure 2.8.* Two Filipino girls. Includes the caption: “These are two little nieces of the bride shown in one of the other pictures. Carigara, Leyte Island.” Herbert Hahn Brown Album, Herbert Hahn Collection, in author’s possession.

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>47</sup> Anderson, *Leyte*, 9.

The final image of Hahn's series of wedding photographs is devoid of the bride and groom. Instead of the bride and groom, the photograph, as shown in Figure 2.8, depicts two young girls. Both girls are nicely dressed and posed in front of foliage and a building. One girl is shoeless, her shoes dangling from the hand of the adult—not seen in the photograph—whose hand she holds. The other girl, still wearing her shoes, holds onto her companion's hand, but unlike her companion, engages the camera. Without the caption, this is simply a photograph of two girls in nice dresses with their hair styled. The caption included on the back of the photograph, however, directly connects this image with the two of the bride and groom, stating, "These are two little nieces of the bride shown in one of the other pictures." Additionally, this photograph's caption provides additional information about the bride and groom seen in the other pictures. The photograph of the little girls is labeled as having been taken in Carigara, Leyte Island, indicating that the wedding took place in Leyte, most likely following the campaign to secure Leyte and Mindanao, dating this wedding to, most likely, after June 1945.

Together, these three images present the single event of a Filipino wedding as Hahn witnessed it, although it is not known how much influence Hahn had in the construction of these photographs. For example, the image of the bride and groom set to cut the cake is very reminiscent of the type of image typically taken at an American wedding, where the bride and groom are captured prior to or during the cutting of the wedding cake. While this may be a coincidence and something that crosses cultures, it may be due to Hahn posing the bride and groom in a way that he would have seen done in weddings back in the states. Additionally, by examining all three photographs and combining the information included in each photograph's accompanying caption, the viewer can discern the location and approximate date of the wedding. While the captions accompanying the images of the bride and groom do not include a location,

the photograph of the little girls does, which in turn informs the viewer about the photographs of the bride and groom.

Hahn's photographing the Filipino wedding is one example of him documenting his time overseas using multiple photographs and captions to convey a single experience. Many of the photographs he took while in the army include some form of caption, with some more extensive than others, such as those seen on the back of the photographs relating to the wedding. The combination of image and caption provide a more detailed way of relaying a particular experience to his audience. For example, in the case of the wedding, while the photographs themselves provide some indication of what is going on—notably that of a wedding—they do not convey the complete story in the same way that the captions do. In the case of photograph shown in Figure 2.6, where the bride and groom are shown covered in money, the caption provides an explanation to a sight that Hahn's family would have been unfamiliar with and may not have understood. It would not have been a common practice to pin money to the bride and groom in the United States, but Hahn presents a photograph in which a bride and groom are covered in money and, due to its oddness, determines it is necessary to explain the photograph. By providing a caption which explains the practice and its meaning, Hahn provides context to an image that may have otherwise seemed odd and not been understandable to his audience. In this way, Hahn is conscientious of the audience that he is presenting these photographs to and is aware that they will not understand all the photographs he sends home without some context.

## Japan

When the Japanese surrendered in August of 1945, Hahn was stationed on Mindanas Island.<sup>48</sup> Over the course of his deployment abroad, Hahn had been to New Guinea, Langalang, Leyti, Carigara, Leyte, Parang, Mindano, Del Monte Plantation, and Mindanao.<sup>49</sup> Following the Japanese surrender, Hahn hoped that he would be sent home, however, he had only acquired sixty-one points.<sup>50</sup> At this time, the army used a point system called the “Adjusted Service Rating Card,” or ASR, in which they calculated how many points a soldier had obtained during their service in order to determine when they should be sent home.<sup>51</sup> An ASR score weighted how long the soldier had been in the army, how much of that time had been spent overseas, awards and decorations that the soldier had received—particularly for valor or wounds—and if the soldier had any children.<sup>52</sup> At the end of the war, the initial “critical score” soldiers needed to be sent home was eighty points.<sup>53</sup> By December of 1945, a soldier needed a score of fifty points or to have been in service for four years.<sup>54</sup> As Hahn had not met the initial criteria for release, he was sent to Japan as part of the occupational forces. When the score threshold was dropped to fifty points or higher in December 1945, Hahn was sent home. While his time in Japan was limited, he continued to take many photographs.

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<sup>48</sup> Herbert Hahn, Herbert Hahn to Lawrence Hahn, August 16, 1945, letter, in author’s possession.

<sup>49</sup> Herbert Hahn, Herbert Hahn to Walter Hahn, September 7, 1945, letter, in author’s possession.

<sup>50</sup> Herbert Hahn, Herbert Hahn to Lawrence Hahn, August 16, 1945, letter, in author’s possession.

<sup>51</sup> John C. Sparrow, *History of Personnel Demobilization in the United States Army* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1952), 71.

<sup>52</sup> Sparrow, *History of Personnel Demobilization in the United States Army*, 91.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 326.



*Figure 2.9.* Hahn sitting in front of shrine. Includes the caption: “Me sitting in front of a Jap Shrine in Kure Japan.” Herbert Hahn Brown Album, Herbert Hahn Collection, in author’s possession.

Several of the photographs that Hahn took depict him sitting front of what he termed “Jap shrines.”<sup>55</sup> One of these photographs is shown in Figure 2.9. Hahn is depicted crouched in front of a small building. He is posed with one arm resting on his knee and his gaze meeting the camera. The photograph depicts Hahn directly facing the camera, but the building is shown at an angle. The building itself appears relatively small with Hahn for reference. However, despite its size, it is ornate with columns framing the doorway and a set of stairs leading to the building

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<sup>55</sup> While this term is acknowledged as extremely derogatory and insulting, it is used here in its historical context to accurately depict Hahn who used this term in reference to Japanese individuals. The prevalence of this term in Hahn’s letters and photograph captions is similar to that of his contemporaries and indicates the widespread use of the term. The inclusion of this term in this thesis is limited to direct quotations from Hahn and is used to accurately present Hahn’s “voice.”

which itself has been elevated by a platform of stone or concrete. While the building appears to have been significant to its builder and the people who used it, it is not given such reverence by Hahn. In addition to only describing the building as a “Jap shrine” in Kure, its depiction at an angle and a lack of further description relegates it to a more anonymous fate. Hahn does not divulge where the building was located aside from it was in Kure, never addressing whether it is a private or public building. It is simply a Japanese shrine and it is noteworthy because it is a usual sight for Hahn.

Also contained in the photograph are underlying meanings which Hahn may not have originally intended to include. His placement in front of the building and his general prominence in the photograph shows the American presence in Japan, that the war is over and the Americans have won. These spaces that been previously sacred to the Japanese are now occupied by Americans who have, for the most part, taken control of Japan. Locations that had been previously unknown and unseen to soldiers such as Hahn are now subject to being depicted as curiosities and landmarks which soldiers can pose in front of for photographs. While it may not have been intended as a photograph depicting the triumphant American in Japan, it is as Hahn, part of the occupying forces, sits in front of this building.

The photographs taken in Japan are similar to those that he took during the war. They document his experiences and what he is seeing, although the setting is now Japan itself in the months following their surrender. Hahn appears to continue his previous objective of documenting and communicating his experiences. The change in setting simply means that Hahn is now depicting the homeland of the Japanese, the people who he had been previously charged with fighting and killing. While some of the language that Hahn uses to describe things related to the Japanese—including, for example, Japanese farming techniques—is derogatory, he does not,

outright, refer to the Japanese as his enemy. Instead, he uses the term “Jap” to refer to all things Japanese. For example, when describing how the Japanese farm to his brother, Lawrence, he states:

Everything is done by hand in farming with women doing 90% of the work. First they plant their gardens on hill sides terraced about every 10-12 feet. When the plants are up they would go along and sprinkle human shit and piss, mixed to the consistency of cream, all along the plants. This would stink so one couldn’t stand it unless he was a Jap.<sup>56</sup>

His description takes a blatant derogatory turn at the end when he refers to the smell, indicating that one would need to be Japanese in order to tolerate such a smell.

Hahn’s preferred term for referring to the Japanese as “Japs” has a history of being derogatory.<sup>57</sup> While the term was used consistently as a form of racial slur or derogatory term to refer to the Japanese, some consider the term to have become more “racially charged” during World War II when the United States was at war with Japan.<sup>58</sup> Natasha Varner in her blog post for the website, *Denshō*, discusses not only the history of the term, but also how it is regarded in the present and used in online dictionaries. According to Varner, the term “Jap” should be perceived to be as severe as other racial slurs and derogatory terms.<sup>59</sup> Instead, the term has remained prevalent and requires constant protesting to remove it or provide historical context and underline the severity of the term in dictionaries or other documents.<sup>60</sup>

During World War II, when Hahn was using this term to describe the Japanese, it was a commonly used term. While it was still a derogatory term, it was the term to use to describe Japanese and those of Japanese ancestry.<sup>61</sup> Hahn’s choice to use the term was most likely rooted

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<sup>56</sup> Herbert Hahn, Herbert Hahn to Lawrence Hahn, December 11, 1945, letter, in author’s possession.

<sup>57</sup> Natasha Varner, “Racism by Definition: Challenging the Use of Racial Epithets in Online Dictionaries,” *Denshō*, last modified January 21, 2016, <https://densho.org/racism-by-definition/>.

<sup>58</sup> Varner, “Racism by Definition.”

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

in both its widespread use as well as the fact that it carried with it a derogatory element. While some of Hahn's usages of the term carry a derogatory element to them, indicating that was perhaps his intended purpose in applying the term, at the same time, some instances demonstrate his using the term as a synonym for Japanese.

### **After the War**

Hahn was formally discharged on January 2, 1946 at Fort Leavenworth in Kansas which served as a separation center. He had been abroad for one year, five months, and seven days. In that time, he had produced and collected hundreds of photographs that documented his experience of the war. With the end of the war and his return home, one of the original purposes of the photographs he had taken came to a conclusion in that he no longer needed them to communicate his experiences abroad to his family. These photographs had served as a component of his correspondence back home and had been a way in which he more fully conveyed his experiences to his family who served as his audience. His captions included on the photographs and accompanying notes in letters had sought to enhance particular photographs and addressed a specific audience. As Hahn sought to capture specific moments or experiences in photographs, he was also aware of how these photographs would be perceived by his audience. Hahn had not assumed that his audience would share his same knowledge base regarding the individual images and had captioned his images accordingly.

Additionally, when he mailed home photographs or negatives, these images were presented in smaller batches to his audience rather than as a single, complete collection. He had not mailed home all of his photographs at once and had not been required to explain how all the photographs related to each other. Hahn, instead, only had to explain how small groups of photographs related to each other such as in the case of the wedding photographs in which he



had to connect the image of the two young girls to the bride seen in the other two photographs. In taking these photographs, Hahn had not only been documenting his experiences for himself, but also for his audience. In telling his experiences to his audience via the photographs, he had been also recording his experiences akin to a travelogue with the photographs serving as components. When he took a majority of the photographs, he did not know the outcome of the war or when he would return home. This is seen in letters in which he makes initial claims and then later has to revise his statements such as when he expected to return home. The larger, overarching narrative of his time in the army and abroad was not his focus as he did not have a conclusive ending as many who created travelogues did. For most travelogues, the beginning and ending were relatively set with the middle being the unknown that they would document.<sup>62</sup> This was due, in part, to most travelogues documenting trips or vacations in which the departure and return dates had been set.<sup>63</sup> The experiences which served as the middle for the travelogue, then, would be more spur of the moment.

When the war ended and Hahn returned home, one of the original purposes of the photographs concluded. The photographs, however, were not rendered obsolete or relegated to a box, at least, initially. The photographs, instead, were given a new purpose and set into the context of an album which took a similar form to a travelogue. When Hahn created his photographs, he was documenting the “middle” of his travels and these photographs captured experiences that served as components to his album, which resembles, in some part, a travelogue. The photographs took on a new role when they were placed in the album in which they contributed to a larger narrative and became part of a single, cohesive collection, along with the photographs that Hahn had received while he was abroad and items that Hahn had bought.

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<sup>62</sup> Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 87-88.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

### Chapter 3

#### The Brown Photograph Album



*Figure 3.1.* Hahn, Moore, and Interpreter standing in Hiroshima. Includes the caption: “Near center of where atomic bomb hit Hiroshima. L-Jap Interpreter, Center-Hahn, R-Moore.” Herbert Hahn Brown Album, Herbert Hahn Collection, in author’s possession.

The atomic bomb struck Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. Unlike previous methods of bombing used during the course of the war, the atomic bomb decimated the city and its inhabitants with a single bomb.<sup>64</sup> It represented a new style of warfare and a new form of mass destruction.<sup>65</sup> Following the dropping of the bomb in Hiroshima and then later in Nagasaki, Japan surrendered to the United States.<sup>66</sup> Hahn was among the soldiers sent by the United States to occupy Japan following its surrender. When he encountered the landscape of Hiroshima, it

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<sup>64</sup> Ronald Takaki, *Hiroshima* (Toronto, Ontario: Little, Brown & Company, 1995), 42-43.

<sup>65</sup> Takaki, *Hiroshima*, 7.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 48-49.

was—as shown in Figure 3.1—in ruins. However, the city that Hahn encountered did not reflect the immediate aftermath of the atomic bomb. He arrived several weeks later.

Immediately following the dropping of the bomb, the city had been reduced to rubble and its citizens dead or injured. Throughout the city, there were fires caused by the bomb, but these were secondary as to the effects that the bomb had on the citizens of Hiroshima.<sup>67</sup> Those who had not been killed by the atomic bomb suffered from the effects of the radiation and mass panic.<sup>68</sup> Hiroshima's population prior to the bomb was 350,000 with 43,000 identified as Japanese soldiers.<sup>69</sup> The bomb killed approximately 70,000 people upon impact, but more would die in the following months due to the effects of the bomb.<sup>70</sup> Radiation poisoning and other wounds received from the bomb would claim 60,000 by November of 1945 and 70,000 more by 1950.<sup>71</sup> When the atomic bomb dropped in August of 1945, the bodies of the dead were present everywhere, however, when Hahn arrived over a month later, these bodies had been removed and only the rubble remained.

The Hiroshima that Hahn encountered was a city that had been reduced to rubble with what few structures survived appearing as hollow skeletons rising above the flatness. This is the city that Hahn stands in the middle of in Figure 3.1, surveying the damage done by the atomic bomb. Accompanying Hahn, who appears at the center of the image, are an unnamed Japanese interpreter to his left and a man identified only as Moore to his right. They stand, according to Hahn's description, at the approximate center of where the bomb landed in Hiroshima, surrounded by the ruins of the city. A single structure can be seen in the photograph, rising out of

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-45.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

the flat landscape that is edged by mountains in the distance. In the photograph, Hahn's focus is downwards on something that is not entirely discernable to the viewer, while Moore looks over towards Hahn and the Japanese interpreter. Unlike Hahn and Moore, the Japanese interpreter's attention is not in the frame of the photograph, rather, he is looking at something in the distance beyond what the viewer can see in the photograph. While Hahn and Moore appear relatively relaxed, the interpreter stands straight, arms at his side, his posture difficult to read. As he is only identified as a "Jap interpreter" by Hahn, it is not clear whether he is Japanese and is serving as their interpreter or if he is someone from another country—such as the Philippines—who speaks Japanese and was brought along to serve as a translator for the Americans. This photograph, in addition to two others taken at Hiroshima, documents the city upon Hahn's arrival. It is a city of rubble, seemingly devoid of brutality to the viewer as there are no clear, discernable bodies present in the frame, only fallen buildings. The 70,000 killed in the immediate aftermath of the atomic bomb are missing in these photographs, their bodies having been disposed of in the weeks that followed the dropping of the atomic bomb.<sup>72</sup> By the time Hahn arrived to Hiroshima and took his photograph, the city had been "cleaned up" to some degree in that the dead had been removed and all that remained that remained was the rubble. While the photographs Hahn took in Hiroshima do not depict bodies, the images do depict the aftermath of brutality.

For the most part, Hahn's photographs of Hiroshima are reflective of those shown in the media at the time. A popular image that was associated with the atomic bomb dropping was that of the mushroom cloud it produced which in itself did not disclose the violence brought about by the atomic bomb.<sup>73</sup> While photographers in Hiroshima captured the immediate panic following

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>73</sup> Andrew Katz, "After the A-bomb: What Photographers Encountered in Hiroshima," *Washington Post*, August 6, 2015, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/08/06/after-the-a-bomb-what-photographers-encountered-in-hiroshima/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.02ed2c1f30a8](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/08/06/after-the-a-bomb-what-photographers-encountered-in-hiroshima/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.02ed2c1f30a8).

the drop of the atomic bomb, these were generally not the images shown in the United States. For example, Andrew Katz in his article, “After the A-bomb: What Photographers Encountered in Hiroshima,” discusses the work of Yoshito Matsushige, a local Japanese photographer who captured the immediate aftermath of the atomic bomb.<sup>74</sup> His photographs captured the panic that ensued and, in September 1952, several of his photographs were published by *LIFE* magazine in the United States.<sup>75</sup> Per the article in *LIFE*, these photographs had been previously kept from the public eye due to censorship.<sup>76</sup> The photographs shown by *LIFE* in 1952 were gruesome photographs that depicted the aftermath of the atomic bomb, including not only the effect on buildings, but also on the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.<sup>77</sup> Included among the photographs were those of children affected by radiation and the initial blast of the bomb as well as images of bodies lying amongst the rubble.<sup>78</sup> While Hahn’s depictions of Hiroshima are similar to the photographs shown by *LIFE* in 1952, the sterilized nature of his photographs—in that there are no bodies present—are more like the censored depictions of the bomb such as the depiction of the mushroom cloud. Like the depiction of the mushroom cloud, there is an allusion to extreme violence, but death is not explicitly depicted.

Following his return from the war, Hahn had hundreds of photographs, including photographs that he had taken himself, photographs that he had collected along the ways, and assorted materials that he had also collected while overseas. Initially, the photographs he had taken had been intended to document and communicate his experiences abroad to an audience

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<sup>74</sup> Katz, “After the A-bomb.”

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> Katz, “After the A-bomb.” “When Atom Bomb Struck—Uncensored,” *LIFE*, September 29, 1952, <https://books.google.com/books?id=VVEAAAAMBAJ&pg=PP1&lpg=PP1&dq=First+Pictures+-+Atom+Blasts+Through+Eyes+of+Victims&source=bl&ots=BUGF7TObBA&sig=bZpdBcyOC07fPfkWasu88A42eE&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0CCYQ6AEwAWoVChMIlpmei6qQxwIVSDU-Ch3WKwAl#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

<sup>77</sup> “When Atom Bomb Struck—Uncensored.”

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

still at home on the farm in Iowa. When the war ended, the photographs as a communication device seemingly came to an end as they were no longer needed to explain his experiences abroad and document his own wellbeing as he had returned home. The images, however, were not case aside upon his return home. Instead, the photographs were given a new purpose, in that they now served as components in a larger collection with a single overarching narrative. Using a brown photograph album, Hahn used the photographs and materials that he had acquired over the course of the war and attempted to form a single narrative in which he had the advantage of hindsight to analyze events. This album, however, did not share the same purpose of the photographs. While the majority of the photographs had been intended for public consumption—in that he presented them to an audience and described them with his audience in mind—the album was, for the most part, removed from public view. The album had a different purpose from the photographs that he included in the album. Following the end of the war, the photographs and materials that Hahn had taken and collected during the war were placed into an album where they assumed a new purpose in attempting to present a cohesive, single narrative of Hahn's experience for Hahn himself, rather than for an outside audience as the photographs had been.

The image shown in Figure 3.1 is one of three photographs that depicts Hiroshima following the dropping of the atomic bomb. The photographs depicting Hiroshima's destruction are arranged on the first page of the brown album and set amongst other images taken in nearby Kure, where Hahn was stationed. These images contribute to the framing of the album which begins and ends with violence. While the violence depicted in the images of Hiroshima is bloodless, in that there are no bodies plainly visible, the desolate landscape speaks to a horror that took thousands of lives. Even though the viewer is spared the image of a corpse, the

remnants of death are still present. Compared to the photographs at the end of the album, the images of Hiroshima are sanitized and seemingly devoid of brutality. These images, however, depict the atrocities of war just as much as the images at the end of the album.

### The Photographs at the End of the Album



*Figure 3.2.* Soldier in tank overlooking the dead. Herbert Hahn Brown Album, Herbert Hahn Collection, in author's possession.

At the end of the brown photograph album, there are twenty-five photographs that have been separated from the rest of the content by a series of pages containing commercially produced postcards. The postcards that precede these photographs fill seven pages and are all artistic renditions of a variety of subjects. The postcards include images of natural landmarks in Utah and Colorado as well as a series of postcards depicting cowboys and their horses in the west. They divide the photographs at the end from the rest of the album's content. Included among the images quarantined at the end of the album are photographs that depict the more brutal and graphic aspects of war. One of these images is shown in Figure 3.2 which depicts a soldier emerging from a small tank. In the foreground of the photograph, however, are two

bodies, one of which is more discernable and has been stripped naked. The body lies amongst debris and rubble, most likely created during a battle or small skirmish in which the individual lost their life. The emergence of the soldier from the tank indicates that whatever danger was present has since passed and that he no longer feels that his life is threatened, a sentiment. The body set in the foreground was most likely part of that danger and his death marked the end of that threat. His naked appearance indicates that enough time has passed that his body has been raided for souvenirs, taken by the surviving victors.

This photograph, like others at the end, presents a more brutal and immediate sense of violence. Rather than requiring the viewer to think about the people whose homes were included in the rubble of Hiroshima and imagine how many were among the casualties, this photograph presents the dead front and center. There is no need to imagine death or the victims of war because they are explicitly present in the photograph for the viewer to see. Unlike the photographs of Hiroshima where the landscape has been, seemingly, sanitized and the implements of war are not present, these photographs depict both death and how that death came to be. In Figure 3.2, the body is depicted beside the tank that most likely contributed to the individual's death, setting the body and the most likely cause side by side in the photograph. In the depiction of Hiroshima, the atomic bomb is not shown in any form. Instead, it is referenced in the caption which indicates how close the photograph was taken to the site of the atomic bomb's landing in Hiroshima. The viewer, however, is not shown what the bomb looked like, how it hit the ground in Hiroshima, or the resulting mushroom cloud that rose above the city. These depiction are absent in Hahn's photograph of Hiroshima, rather, the only thing shown to the viewer is the aftermath in which only rubble and debris is visible. The violence is implied



rather than shown and, perhaps, for this reason the photographs of Hiroshima were considered more acceptable for the beginning of the album.

Images such as those shown in Figure 3.2, however, are kept to the back of the album. Unlike the photographs of Hiroshima which the viewer encounters upon opening album, these photographs require the viewer to have paged through the entirety of the album and looked past the commercially produced photographs. The viewer is rewarded for their dedication in viewing the album with violence. This image is one of the first that viewer sees following the section of postcards and is included with four other photographs of similar content and one last postcard—an artist's rendition of Mount Majestic and Angel's Landing in Zion National Park, Utah. Among the other photographs included on this page are two photographs depicting Japanese soldiers taken prisoner by American soldiers with one documenting captured enemy soldiers marching into a camp while American soldiers look on. Figure 3.2 is one of two photographs on the same page that depicts American soldiers encountering the dead. The fourth photograph on this same page depicts a battle, capturing projectiles being launched at an unseen enemy as a haze of dust and smoke threaten to obscure the contents of the photograph. These depictions of brutality are more blatant than the images taken in Hiroshima, presenting their violence, destruction, and death without the viewer needing to interpret or consider what they are seeing.

While these images contribute to the framing of the album, creating a violent end for the album, it is unclear exactly why they were placed at the end of the album. One reason may have been due to the blatant graphic nature of the photographs and a need to hide them from the rest of the album's content. Unlike the images taken of Hiroshima following the atomic bomb, these images depict bodies strewn across the ground, many of them stripped of all they once had. The very last image in the album depicts a man crouched down, holding the decapitated head of a

Japanese soldier. The violence of these photographs is on full display for the viewer upon first glance. The placement of these photographs behind several pages of postcards supports the idea that they were placed at the back of the album to separate them from the rest of the content and that the postcards were intended to act as a barrier that initially spared the viewer of the images. The postcards could serve as a marker by which the viewer knew to stop paging through the album as the last few pages contained graphic depictions of war.

Another reason for the separation of these photographs from the majority of the content of the album may have been how Hahn regarded these images. He may have considered these images relevant to the album, but been unsure how to incorporate them into the album at the time of the album's arrangement. Their placement at the end may have been his way of ensuring they were incorporated into the album with his planning to revisit and do more with them when he reached that part of the album. Given the album's incomplete nature, he was not able to finish doing what he wanted with the album and these photographs were left at the end without context like the photographs at the beginning.

Additionally, Hahn may have considered the images controversial and that was why he contained these select photographs to the end of the album. Hahn's desire to include the photographs in the album may have outweighed his regard of the photographs as controversial and so, in order to include them but not bring attention to them, he included them at the end of the album. His placement of these photographs at the end may have been done specifically to "hide" the images in the album. This potential explanation is derived from a conversation with DeLancey, Hahn's son, who described the photographs at the end of the album as "illegal" to possess and that showing them could result in trouble from the government.<sup>79</sup> DeLancey's

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<sup>79</sup> DeLancey Hahn, oral history interview conducted by author, over the phone, January 20, 2018.

conclusion was based upon what his father, Hahn, had told him regarding the images, stating that they were illegal to have and should not be shown to others as that increased the risk of being caught and punished for possessing them.<sup>80</sup> While this position regarding the images at the end of the brown album is outdated, at the time of Hahn's coming into possession of the photographs, it would have been based in current policy.

### Censorship Policies

During World War II, the government put censorship policies into place to limit what information was released. These policies included censorship of materials produced by soldiers including the photographs they took and the letters they wrote. However, while the materials produced by ordinary soldiers were subject to censorship, they were not the only target of the policies. In addition to censoring letters and photographs produced by ordinary soldiers, journalists and photographers who produced "official media" intended for the public's consumption were also heavily scrutinized.<sup>81</sup> One of the primary reasons in enacting these policies was to limit the dissemination of information that, were it to fall into the enemy's hands, could inform them of troop movements and other battle plans.<sup>82</sup> Additionally, by limited what images could be shown in official media outlets, the government sought to regulate the image of the war that was shown to the public. Government officials tried to ensure that images of dead American soldiers would not be shown to the public, fearing that it would harm the public's morale and perception of the war.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> DeLancey Hahn, oral history interview conducted by author, over the phone, January 20, 2018.

<sup>81</sup> George H. Roeder, Jr., *The Censored War: American Visual Experience During World War II* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1993), 17.

<sup>82</sup> Roeder, *The Censored War*, 8.

<sup>83</sup> Goldberg and Silberman, *American Photography*, 15. Cutshaw and Barrett, *In the Vernacular*, 110-111.

The policies enacted during World War II were notably less strict than those enacted during World War I, but they were still strict on what was permitted to be shown to the public.<sup>84</sup> Photographs produced by professional photographers and journalists that were deemed too graphic were subject to censor and shut away in the “Chamber of Horrors” maintained by the government.<sup>85</sup> While more graphic images would eventually permeate into the public’s consciousness, efforts were made by the government in the beginning to ensure that the public was kept from seeing the horrors of warfare. It was only after it had been determined that the American public was, for the most part, completely unaware of the struggle going on at the front, that more gruesome images were shown to the public.<sup>86</sup> According to Goldberg and Silberman, “Concluding that pictures could now be used to toughen up the home front, President Roosevelt directed the military to release photographs depicting American sacrifices and suffering.”<sup>87</sup>

Many of the images at the end of the brown photograph album would have been censored due to their content. While they do not all necessarily depict “American sacrifices and suffering,” they do depict violence against the enemy which was a censored subject. The government did not approve images depicting poor treatment of or violence against the enemy to be shown. It was believed that images depicting violence against the enemy, if acquired by the enemy, could be used in propaganda against the United States.<sup>88</sup> Several of the images contained at the end of the brown photograph album fall under this category and would have been subject to censorship if seen by government officials. Hahn, most likely, did not mail these photographs home, although

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<sup>84</sup> Goldberg and Silberman, *American Photography*, 109.

<sup>85</sup> Roeder, *The Censored War*, 33, 36.

<sup>86</sup> Goldberg and Silberman, *American Photography*, 111-113.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>88</sup> Roeder, *The Censored War*, 8.

also may have. In September of 1945, Hahn commented to his brother, Walter, in a letter that, “they are starting to loosen up on censoring.”<sup>89</sup>

The inclusion of the photographs at the end of the brown photograph album indicates that they were considered necessary to the album. While it is not clear if Hahn is the original creator<sup>90</sup> of these images, he considered them important to keep despite regarding them as “illegal” to possess and necessary to the album. This may be due in part to the content of several photographs corresponding to events that Hahn recounted in letters home, indicating that they were relevant to his experiences abroad. Hahn was in a position of relative safety working in the kitchen of Headquarters Company during the war. As such he did not regularly engage in combat, he was not entirely removed from combat and its aftermath. In a letter to his brother, Lawrence, Hahn describes encountering the bodies of enemy soldiers, stating:

The things I sent home really weren't much, but about all one could get without risk. I once had a chance to get a new Jap pistol with holster, belt, and many pouches of ammunition. This was in Leyte. We were told not to touch those bodies. I didn't intend to anyway, but when a battery of artillery moved in they asked no questions and stripped the bodies of souvenirs. I figure all the souvenirs in the world aren't worth the risk of getting a single one, no matter how safe it seems. Any of them may be booby trapped.<sup>91</sup>

This candid discussion of looting the dead indicates that Hahn saw death up close. While he did not always participate in combat as indicated in his description of witnessing a landing on a

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<sup>89</sup> Herbert Hahn, Herbert Hahn to Walter Hahn, September 7, 1945, letter, in author's possession.

<sup>90</sup> In the available letters that Hahn wrote home, he often referenced including photographs and negatives in the letters themselves, however, he rarely disclosed the content of the photographs and negatives. Generally, instead, Hahn would state that he had included several photographs or, if he had included negatives, he would provide instructions for how many copies he wanted made of the negatives. It is difficult, then, to determine what photographs and negatives Hahn mailed with each letter. Similarly, while several of these photographs correspond to the content of letters, it is not known if these were images he included along with the letter because he did not directly refer to the content of the photographs in his letters. However, given his tendency to caption photographs that he mailed home, these images were most likely not mailed home.

<sup>91</sup> Herbert Hahn, Herbert Hahn to Lawrence Hahn, August 6, 1945, letter, in author's possession.

beach and stating they arrived “the following day” after the beach had been secured, he was not completely removed from it.<sup>92</sup>

The inclusion of these photographs, therefore, may have been considered necessary as they were needed in order to accurately depict and process his experiences during the war. Hahn did not only attend weddings or interact with people walking through and working in camp, he also had to encounter the dead and experienced what it meant to be a soldier at war. The letters indicate that Hahn’s experiences abroad were not always pleasant and the inclusion of the photographs at the end of the album reflect this. The inclusion of these more brutal photographs may have been Hahn coped with the stress and trauma brought about by the war, using the photograph album as a moment to reflect on or put away the memories he had of the war.

In general, many soldiers during World War II dealt with stress and trauma during their time abroad. During the war, in combat, soldiers were expected to cope with the stresses brought on by battle and endure the trauma that war brought about.<sup>93</sup> While some soldiers returned home and did not suffer from suppressed stress and trauma, other soldiers did. Following their return from the war, some soldiers suffered from “flashbacks” in which they would relive particularly traumatizing experiences from the war.<sup>94</sup> For soldiers suffering from flashbacks, they are forced to relive the worst parts of their war experiences, re-traumatizing them on a regular basis. The residual trauma experienced by both these soldiers and those from other wars has gone by different names, including, shell shock, combat fatigue, and, more recently, posttraumatic stress

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<sup>92</sup> Herbert Hahn, Herbert Hahn to Lawrence Hahn, May 4, 1945, letter, in author’s possession.

<sup>93</sup> John C. McManus, *The Deadly Brotherhood: The American Combat Soldier in World War II* (New York City, New York: Ballantine Books, 1998), 293.

<sup>94</sup> John E. Talbott, “Soldiers, Psychiatrists, and Combat Trauma,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 27, no. 3 (Winter 1997): 439-440.

disorder or PTSD.<sup>95</sup> While some soldiers are able to cope with the trauma experienced in war and handle the residual trauma, other cannot and may resort to alcohol or suicide.<sup>96</sup>

Hahn's creation of the brown photograph album may have been a method by which Hahn coped with the stress and trauma brought on by his experiences in the army. The process of arranging photographs may have allowed for Hahn to reflect upon his experiences and potentially confront his memories. Additionally, the act of physically placing photographs that represented memories of his experiences may have helped in the handling and potential suppression of undesirable memories. In the photograph album, Hahn was able to confront his memories in a safe place where he could deal with and make meaning of his experiences. The brown photograph album, in this way, may have represented a personal and private space where Hahn could confront his memories without an audience present.

### **Condition of the Brown Photograph Album**

The brown photograph album is ultimately incomplete in its presentation. While it possesses a distinct beginning and end, there is no true middle to the album. The album, instead, has a jumble of photographs present with some affixed to the pages without any clear organization, while others are stored between the pages of the album. Whatever Hahn's intended purpose for the album, he ultimately did not complete them and this is reflected in the state of the brown photograph album.

The first page of the brown photograph album sets a standard for the viewer wherein the images are neatly arranged with photograph corners and include accompanying captions in white ink. Based upon the first page alone, it appears as though a great deal of effort has gone into the creation and arrangement of the contents of the brown album and that the following pages will be

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<sup>95</sup> Talbott, "Soldiers, Psychiatrists, and Combat Trauma," 437.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 442-443.

equally informative. However, by the second page, these standards begin to wane. While the photographs are still carefully arranged, they no longer have accompanying captions.

Additionally, duplicate photographs begin to appear, indicating that there is no curation process and that the photographs are simply included regardless of whether or not they have already been included. For example, on the second page, an image of individuals gathered around what appears to be a table appears twice on the same page. Later pages also demonstrate similar choices to include duplicate photographs both on the same page as well as across multiple pages. While the decision to include multiples of the same photograph could have been a conscious choice on Hahn's part, he also demonstrates an effort to group duplicate photographs in a single location. For example, on page sixteen of the brown photograph album, there appears to be a single photograph that Hahn took of his living arrangements while abroad that includes one of his "roommates" Ted Newberry sitting with his back to the camera. While arranging the brown album, Hahn placed two identical copies of this photograph in the same photograph corners, indicating that he had a method by which he could include multiple photographs in the album without displaying both of these duplicates. His carrying out of this practice, however, is limited to this photograph.

In addition to the lapses in the arrangement and organization of the photographs, the album itself contains loose photographs that do not appear to have ever been fixed into place. These photographs are tucked between the pages of the album and, while many appear to be part of the intended layout of the album in that they appear to have been at approximately the same time as those included in the album, there is no clear indication that they would have been included. For example, the photographs are not contained between blank pages where they might have been placed nor are there empty photograph corners where these images should have been



affixed. The assumption that Hahn intended to include these photographs in the album comes from their appearing to be contemporary photographs to those included in the album and sharing the same subject matter as those photographs included in the album. If this assumption is true, then their inclusion between the pages of the album was due to the album being incomplete and the photographs were left there with the intention that they would eventually be returned to and affixed permanently into the photograph album. If these photographs were not intended to be part of the permanent collection contained in the album, then the inclusion of these photographs may be explained as accidental inclusions or later additions. For example, if Hahn wanted to keep these loose photographs safe, he may have tucked them between the pages of the brown album, considering that a safe location for the photographs as well as a place where they were stored with similar images.

The devolving arrangement of the pages and the inclusion of multiple copies of the same image indicate that the brown photograph album is incomplete. The album demonstrates an initial effort to construct and arrange a single collection space where Hahn's experiences during World War II could be contained using materials that Hahn produced and acquired during the war. This effort, however, appears to have been relatively short-lived in that the initial effort did not correspond to a completed product. For example, in addition to the arrangement of the first page, Hahn affixed brown envelopes to the front and back covers of the album in which he included additional components and materials. The brown folder attached to the back cover includes two documents that Hahn acquired during the war including a leaflet written in Japanese that, according to Hahn, was distributed to Japanese soldiers to inform them that they should surrender themselves as the war was over. Additionally, this folder contains a newsletter produced by X Corps that discusses the dropping of the atomic bomb and the Japanese response

to it. Both this folder attached to the back cover and the one attached to the front cover, demonstrate Hahn's altering of the brown album and indicate that he had—at least, initially—a greater purpose for the brown album that expanded beyond the arrangement of photographs. Despite this initial effort, however, the brown photograph album is incomplete or, at the very least, roughly finished.

### **Photograph Album Theory**

Photograph albums are understood to innately tell stories and construct narratives due to the creator's relationship with the album and the level of control that they are able to exert over the album.<sup>97</sup> This level of control on the part of the creator allows them to tell a story by way of photographs that they have taken or acquired through the arrangement of these images.<sup>98</sup> The story that the album tells depends upon what the creator decides is most relevant to them. This may include a “predictable” story of growth with the photographs documenting a child as they grow into adulthood or it may “unconventional” in its focus on a particular facet or journey in someone's life such as their travels.<sup>99</sup> Often, the choice of what story is depicted in the pages of a photograph album can inform the viewer on the creator of the album. By viewing the overall story and viewing the components that the creator has determined necessary inclusions, the viewer can learn more about the creator. In the same way that an author's written work reflects upon them and their choices, so do the choices that album creators make regarding their photograph albums.

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<sup>97</sup> Marilyn F. Motz, “Visual Autobiography: Photograph Albums of Turn-of-the-Century Midwestern Women,” *American Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (March 1989): 64-65.

<sup>98</sup> Barbara Levine, “Collecting Photo Albums—Musings On,” in *Snapshot Chronicles: Inventing the American Photo Album*, eds. Barbara Levine and Stephanie Snyder (New York City, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006), 17.

<sup>99</sup> Levine, “Collecting Photo Albums—Musings On,” 17-18.

Often the stories present in these albums transcend beyond being only family stories. Barbara Levine, in her chapter contribution to *Snapshot Chronicles: Inventing the American Photo Album*, discusses encountering the stories present in photograph albums that are not directly part of her family's history.<sup>100</sup> These albums are, instead, ones that she has collected overtime and the people pictured in the albums are, more often than not, strangers to her.<sup>101</sup> Despite not knowing the people who populate the album, Levine argues that their stories are still evident and clear to her, an outside viewer.<sup>102</sup> According to Levine, regardless of knowing who the people are in the photographs, the stories remain universal and the photograph album is a good tool for conveying these stories.<sup>103</sup> While Levine argues that meaning can transcend knowing the identity of those pictured, some meaning is lost without knowing the identity of the photographed individuals. Without the context familiarity provides, some of the story will be lost as only family with the context of family history will be aware of the complete story present in the pages of the album and the details regarding events occurring in the photographs.

Many share Levine's sentiment that the stories present in albums remain accessible regardless of knowing the identity of those photographed, including Martha Langford. Langford, in *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums*, agrees with Levine's argument that the album retains its original story and meaning, although Langford adds one condition. According to Langford, the album's meaning shifts when it is removed from the context of its originating family and viewed by an outsider.<sup>104</sup> While there continues to be a meaning present in the album, this meaning shifts depending upon who is viewing the album.

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20.

<sup>104</sup> Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 18-20.

Additionally, the album never truly loses its original meaning or context, but this meaning and context can be difficult for viewers outside the family to ascertain.<sup>105</sup> This is due in part to the albums sharing a similar method of representation and, generally, being held to shared conventions. The shared consensus, thus, remains that photograph albums are important and that the stories they contain are also important.

In addition to presenting a story determined by the creator, the photograph album can also serve a vessel by which the creator tells their autobiography. It can fulfill this function due to the control allowed the creator by the medium and the creator's ability to decide whether or not they want to be the focus of the album. For example, someone putting together an album can decide—either consciously or not—to make themselves the “protagonist” of the story in their photograph album. They do this by choosing images that reflect a story of theirs that they wish to tell and use the album as a means of conveying that story by way of arranging the photographs.

Several authors have put forth this concept of the photograph album as a form of autobiography, including Marilyn Motz in her study of Midwestern women. Motz argues that the relatively inexpensive costs associated with the photograph album as well as the level of control and manipulation afforded to the assembler made them the perfect device for disadvantaged groups to create their own visual autobiography.<sup>106</sup> Motz, in “Visual Autobiography: Photograph Albums of Turn-of-the-Century Midwestern Women,” discusses how women in the Midwest were able to take advantage of the photograph albums available to them and tell their own stories in a way that they would not have otherwise been able to.<sup>107</sup> These stories then became important as they provided a form of historical record for these

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>106</sup> Motz, “Visual Autobiography,” 65-66.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 67-69.

women that later historians, such as Motz, could study and analyze.<sup>108</sup> For example, the albums Motz examined allowed for her to learn about the daily life of these women, the roles these women played in their families and communities, and the world as these women perceived it.<sup>109</sup>

The concept Motz puts forward—the album as autobiography—corresponds to Langford’s argument of the album serving as a visual diary.<sup>110</sup> Both Motz and Langford emphasize the photograph album’s ability to convey a person’s story akin to a written autobiography or diary. Through the process of photograph selection and the incorporation of accompanying captions, a narrative can be established that tells a linear or chronological story. Generally, the use of the photograph albums as autobiographies or visual diaries is a conscious choice in which the creator decides to create a historical record of themselves, generally, for themselves.<sup>111</sup> For example, Motz argues that the women were purposefully reporting and commenting on their lives through their photograph albums and that the choices they made were not meaningless ones.<sup>112</sup> Instead, when these women chose to include or exclude a photograph or apply a particular caption, they were actively seeking to produce a narrative in which an aspect of their lives was conveyed to the audience. This, then, produced a historical record for women who might have otherwise become lost to the historical record.

In addition to arguing that the album can be used as a visual diary, Langford also argues that the album could be a form of travelogue. Unlike an album which may contain photographs relating to travel as components of a larger narrative, albums serving as travelogues are devoted to travel and the traveler’s experiences.<sup>113</sup> An album acting as a travelogue may tell an

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 71-72.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 72-73.

<sup>110</sup> Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 65.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>112</sup> Motz, “Visual Autobiography,” 75-76.

<sup>113</sup> Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 81.

overarching narrative, but it does so in short vignettes throughout the album that relay particular experiences or encounters.<sup>114</sup> According to Langford, the photographs contained in a travelogue are reflective of their attachment to the environment in which they are in.<sup>115</sup> As they are travelers and the location they are photographing is not their home—at least, not as they perceive it as they will generally associate the term ‘home’ with another location despite their possibly being at this location for an extended period of time—the way in which they record their surroundings is different. They capture the world around them with a traveler’s gaze which means they are more likely disconnected from their surroundings and are capturing it in “blinks, blurs, or ‘snaps.’”<sup>116</sup> Travelogues, generally, have an attached agenda in that they tell the story of the traveler being elsewhere and will have a fixed beginning and end.<sup>117</sup>

#### Significance of Photograph Albums

From their inception, photograph albums have been useful tools to record history, albeit, usually a family’s private history. Early Victorian albums allowed for a transition from telling family histories to showing family histories through photographs.<sup>118</sup> Rather than record the family history in a written form—such as in the family Bible—the family could not record their history in albums with photographs and captions indicating the genealogy in a way that the written record could not.<sup>119</sup> At the most basic level, a photograph album provides the history of a family for that family’s viewing. Through its images of people across time, it documents family genealogies, noting births and marriages directly, while alluding to deaths with absences.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 78-81.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 81, 87.

<sup>118</sup> Elizabeth Siegel, *Galleries of Friendship and Fame: A History of Nineteenth-Century American Photograph Albums* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2010), 6-7.

<sup>119</sup> Siegel, *Galleries of Friendship and Fame*, 7. Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 92.

<sup>120</sup> Siegel, *Galleries of Friendship and Fame*, 7-8.

Photograph albums and the photographs they contain are, in this way, significant to the families that create them. However, they are also significant to the historians later viewing them as they can inform the historian not only on the individual depicted in the album, but also life during a particular period.<sup>121</sup> This can include the most basic features such as popular fashion and the state of locations—in that photographs provide a visual record of how a particular building or landmark appears at that time. However, in addition to this, photograph albums can indicate people's perceptions.

Photograph albums provide insights into how people perceived the world around them. As albums can function as a device by which individuals tell their story, they can provide viewers glimpses into how the creators perceive the world they are living in or encountering. Colette Apelian, in "Reading a Family Photo Album," discusses how a family's travel album, or travelogue, presents the perceptions of the creator.<sup>122</sup> According to Apelian, the vocabulary used for captions provide an insight into the creator's views including their biases and potential sense of superiority over others.<sup>123</sup> For example, the use of derogatory language such as referring to another people as "savages" or expressing distaste in another people's culture can indicate an underlying bias or sense of superiority. How the creator views themselves in relation to those they encounter can be seen in their chosen terminology. Additionally, language choice can indicate what words or terms are considered acceptable or "standard" at that time.

Photograph albums provide documentation of a particular time period and its people by way of the creator of the photograph album. In this way, the photograph album can provide a visual historical record regarding a particular individual, a particular event, or a particular time

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<sup>121</sup> Motz, "A Visual Autobiography," 75.

<sup>122</sup> Colette Apelian, "Reading a Family Photo Album," *Getty Research Journal* no. 3 (2011): 189.

<sup>123</sup> Apelian, "Reading a Family Photo Album," 191.

period. This visual record can provide historians with information that they might not otherwise be able to obtain or which there is a limited record regarding. Additionally, due to the relative inexpensive and prolific nature of photographs, photograph albums can be fairly common and provide many additional narratives, or viewpoints, of a single event or time period. For example, albums created by soldiers during war can present a variety of viewpoints on the same war. In addition to providing the soldier a way in which they can capture their experiences, by producing a meaningful object for themselves or assist in suppressing trauma acquired during combat, photograph albums can provide historians a resource in which they can see how different soldiers perceived the same war.

### **Soldier Photograph Albums**

Hahn's choosing to arrange the photographs he acquired during World War II in an album is similar to what other soldiers have done. While the choices Hahn made are unique to his album, other soldiers have also used the relatively common medium of a photograph album to collect and arrange their photographs. With these photograph albums, soldiers were able to arrange the photographs into larger, more meaningful narratives or collections.<sup>124</sup> While the individual photographs represented or contained a particular story or vignette, the album allowed for the creator to establish and indicate relationships between photographs across the pages of an album.<sup>125</sup> Additionally, these albums could be used to tell the story of a soldier's experience during the war in a form similar to a travelogue or visual diary as described by Langford.

While Hahn's album is incomplete and its purpose may not have been telling a story to an audience, there is still a story contained in the album. This story comes in the form of the vignettes contained in the photographs as well as the relationships made between the

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<sup>124</sup> Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 70.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 67-60.



photographs in how they are arranged on the pages. This story informs the viewer of Hahn's experiences during World War II and provides some insights on what he witnessed.

Additionally, the story contained in this album can be compared to other albums which also contain stories, which is discussed later in this thesis.

World War II was not the first war in which soldiers documented their experiences with personal photographs and the use of photograph albums. World War I also produced numerous soldier photograph albums which collected and arranged soldiers' personal photograph collections. These albums would take the photographs that soldiers had taken on small, portable cameras and then arrange them into larger contexts.<sup>126</sup> For the most part, the arrangements of these albums are similar to the arrangement of Hahn's album.

During World War I, many soldiers had access to cameras and, thus, were able to capture their experience via photographs.<sup>127</sup> Some soldiers would then choose to mount these photographs in albums following the war. These albums provide insights into not only what the soldiers experienced during the war, but also how they perceived the war. For example, Stephanie Snyder in her chapter, "The Vernacular Photo Album: Its Origins and Genius," examines a World War I photograph album in which a variety of images are shown.<sup>128</sup> The album Snyder looks at includes photographs of trench warfare alongside images of landmarks that the soldiers saw during their deployment as well as images of them having fun.<sup>129</sup> These juxtaposed images document a range of experiences that the soldiers had while abroad.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Stephanie Snyder, "The Vernacular Photo Album: Its Origins and Genius," in *Snapshot Chronicles: Inventing the American Photo Album*, eds. Barbara Levine and Stephanie Snyder (New York City, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006), 32.

<sup>127</sup> Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 70.

<sup>128</sup> Snyder, "The Vernacular Photo Album," 32.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

According to Snyder, the story lies in the relationship of these photographs to each other as there is an inconsistent tone present within the pages of the album.<sup>131</sup>

### **Purpose of the Brown Photograph Album**

Ultimately, the brown photograph album serves as a place in which Hahn collected many of the photographs he had taken and acquired over the course of World War II. While the photograph album contains a clear beginning and a somewhat clear end, it does not contain a clear middle. The photographs in the middle, instead, are roughly placed as though they were included in a hurry and they are not given the same attention to detail the photographs at the beginning were. In the case of the end, the photographs are present and neatly arranged, but they are not as detailed as those in the beginning. For this reason, the album is unfinished and Hahn's initial purpose for the album was never realized, leaving the album in an indefinite production hiatus.

In addition to appearing as though the brown photograph album should have been more detailed throughout, the album appears to be a place where Hahn contended with his experiences and memories of World War II. In the pages of the brown album, Hahn could acknowledge the trauma that he had experienced during the war as well as the violence he witnessed and was part of. While the album may have begun as a cathartic exercise, it ultimately became a place in which Hahn could suppress his memories of the war. As Hahn chose not to speak about the war in his later life, the album became a vessel in which Hahn could repress his memories and exercise silence. In this way, the album preserved memories that Hahn did not want to acknowledge verbally, but could not forget.

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

## A Policy of Silence

At some point in his life, Hahn adopted a policy of silence regarding the war, in that he chose to speak very little, if not at all, about the war. Hahn's children recall their father's silence about the war and that when he did bring it up, he was generally quite vague about it.<sup>132</sup> Of his children,<sup>133</sup> only DeLancey and Shiela directly recall their father speaking about the war, however, both agree that these instances were always brief.<sup>134</sup> More often than not, Hahn's descriptions were vague such as, according to Shiela, describing the war as something to be avoided at all costs.<sup>135</sup> One story that Shiela recalled her father telling with more detail was when Hahn believed his brother, Frederick, had died in a battle.<sup>136</sup> According to Shiela, Hahn talked about going through the dog tags taken from the deceased and finding one that had "Lamont, Iowa" stamped on it.<sup>137</sup> He immediately assumed that this tag had belonged to his brother, Frederick, and that his brother must have been among those killed and began crying. However, it was during his mourning that his brother appeared, alive and well, and Hahn realized that this tag had not belonged to his brother. Shiela recalled her father stating that this moment had been the both the saddest and happiest for him during the war as he had gone from mourning his brother

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<sup>132</sup> Belinda Peterson, oral history interview conducted by author, La Crosse, Wisconsin, January 5, 2018. Rhonda Larson, oral history interview conducted by author, La Crosse, Wisconsin, January 5, 2018. Daniel Hahn, oral history interview conducted by author, La Crosse, Wisconsin, January 5, 2018. DeLancey Hahn, oral history interview conducted by author, over the phone, January 20, 2018. Shiela Schwarz, oral history interview conducted by author, Oak Creek, Wisconsin, January 25, 2018.

<sup>133</sup> The most likely explanation for why specifically DeLancey and Shiela remember their father speaking at all about the war is due to both having lived at home the longest and farming alongside their father as adults. When DeLancey was away at college, Shiela farmed on her own for several years as their parents, Herbert and Barbara, had already moved into town at this point. Herbert, however, would regularly come to the farm to help with chores and this provided Shiela opportunities to talk to her father. In the case of DeLancey, he would ultimately buy the family farm from their parents and would work alongside with their father for the longest time out of all of the children. These experiences provided opportunities for both Shiela and DeLancey to talk to their father fairly candidly and inquire about a range of topics, including the war.

<sup>134</sup> DeLancey Hahn, oral history interview conducted by author, over the phone, January 20, 2018. Shiela Schwarz, oral history interview conducted by author, Oak Creek, Wisconsin, January 25, 2018.

<sup>135</sup> Shiela Schwarz, oral history interview conducted by author, Oak Creek, Wisconsin, January 25, 2018.

<sup>136</sup> Shiela Schwarz, oral history interview conducted by author, Oak Creek, Wisconsin, January 25, 2018.

<sup>137</sup> Shiela Schwarz, oral history interview conducted by author, Oak Creek, Wisconsin, January 25, 2018.

to realizing his brother was still alive.<sup>138</sup> While the story was specific in emotional detail, it lacked context in that he did not disclose when or where this event had occurred, only that it had occurred while he had been abroad.

In addition to choosing not to speak about the war, the album itself was kept from outside viewers. Hahn's daughter, Shiela, recalls that the brown photograph album was kept at the bottom of her father's closet where it was not intended to be found.<sup>139</sup> It was made explicitly clear that the brown photograph album, should it be found, was not meant for their eyes.<sup>140</sup> While Shiela and her siblings did look at the album, they did so secretly, without disclosing the fact to their father, understanding that they could get in trouble for doing so.<sup>141</sup> None of them expressed any particularly strong feelings for the album as they primarily remembered it as the album that "Dad kept his war pictures in" and "the one with the dead bodies in it."<sup>142</sup> The photograph album, to them, represented a part of their father that he had not discussed and, as adults, they considered it respecting his wishes to not page through the album, but, rather to leave it alone.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Shiela Schwarz, oral history interview conducted by author, Oak Creek, Wisconsin, January 25, 2018.

<sup>139</sup> Shiela Schwarz, oral history interview conducted by author, Oak Creek, Wisconsin, January 25, 2018.

<sup>140</sup> Belinda Peterson, oral history interview conducted by author, La Crosse, Wisconsin, January 5, 2018.

<sup>141</sup> Belinda Peterson, oral history interview conducted by author, La Crosse, Wisconsin, January 5, 2018. Rhonda Larson, oral history interview conducted by author, La Crosse, Wisconsin, January 5, 2018. Daniel Hahn, oral history interview conducted by author, La Crosse, Wisconsin, January 5, 2018. DeLancey Hahn, oral history interview conducted by author, over the phone, January 20, 2018. Shiela Schwarz, oral history interview conducted by author, Oak Creek, Wisconsin, January 25, 2018.

<sup>142</sup> Belinda Peterson, oral history interview conducted by author, La Crosse, Wisconsin, January 5, 2018. Rhonda Larson, oral history interview conducted by author, La Crosse, Wisconsin, January 5, 2018. Daniel Hahn, oral history interview conducted by author, La Crosse, Wisconsin, January 5, 2018. DeLancey Hahn, oral history interview conducted by author, over the phone, January 20, 2018. Shiela Schwarz, oral history interview conducted by author, Oak Creek, Wisconsin, January 25, 2018.

<sup>143</sup> Belinda Peterson, oral history interview conducted by author, La Crosse, Wisconsin, January 5, 2018. Rhonda Larson, oral history interview conducted by author, La Crosse, Wisconsin, January 5, 2018. Daniel Hahn, oral history interview conducted by author, La Crosse, Wisconsin, January 5, 2018. DeLancey Hahn, oral history interview conducted by author, over the phone, January 20, 2018. Shiela Schwarz, oral history interview conducted by author, Oak Creek, Wisconsin, January 25, 2018.

Hahn's policy to remain silent about the war was one shared by his siblings who also participated in the war. Frederick, for example, generally refused to talk about World War II and attempt to discourage conversations about it. When Frederick was the subject of an article regarding his service due to his being honored in 2005 for his service, he was evasive with those asking questions about his service. The article, published in Waterloo's *Courier*, contains only brief quotations, including, "I'm not much on talking about what happened back then."<sup>144</sup> This was a similar sentiment shared by Hahn who would attempt to shut down conversations about the war.<sup>145</sup> In addition to not speaking about the war, Hahn and his siblings also ensured that there was little to no physical record remaining regarding their experiences during the war. They did this by destroying a majority of the letters they wrote back and forth during the war.<sup>146</sup> While some of the letters they wrote remain, these letters represent a small fraction of the correspondence they created during the war.

The choice to remain silent about the war was a common one made by soldiers returning from World War II. Alison Parr explored this common occurrence in her article, "Breaking the Silence: Traumatized War Veterans and Oral History," in which she interviewed three surviving veterans who had recorded oral histories in the early 1990s.<sup>147</sup> In her follow-up interview, she asked them about why they had chosen, for the most part, to remain silent about their war experiences and to discern what had led them to make this choice.<sup>148</sup> According to Parr, for some soldiers returning, this choice was made in order to not revisit painful memories that invoked

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<sup>144</sup> Matthew Wilde, "Waterloo World War II Vet Honored," *Courier*, March 20, 2005, [http://wfcourier.com/news/top\\_story/waterloo-world-war-ii-vet-honored/article\\_7acc3c56-82f7-56f5-9119-97e432d5e395.html](http://wfcourier.com/news/top_story/waterloo-world-war-ii-vet-honored/article_7acc3c56-82f7-56f5-9119-97e432d5e395.html).

<sup>145</sup> Shiela Schwarz, oral history interview conducted by author, Oak Creek, Wisconsin, January 25, 2018.

<sup>146</sup> Shiela Schwarz, oral history interview conducted by author, Oak Creek, Wisconsin, January 25, 2018.

<sup>147</sup> Alison Parr, "Breaking the Silence: Traumatized War Veterans and Oral History," *Oral History* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 61.

<sup>148</sup> Parr, "Breaking the Silence," 61.

posttraumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, and forced them to relive the trauma they had suffered during the war.<sup>149</sup> For other soldiers, this choice was made because they did not think that those they returned to would understand their experiences.<sup>150</sup> While the veterans interviewed by Parr for follow-ups to the oral histories expressed that feeling relief at having disclosed their stories after so much time remaining silent, they also disclosed that they still, generally, remain silent on the topic, refusing to disclose information about their experiences to their families.<sup>151</sup> In the case of the veterans Parr interviewed, this was primarily due to these others not engaging them on the topic or being interested in it now that they were comfortable with disclosing information.<sup>152</sup>

The association of talking about experiences and relieving traumatic experiences was often a major deterrent for soldiers to discuss their experiences even with fellow soldiers.<sup>153</sup> Some soldiers, upon their return from overseas, completely disassociated themselves with the military and those they had served with.<sup>154</sup> For these soldiers, it was not a matter of having their experiences be understood, but, rather, having to relive their experiences. By suppressing these experiences and refusing to associate with anyone or anything that invoked memories of the war and their time in the military, these soldiers attempted to maintain composure and keep themselves from crumbling under the weight of their trauma and PTSD.<sup>155</sup> While some soldiers attempted to combat this through some kind of therapeutic processing such as writing about their experiences either directly or in the form of poetry, others sought purely to suppress and ignore it, as though this would make it go away.<sup>156</sup> Hahn appears to have a combination of both, in that

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<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 61-62.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>154</sup> McManus, *The Deadly Brotherhood*, 345-346.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 345.

<sup>156</sup> Parr, "Breaking the Silence," 62.

he both ignored his memories of the war and attempted to suppress them while also expressing and processing his experiences creatively through the assembly of his photograph album.

### **Significance of Hahn's Album**

The brown photograph album is significant for several reasons. One way in which it is significant is how it uses the medium of a photograph album. Generally, albums contain linear stories of growth or change over time such as the story of a child growing up. Additionally, albums are created to be shared, if not with a wider audience, then at least in the family. The experiences captured in photograph albums and the stories created through the arrangement of the photographs are intended to have an audience, either of the family or of visitors to the family whom the family wants to share their album with. Hahn's album, however, does neither of these things. It does not tell a traditional story of growth or change, instead focusing on one particular time during Hahn's life—World War II—and his experiences during it. Additionally, it was not intended for an audience's viewing and was kept away from view from everyone in Hahn's life.

Additionally, by choosing to remain silent about the war, Hahn created gaps in his personal historical record regarding his service during the war. While some of these gaps can be filled with government documents, a majority of them cannot. The album with its photographs and captions can fill in some of the gaps left by Hahn's choice to remain silent. The vignettes present in the photographs can replace the stories that Hahn did not choose to tell his children and provide the details that he did not. While the photograph album is not perfect in its telling of Hahn's experiences during World War II, it does allow for a partial recovery of Hahn's time during World War II. The relevance of the album also extends beyond the album itself. While the album presents the viewer a glimpse into Hahn's experiences during World War II, it also

provides a point by which to examine other issues, particularly that involving soldier photography and the difficulties associated with soldiers' personal photograph collections.



## Chapter 4

### The Album's Application to Larger Discussions



*Figure 4.1.* A soldier overlooking several bodies. Herbert Hahn Brown Album, Herbert Hahn Collection, in author's possession.

Standing over a trench, a nameless soldier surveys the bodies that fill it. The bodies are in various stages of undress, some stripped naked while others retain some articles of clothing. The soldier—an American based upon his uniform—stands still, his face obscured by shadowing, leaving the viewer unable to discern his expression and left to wonder what he thinks of the sight before him. The dead are most likely Japanese soldiers, his enemies, and their bodies have been stripped from potential souvenirs, including their guns and the flags that Japanese soldiers carried with or wore wrapped around them.<sup>157</sup> The identity of the soldier, like that of the dead, is

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<sup>157</sup> Lee Kennett, *G.I.: The American Soldier in World War II* (New York City, New York: Scribner, 1987), 120.

left unknown. Without a caption, the photograph, shown in Figure 4.1, is left to the viewer's interpretation.

This image is one of twenty-five included at the end of the brown album. For the images contained at the end of the brown album, the identity of the photographer is unclear. While Hahn may have taken these images, as the content of some of them correspond to things he witnessed, a case can be made both for and against Hahn as the photographer of these images. When considering these images in the context of Hahn's album, determining whether or not Hahn took these photographs is secondary as their placement and relationship to the rest of the album is more significant. Establishing creatorship, however, is important to archival institutions and other repositories as they need to properly attribute credit to the creator of the photographs. One of the difficulties with these photographs in Hahn's collection is that there are several layers of creatorship at play at the same time.

With these particular photographs, as well as the other photographs incorporated into Hahn's brown photograph album, there is both a creator of the photograph as well as the creator of the album present. In some instances, the creator of both is the same as there are some photographs that Hahn took himself and then incorporated into his photograph album. This is not the case with all the photographs, however, and while the creator of the album is known, the creator of the photograph is not. For archival institutions and repositories, collections such as Hahn's can cause difficulty as who is the creator of the photograph is not always as clear as who the creator of the collection is. More often than not, institutions may associate the creator of the collection with the creator of the photograph and misapply creatorship of the photograph to the collection creator. These two types of creators, however, are different and play distinct roles in the shaping of an item or collection. The role of the creator of the photograph is fairly

straightforward in that they are the photographer who produces the original photograph. The role of the creator of the collection—or, in Hahn’s case, album—is less straightforward. The creator of the collection curates and assembles their collection from materials that they may or may not have produced. In doing so, they assemble their own collection ascribe their own meaning and create collections between the items in the collection. Their manipulation of the components to create a new collection allows them to become a creator themselves as they have created a new collection from materials that were previously unrelated. Their role of creator, however, is distinct from that of the creator of the original materials. As Hahn’s album demonstrates, these roles can sometimes overlap. In addition to serving as an example regarding the complicated nature of soldiers’ personal photograph collections, Hahn’s photograph album and photograph are part of a larger discussion relating to soldier photography during war, including the commodification of photographs depicting violence and the tendency for soldiers to share photographs among men in their unit.

### **Soldier Photography**

While soldier photography is used as an all-encompassing term to refer to both photographs taken by soldiers who were assigned by the military to do so and the personal photographs taken by soldiers who carried a portable camera, for the sake of this thesis, the term soldier photography is broken up into formal and informal soldier photography. These terms are meant to differentiate the types of photography and the purposes behind why these photographs were taken. Formal soldier photography refers to the photographs taken by soldiers who were assigned to do so by the military. These assignments may have included taking aerial reconnaissance photographs to determine enemy positions and possible movements.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Mame Warren, “Focal Point of the Fleet: U.S. Navy Photographic Activities in World War II,” *Journal of Military History* 69, no. 4 (October 2005): 1045-1046.

Additionally, these assignments may have included publicity images in which the movements of American soldiers were captured to be presented to the public.<sup>159</sup> Informal soldier photography, as used by this thesis, refers to soldiers who were not assigned to take photographs during the war, rather, choosing to do so. While it is known that soldiers were doing this during the war, it is not clear how many participated in informal soldier photography.<sup>160</sup>

Generally, in the discussion of soldier photography, there is a focus on photographs taken by soldiers who were assigned to do so. For example, in *American Photography: A Century of Images*, when Vicki Goldberg and Robert Silberman refer to soldier photography, they are referring to images taken for the war effort by soldiers assigned by the military to do so.<sup>161</sup> They are generally not referring to the personal photographs taken by soldiers for their personal collections or correspondence, so when they indicate a rise in photographs taken during the war, this is in reference to the military's increased use of aerial and other reconnaissance photography as well as the abundance of journalists and other professional photographers who were capturing the war in photographs.<sup>162</sup> Thousands of photographers are estimated to have participated in capturing World War II with the exact breakdown of how many photographers were present from each aspect—working for the military, working for a magazine, etc.—being unknown.<sup>163</sup> How many photographers that a magazine sent out to officially capture the war depended upon the size of their publication and how many photographers they could afford to send out.

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<sup>159</sup> Thayer Soule, *Shooting the Pacific War: Marine Corps Combat Photography in World War II* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 4-5.

<sup>160</sup> Jorge Lewinski, *The Camera at War: A History of War Photography from 1848 to the Present Day* (Seacaucus, New Jersey: Chatwell Books, 1986), 95.

<sup>161</sup> Goldberg and Silberman, *American Photography*, 109-110.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 113-114.

<sup>163</sup> Lewinski, *The Camera at War*, 95. "World War II Photos," National Archives, accessed April 9, 2018, <https://www.archives.gov/research/military/ww2/photos>.

According to *LIFE* magazine, they sent twenty-one photographers out to capture the war for the magazine.<sup>164</sup>

Additionally, the concept of personal photography by soldiers is sometimes erased from discussions of the experience of American soldiers during World War II. Both Lee Kennett and John C. McManus fail to mention personal soldier photography in their discussions and evaluations of the experiences of American combat soldiers. Lee Kennett, in *G.I.: The American Soldier in World War II*, does not make any mention of soldiers taking photographs during the war. While Kennett talks about letters home which a soldier could use to convey his experiences to his family, he does not outright mention or allude to photographs as another medium which could fulfill a similar purpose.<sup>165</sup> Similarly, Kennett discusses how censorship impacted soldiers' correspondence back home, but does not talk about how censorship impacted the photographs taken by soldiers.<sup>166</sup> The concept of soldier photography is notably absent in his discussion as though it did not occur at all.

Like Kennett, John C. McManus in *The Deadly Brotherhood: The American Combat Soldier in World War II* does not discuss soldier photography. While McManus details the materials carried by soldiers—such as their rations, their uniforms, and their weapons—cameras are notably absent from his discussion.<sup>167</sup> In his discussion of souvenirs, McManus details how soldiers in both the European and Pacific theaters would scavenge war souvenirs from the bodies of dead enemy soldiers as well as acquire other souvenirs as they went.<sup>168</sup> Photographs, however, are not included in this discussion despite them serving as souvenirs.

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<sup>164</sup> Ben Cosgrove, "World War II: Photos We Remember," *TIME*, May 19, 2013, <http://time.com/3638649/world-war-ii-photos-we-remember/>.

<sup>165</sup> Kennett, *G.I.: The American Soldier in World War II*, 73.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>167</sup> McManus, *The Deadly Brotherhood*, 40.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

The absence of soldiers' personal photography from both Kennett's and McManus' conversations seem to imply that it was unlikely that a soldier carried a camera on them. This seems to contradict what Jorge Lewinski puts forth in his book, *The Camera at War: A History of War Photography From 1848 to Present*, that many soldiers carried a camera on them, although the exact total is not known.<sup>169</sup> While both Kennett and McManus attempt to offer detailed descriptions of the lives of soldiers during World War II, both miss a crucial aspect of the soldier's experience—photography. This is particularly significant as soldiers would sometimes trade or pass out the photographs they took to other men in their unit, indicating a commodification of photographs, including those depicting violence.

There have been several accounts published regarding soldiers who were assigned to take photographs during World War II. Some of these are firsthand accounts, written by the soldiers who were part of divisions in which photography was their primary assignment. Other accounts are by historians or journalists, recounting the experiences of these soldiers. One firsthand account is Thayer Soule's *Shooting the Pacific War: Marine Corps Combat Photography in World War II*. Soule was a Marine captain during the war who oversaw both photographers and cameramen in the Pacific.<sup>170</sup> During the war, Soule's assignment was to ensure that media was produced documenting the Marines—such as their landing on an island—so that these images could be later available to the Marine Corps for promotional materials or news reports.<sup>171</sup> His purpose in taking these photographs was not person; it was his duty. If he did not capture a particular event, it meant that he had not done his job and could be subject to reprimand.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Lewinski, *The Camera at War*, 95.

<sup>170</sup> Soule, *Shooting the Pacific War*, n.p.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-6.

Other accounts have been written about soldiers in similar positions to Soule, where it was their job to take photographs for the military. Non-firsthand accounts include the histories of both Frederick Hill and Norm Hatch. While Frederick Hill contributed to the article written about his service, “They Also Served, A Soldier’s Pacific Theater Album, World War II,” he did so with George Venn and Jan Boles and the resulting article is written in the third person. Unlike Soule who recounts events in the first person, “They Also Served,” reads more like a historical account compiled by historians. “They Also Served” and *War Shots: Norm Hatch and the U.S. Marine Corps Combat Cameramen of World War II* both recount the histories of soldiers who were assigned to take photographs.

The account of Norm Hatch by journalist Charles Jones closely mirrors Soule’s account. Like Soule, Hatch was a Marine photographer who served in the Pacific.<sup>173</sup> While Hatch’s experiences differed from that of Soule, both shared a similar purpose in that they were expected to photograph the war for the Marine Corps.<sup>174</sup> For both of them, they were expected to capture photographs and not doing so went in direct violation of their orders.<sup>175</sup> Taking photographs was not a choice for Soule and Hatch and the content of their photographs was, more or less, regulated. For example, when the marines landed on an island, it was expected that Soule would ensure that there were photographs and film of it to be sent back.<sup>176</sup>

In the case of Frederick Hill, his assignment by the military was to take and develop aerial photographs that documented the movement of the enemy as well helped the military leaders determine what their next course of action would be.<sup>177</sup> Unlike Hatch and Soule, Hill was

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<sup>173</sup> Charles Jones, *War Shots: Norm Hatch and the U.S. Marine Corps Combat Cameramen of World War II* (Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books, 2011), 79.

<sup>174</sup> Jones, *War Shots*, 77-79.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>176</sup> Soule, *Shooting the Pacific*, 4-7.

<sup>177</sup> Frederick H. Hill, George Venn, and Jan Boles, “They Also Served: A Soldier’s Pacific Theater Album, World War II,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 108, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 296.

part of the army rather than the marines, although he also served in the Pacific.<sup>178</sup> Hill, the subject of “They Also Served,” was an aerial reconnaissance photographer who also oversaw the development of photographs in the field.<sup>179</sup> Prior to his being in the army, he had been a hobbyist photographer turned freelance photographer who had honed his craft.<sup>180</sup> While he was assigned to take photographs for the military, Hill also took and acquired photographs that had not been taken for the military, thus also participating in informal soldier photography.<sup>181</sup> He was able to do this due to his access to a darkroom in the field where he was expected to develop the aerial photographs.<sup>182</sup> In this way, Hill participated in both formal and informal soldier photography as he took the photographs that the military required of him as well as photographs of interest to him—in addition to collecting photographs taken by other soldiers.

### **Soldiers’ Personal Photograph Collections**

While Hahn chose to arrange his photographs into an album upon returning home from the war, this was not the case for all soldiers. Some soldiers chose to leave their photographs as a loose collection. For example, prior to writing *A Soldier’s Sketchbook*, Joseph Farris left his photographs in a box until he decided to revisit them in order to write *A Soldier’s Sketchbook*.<sup>183</sup> Others soldiers chose to leave their photographs loose, but later generations decided to place them into an album as is the case with William Giesfeldt’s photograph collection. Giesfeldt left his photographs as a loose collection until his grandson later arranged the photographs into an album.<sup>184</sup> These decisions primarily impact the reading of the collection. For example, while

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<sup>178</sup> Hill, Venn, and Boles, “They Also Served,” 295.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 294.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 297.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> Joseph Farris, *A Soldier’s Sketchbook: From the Front Lines of World War II* (Washington D.C.: National Geographic, 2011), 15.

<sup>184</sup> William Giesfeldt, oral history interview conducted by author, Waukesha, Wisconsin, October 7, 2017.



Hahn chose to arrange his photographs into an album, Giesfeldt's grandson determined how the photographs should be arranged and relate to each other. This means that relationships created between the photographs in Hahn's collection are his own while those made between the photographs in Giesfeldt's collection are those created by someone else, attempting to make sense of the collection.

In addition to the difficulty associated with interpreting the collection, there is also the question of how reflective the photographs are of his direct experience. While soldiers such as Hahn and Farris took the majority, if not all, of the photographs in their collection, Giesfeldt took none.<sup>185</sup> The composition of his collection, instead, is comprised of photographs that he received by others as well as postcards that he acquired that depicted locations he was at.<sup>186</sup> This means that he was not responsible for the direct creation of the photographs in his collection and was not able to use the photographs to capture his direct experiences. While he still created the photograph collection as he participated in the curating and collecting of the photographs, he is not the photographer of these images.

The photograph collections created and maintained by soldiers were not limited to photographs taken by themselves, but could also come from other men in their unit as is the case with Giesfeldt's photograph collection.<sup>187</sup> Similarly, Hahn's collection contains photographs known to be taken by Hahn as well as photographs taken by others. In addition to possessing photographs taken by others, Hahn's collection also contains numerous duplicate photographs, some of which were bundled together with a paper clip. While Hahn did share copies of his

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<sup>185</sup> William Giesfeldt, oral history interview conducted by author, Waukesha, Wisconsin, October 7, 2017.

<sup>186</sup> William Giesfeldt, oral history interview conducted by author, Waukesha, Wisconsin, October 7, 2017.

<sup>187</sup> William Giesfeldt, oral history interview conducted by author, Waukesha, Wisconsin, October 7, 2017.

photographs with his family, it is likely that he was participating in this photograph exchange and distributing additional copies of his own photographs.

During World War II, photographs were given and exchanged between soldiers, leading to soldiers possessing diverse photograph collections. While not all soldiers possessed a camera during World War II, many soldiers have personal photograph collections from World War II. These collections were most likely created due to the exchanging and distribution of photographs by soldiers who did possess a personal camera and were able to acquire multiple copies of their photographs. According to Hahn, when soldiers had their photographs developed, they were generally only given a single copy. In a letter to his brother, Lawrence, Hahn states, “I got some more pictures taken the other day and mailed neg. to Australia for censoring and developing. The trouble here is they only make one print of each.”<sup>188</sup> Hahn’s receiving of only a single print of his photographs would not only have made it difficult for him to mail copies to each of his family members, but also to obtain additional copies to distribute to other soldiers.

There has been little written on the exchange of photographs between soldiers. While evidence of this exchange is present in veterans’ oral histories and in the personal photograph collections of soldiers, there is not enough information to draw larger conclusions about what practices were common among soldiers. This exchange of photographs indicates a commodification of photographs regarding the war, including those depicting violence as seen in Hahn’s brown photograph album. It is not known, however, if this exchange was generally free—in that money or other currency did not exchange hands—or if it often had a price attached with free exchanges as an exception. In Giesfeldt’s case, he received his photographs for free

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<sup>188</sup> Herbert Hahn, Herbert Hahn to Lawrence Hahn, May 4, 1945, letter, in author’s possession.

after one of the men in his unit—who did have a camera and had been taking photographs—offered him copies of the photographs.

This exchange of photographs between soldiers resulted in soldiers' having diverse photograph collections; however, by containing photographs from multiple sources, these personal photograph collections pose a few problems. The first is with the interpretation of the collection. While the possessor of the collection had a role in creating the collection through collecting and curating photographs, these photographs may not directly represent the possessor's experiences during World War II. The photographs, instead, may be stand ins for experiences that the soldier did have or, while directly related to their experiences, do not depict their viewpoint. For example, with Giesfeldt's collection, he received photographs from another man in his unit meaning that the photographs depicted things that their unit had, collectively, experienced. These photographs, however, did not depict Giesfeldt's viewpoint, rather, the other man in his unit. Another problem associated with these collections is related to the establishment of provenance by archives and other institutions.

### **Provenance**

As evidenced in the case of multiple soldiers' photograph collections, including Herbert Hahn's, the photographs in soldiers' collection often come from multiple sources and it cannot be guaranteed that the soldier in possession of the photographs was the photographer. For example, Frederick Hill was actively acquiring photographs from other soldiers if he considered their photograph particularly noteworthy and incorporated these images into his own photograph collection.<sup>189</sup> While the possessor of the photographs may have been responsible for the creation of the collection, like Hill, they may not have been responsible for taking the photographs. The

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<sup>189</sup> Hill, Venn, and Boles, "They Also Served," 297.

layers of creatorship present in soldiers' personal photograph collections can present difficulties for archives and other similar repositories upon their receipt of these collections when it comes to determining provenance.

According to Laura Millar, in *Archives: Principles and Practices*, provenance refers to the origins of an object or collection.<sup>190</sup> Provenance, however, is more than simply that as Millar indicates in her complete definition, in which she defines provenance as, “the origin or source of something, or as the person, agency, or office of origin that created, acquired, used and retained a body of records in the course of their work or life.”<sup>191</sup> Provenance is understood to be necessary and important to the record as it informs those accessing the collection not only who initially created the object or collection, but also all the hands that it passed through prior to being received by the archive. However, while provenance is considered important, there is no single, universal standard by which it should be recorded or established.<sup>192</sup> How it is recorded, instead, depends upon the institution at which the record is held at. Each institution creates its own policy regarding provenance and one institution's policy may not align with another's. For example, one institution may place a high value on provenance and include a detailed record to a particular item or collection, while another may not or be unable to do so. These discrepancies lead to the history of items being recorded differently across institutions.

Despite the inconsistencies in how provenance is recorded, it is essential with regard to objects and collections held by repositories. Provenance provides the history of an item or collection, documenting the path that a particular item or collection took prior to being acquired

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<sup>190</sup> Millar, *Archives*, 46.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>192</sup> Shelley Sweeney, “The Ambiguous Origins of the Archival Principle of “Provenance,”” *Libraries and the Cultural Record* 42, no. 2 (2008): 207.

by the institution.<sup>193</sup> It records not only who the original creator was and the donor of the object, but also the different people who possessed the item or collection in-between, including children of the creator and previous collection owners. This can be important as this record can indicate who may have manipulated the collection following its initial creator. For example, the original collection as left by the creator may have contained hundreds of letters and numerous personal diaries, but a child or heir of the original creator may have gone through these items and “sanitized” the collection so that the original creator was depicted in a particular light. By noting these potential areas for manipulation—or actual cases of manipulation—in the history of the collection, the collection can be better understood and studied more fully.

Provenance, as it relates to the personal photograph collections of World War II soldiers, can be important in helping a historian or researcher better read the collection. For example, by knowing that a particular individual took the photographs in the collection rather than acquired and curated them, it can be understood that these images directly reflect their experiences. Additionally, the provenance can provide some contextual history to the photographs and, by knowing who the photographer is, it can be clarified whether or not the applied meaning was created with the photograph or applied later. For example, Hahn includes many captions on his photographs and by being aware that he was the creator of certain images, his captions can be understood to be the photographer’s description, rather than the collection creator’s description in which the applied meaning may not be the same as that given by the photographer. The captions, in this way, can be used as another way to approach and understand what exactly Hahn was intending to capture and what meaning he was trying to imbue the photograph with.

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<sup>193</sup> Millar, *Archives*, 46-47.

A similar case can be found with the photographs at the end of the brown album. By being unsure if Hahn was the creator or not, the viewer cannot be sure whether the meaning captured in these photographs directly reflects Hahn's experiences or if he found them to be meaningful regarding his experiences and included them as they were representative of events he saw. Distinguishing that it is not clear whether or not Hahn was the creator allows for the viewer to be aware of these two alternatives and analyze and interpret the photographs accordingly. However, if this was not disclosed to the viewer or recorded in the provenance, that could create difficulties for the viewer as they may ascribe that these were actual sights that Hahn saw when they were not.

By documenting the incorrect provenance by either ascribing the incorrect type of creatorship or failing to acknowledge that different types of creatorship can impact the reading of photographs. For example, in the case of Frederick Hill who acquired the photographs of other soldiers but referred to them as part of the "Fred Hill Collection," it is important to distinguish that he is the creator of the collection, but not the creator of all the components of the collection. These different levels of creatorship impact the way the photograph collection is both understood and analyzed by outside viewers. It is important, then, that the provenance attached to photograph collections accurately represent these types of creatorship as it could impact the conclusions derived from the collection.

#### A Case of Incorrect Provenance

Not all institutions will be able to devote the time and resources necessary to determining provenance of an object or collection outside of the—perhaps incorrect or misleading—descriptions given by their donors. They may, instead, be forced to rely upon these histories in which the donor incorrectly ascribes creatorship—either to themselves or another. In the case of

smaller institutions whose collection may not be accessed by many, this may seem fine as the impact of an incorrect or misleading provenance record will only be on the few who do access the collection. With the connectivity of the internet, however, the incorrect or misleading records of these smaller institutions can be made available to historians and researchers who might have otherwise not accessed their collection and these false or deceptive records are, then, absorbed into their research and final conclusions. One example of this can be found with the Coal City Public Library District and their online collection, “World War II: From Homefront to Warfront.”

The Coal City Public Library District (CCPLD) decided to create the “World War II: From Homefront to Warfront” collection as a means of recording and preserving the histories of veterans from the local community.<sup>194</sup> In order to do this, CCPLD conducted oral histories with veterans and photographed or digitized objects in that veteran’s collection that they found to be relevant to that particular veteran’s oral history.<sup>195</sup> These oral histories and accompanying images were then posted onto their website as an entry for each veteran. One of the veterans included in their collection is that of Edwin Gerard. Gerard’s page includes an image taken at the time of his interview, basic information regarding his service during World War II, the audio of his oral history, and accompanying images of photographs and memorabilia that he possessed at the time which the staff considered relevant. Included amongst these images are several photographs that are also present in Hahn’s brown photograph album. While the creatorship of the images, in so much as to who is the photographer, is ambiguous in Hahn’s album, the consensus among the staff at CCPLD is that Gerard was the photographer. They reached their

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<sup>194</sup> “About,” Coal City Public Library District, accessed February 26, 2018, <http://www.ccpld.org/WWII/about.html>.

<sup>195</sup> Irene Shepkowski (Reference Services at Coal City Public Library District), in discussion with author, October 11, 2017.

conclusion based upon the oral history; however, when the oral history is compared to Hahn's history and collection, there appear to be errors present.

CCPLD established Gerard as the photographer of these images based upon the oral history they conducted and the fact that these photographs were in Gerard's possession. The interview, which is a little over an hour long, focuses on Gerard's experiences during World War II.<sup>196</sup> At the end of the interview, after he has told his story which begins with his being drafted and ends with his discharge from the army, several additional topics are discussed based upon the prompting of the CCPLD staff.<sup>197</sup> At approximately one hour and four minutes, the photographs Gerard brought are discussed.<sup>198</sup> During his interview, Gerard provides the staff some contextual background for the photographs by describing his interpretation of each photograph and indicates that he himself is the photographer. This discussion begins with a female speaker, assumed to be Gerard's wife, stating, "I'm surprised Erv had enough film because I think he was the only one that had..."<sup>199</sup> This incomplete statement starts the conversation surrounding the more graphic photographs which are then brought up and examined in the oral history. Another speaker, presumed to be part of the CCPLD staff—references these photographs—and asks, "Did you have to send those home with your friend on the plane, too?"<sup>200</sup> According to Gerard, the photographs—in which he appears to mean all the photographs—he brought back were developed in the United States. While he does not specify if he means to include all the photographs present in this explanation, he does imply that these

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<sup>196</sup> "Erwin Gerard," Coal City Public Library District, accessed February 26, 2018, [http://www.ccpld.org/WWII/collections/gerard/gerard\\_erwin.html](http://www.ccpld.org/WWII/collections/gerard/gerard_erwin.html)

<sup>197</sup> "Erwin Gerard."

<sup>198</sup> "Erwin Gerard."

<sup>199</sup> "Erwin Gerard."

<sup>200</sup> "Erwin Gerard."



photographs are included in those that he brought back to the United States as negatives and developed upon his return, stating, “I brought the film home with me and had it developed.”<sup>201</sup>

Given this conversation occurs following the discussion of the more graphic photographs present in both Gerard’s and Hahn’s collections, CCPLD recorded Gerard as the photographer of the images in the collection. The staff from CCPLD took Gerard’s statement about photographing the war and then bringing the negatives to the United States to be developed as indicating that Gerard must have photographed all the images in his collection and, therefore, be the creator of these images in that he originally photographed them. Given that the staff at CCPLD viewed the collection of photographs as rare, they determined Gerard’s statements were correct and designated him the creator of both the photographs and the collection.<sup>202</sup> However, the presence of several of these photographs in both Gerard’s and Hahn’s collections casts doubt upon the assertion that Gerard is both the original creator of the photographs and the creator of the collection.

As the staff from CCPLD understood it, Gerard captured these graphic images during his time abroad in the army and, upon returning to the United States, had the photographs developed. With this understanding, Gerard’s images should be, hypothetically, the only copies in existence with the primary exception being him having multiple copies developed upon his arrival home and distributing them among his friends. He does not, however, indicate that he shared these photographs during the interview as he does not disagree with the staff member from CCPLD who asserts that the images are rare.<sup>203</sup> Therefore, it can be assumed, that Gerard should be the only person with copies of several, if not all, the photographs that he brought with him to the

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<sup>201</sup> “Erwin Gerard.”

<sup>202</sup> Irene Shepkowski (Reference Services at Coal City Public Library District), in discussion with author, October 11, 2017.

<sup>203</sup> “Erwin Gerard.”

interview. This assumption is disputed by the fact that several of the images also appear in Hahn's collection, indicating that these photographs are not limited to Gerard's collection, making the initial conclusion that Gerard took all the photographs unlikely, if not completely impossible.

The photographs, if taken by Gerard, would need to have been developed while Gerard was abroad in order to produce a situation in which they could reach Hahn and become part of Hahn's collection. As Hahn and Gerard did not reside in the same city or state following the war—Hahn returned to Iowa and Gerard returned to Illinois—the images would have been more likely passed while both were overseas, in the military. This is even more necessary as neither Gerard or Hahn served in the same unit during the war and, therefore, would not have been potentially in contact with each other following the war due to reunions of their unit or other such unit-related gatherings.<sup>204</sup> While Gerard and Hahn did not serve in the same unit, it would have been possible for them to meet during the war and the photographs exchanged at that time, however, Gerard would have needed to have physical prints at this time. As both Gerard and Hahn did serve in the southern Philippines at one point according to the discharge papers of both, there is the potential for the photographs to have been exchanged during a meeting at that time.<sup>205</sup> Aside from this overlap, however, the two have relatively limited opportunities to meet. Hahn was deployed abroad in 1944 between July and August, while Gerard was deployed in February of 1944.<sup>206</sup> Similarly, Hahn returned to the United States in December of 1945, while Gerard returned between December 1945 and January 1946.<sup>207</sup> In addition to different set-off and return dates, the two men reported to different separation centers upon returning to the United

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<sup>204</sup> "Erwin Gerard." Herbert Hahn Discharge Papers, Herbert Hahn Collection, in author's possession.

<sup>205</sup> "Erwin Gerard." Herbert Hahn Discharge Papers, Herbert Hahn Collection, in author's possession.

<sup>206</sup> "Erwin Gerard." Herbert Hahn Discharge Papers, Herbert Hahn Collection, in author's possession.

<sup>207</sup> "Erwin Gerard." Herbert Hahn Discharge Papers, Herbert Hahn Collection, in author's possession.

States. Hahn was sent to a separation center in Kansas, while Gerard was sent to one in Illinois.<sup>208</sup> Aside from their shared time abroad, particularly in the Philippines, the men would, most likely, not have encountered each other otherwise, particularly during the timeframe that Gerard establishes for the development of the photographs. This calls into question CCPLD's interpretation and recording of Gerard as the photographer of the images.

While Gerard cannot be—nor should be—completely removed from the possible pool of photographers of these images, the likelihood of his being the photographer is cast into doubt. As his recount of events leading up to the production of the photographs is imprecise with inaccuracies, he cannot be recorded as the photographer of the images. By removing him as the definitive photographer of the images, his contextualizing of the photographs must also be re-evaluated. While his interpretation of the photographs indicates the meaning that he applied to them, it cannot be used as the definitive explanation and context for the photographs. The likelihood that Gerard took the photographs is the same as Hahn being the photographer. Both men were seemingly in possession of a camera during the war and taking photographs during the war. Additionally, both men had similar cause and placement to be the photographer of these images. However, as likely as it might have been either of them, it may have just as well been someone else from whom they received the photographs. Another soldier with similar means and placement may have been the photographer and, during the course of the war, passed the photographs to both Hahn and Gerard. In any case, this contributes to the discussion of photograph exchange going on between soldiers. The presence of these violent photographs in both collections indicates that the photographs were a commodity that was exchanged between soldiers and, as a result, became dispersed into many soldiers' personal photograph collections.

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<sup>208</sup> "Erwin Gerard." Herbert Hahn Discharge Papers, Herbert Hahn Collection, in author's possession.

Despite Gerard being cast into doubt as the photographer of the images, the official record per CCPLD's website is that Gerard not only created the collection, but also created the photographs in the collection. As CCPLD is a smaller institution, few people are likely to find and access their collection, thus limiting the spread of this misleading information. Images from their collection, however, were made available on the Illinois Digital Archive (IDA), notably a larger digital repository that intends to draw attention to smaller collections created in the state of Illinois.<sup>209</sup> In making images available from CCPLD's "World War II: From Homefront to Warfront" collection, IDA took information that CCPLD had gathered and put on their website, using this information as the established provenance for the images in the collection.<sup>210</sup> This included Gerard's descriptions of the photographs and his association being the photographer of the collection. In this way, this misleading provenance record was further relayed to a larger audience beyond just those accessing CCPLD's website. Further, it was made available to an even larger audience when the Digital Public Library of America picked up the collection to include on their website.

Similar to IDA, the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) is a digital repository that intends to help connect individuals with materials in collections that they might otherwise be aware of. According to DPLA, they provide access to over twenty million items from libraries, archives, and museums across the United States.<sup>211</sup> While DPLA displays these items on their platform, they are not the possessor of the objects and, instead, only provide an access point to these materials by allowing a user to conduct a single search on their database and see results

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<sup>209</sup> "About," Illinois Digital Archives, accessed February 26, 2018, <http://www.idaillinois.org/ui/custom/default/collection/default/resources/custompages/about/>.

<sup>210</sup> "Head-Hunter," Illinois Digital Archives, accessed February 26, 2018, <http://www.idaillinois.org/cdm/ref/collection/ccpl01/id/648>.

<sup>211</sup> "About," Digital Public Library of America, accessed February 26, 2018, <https://dp.la/info/>.

from repositories across the United States. If a user finds an item on DPLA, they are directed to the original repository's website to access a larger image as well as a more complete record. In this way, the user can access the over twenty million items on a single platform and DPLA is not responsible for the management and upkeep of those individual items. As DPLA only provides an access point, they depend upon the original repositories for the information—or metadata—that they include on their website to inform users of DPLA what they are looking at.

When DPLA pulled the items from IDA to include on their platform, including the images from Gerard's collection, DPLA used the information that IDA had attached to them. This meant that DPLA then presented the photographs in Gerard's collection as being the creator of the photographs—not just the collection—and that Gerard's descriptions of the photographs were the original context. DPLA, in this way, participating in furthering the presentation of misleading provenance that originated with CCPLD. With DPLA and IDA involved, information that had been limited to those accessing CCPLD's website was now made visible and accessible to a much larger audience. In this way, a small institution's misreporting of provenance, which would have been relatively contained, was spread to a much larger base of users. Now, people searching on DPLA might come across one of these records, be led to IDA, and then led to CCPLD's website in which the misleading information originated and use this incorrect provenance in their research.

The archive functions as a facilitator of historical documents to historians and researchers. Providing not only materials but also records regarding the materials is crucial for historians and researchers. While the recording of inaccurate or misleading provenance does not damage the item per se, it does impact what can be ascertained from that item. For example, by establishing Erwin Gerard as both the creator of the collection and creator of the photographs,

CCPLD implies that his contextualization of those photographs is the “truest” to the photographs and is the photographer’s original meaning. This then impacts historians and researchers accessing CCPLD’s collection and use the information given by CCPLD to inform their research and conclusions. While incorrectly recorded provenance is not devastating to research, it does provide misleading information to those interested in and investigating photographs held by repositories.

### **Changing Meaning of Photographs**

While photographs capture an event in a single frame, preserving it to be looked at again and again, the meaning attached to these photographs is not fixed.<sup>212</sup> In his article, “Forgetful Memory and Images of the Holocaust,” Michael Bernard-Donals discusses the importance of photography on history and the impact of a photograph as it pertains to the Holocaust. Bernard-Donals argues that photographs of atrocities, such as the Holocaust, can inspire strong feelings from the viewer and serve to capture a record of that event for posterity.<sup>213</sup> In addition to providing a record of an event, these images carry two meanings with them. One meaning is “fixed” in that it was the original meaning applied to the photograph and part of its original context, however, the second meaning is more fluid and changes over time.<sup>214</sup> As new, later viewers encounter the photographs, the meaning that they discern from these photographs may change from the original meaning applied to the photographs. Photographs that were perhaps not once considered impactful or depicting atrocity can be redefined over time to become known as

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<sup>212</sup> Jay Prosser, “Introduction,” in *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis*, eds. Geoffrey Batchen, Mick Gidley, Nancy K. Miller, and Jay Prosser (London, England: Reaktion Books, 2012), 9. Lorie Novak, “Photographic Interference,” in *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis*, eds. Geoffrey Batchen, Mick Gidley, Nancy K. Miller, and Jay Prosser (London, England: Reaktion Books, 2012), 283.

<sup>213</sup> Michael Bernard-Donals, “Forgetful Memory and Images of the Holocaust,” *College English* 66, no. 4 (March 2004): 382-383.

<sup>214</sup> Bernard-Donals, “Forgetful Memory and Images of the Holocaust,” 384-385.

an image of atrocity.<sup>215</sup> Bernard-Donals provides the example of images collected as “Poland under German Conquest,” which includes several images of “street scenes” that depict ghettos between 1940 and 1941.<sup>216</sup> While these photographs were initially viewed as lacking brutality or depicting some form of atrocity, later viewers reinterpreted these photographs to represent atrocity in that they depict one of the first crimes committed by the Nazis against Polish Jews.<sup>217</sup>

Bernard-Donals focuses on the changing meaning of photographs with regards to their relation to depictions of the Holocaust, but his arguments can be applied to broader contexts. Photographs both are and are not fixed images. While a photograph is quite literally a fixed image, its meanings and its applications are not. What a photograph means to people and to history can change with time. While the content of the image itself does not change, the meanings derived from that set image are not guaranteed to be the same across generations.

Herbert Hahn created the brown album using photographs he took, that he received from others, and that he had collected during the war. These images meant something to him and he determined they were necessary inclusions in his photograph album in which he grappled with his experiences in the army and the associated stress and trauma. While these images themselves have not physically changed, their meanings have. With the album no longer in Hahn’s possession and Hahn himself having passed on, new audiences are examining these photographs and applying their own meanings. The images of Hiroshima following the atomic bomb which, to Hahn, may have meant the end of the war and his being saved from further combat, have taken on a new meaning in that they represent a horror of war that impacted thousands of people by bringing about death and disease from radiation poisoning. In the cases of other images, such as

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<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 388.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 388-389.

Figure 3.2, which have always seemed to depict violence and the atrocity of war, the meaning has also changed as well as not. While Hahn may have considered this the representation of a sight that he experienced during World War II and included it in his album as he attempted to come to terms with his experiences, new viewers may not have that same firsthand experience with such a sight, but understand, like Hahn, that this depicts war and its horrible outcomes. The interpretations and meanings applied to the photographs by Hahn have not been lost, as they are still present in the arrangement of the album, but, with time, new viewers have applied new and different meanings to the same photographs.



## Chapter 5

### Conclusion



Figure 5.1. Herbert Hahn sitting in on a bucket in barn. Shiela Schwarz photograph collection, in Shiela Schwarz's possession.

The photograph shown in Figure 5.1 was taken by Herbert Hahn's daughter, Shiela, in the 1980s.<sup>218</sup> It depicts Hahn sitting on a bucket with three milk cans surrounding him, taking a break in milking the cows seen faintly along the edges of the photograph. Hahn himself is cast in shadow by the light streaming in from the open barn door and appears a solemn figure set slightly off center of the photograph. In some ways, this image serves as a metaphor for the family's memory of Hahn's military experiences and their understanding of the album he produced. While certain elements of both are clear, even more are cast in shadow and hidden from view. By choosing to remain silent about the war, Hahn left a gap in his historical record that the family has attempted to fill with speculation. As the viewer of Figure 5.1 does not know

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<sup>218</sup> Shiela Schwarz, oral history interview conducted by author, Oak Creek, Wisconsin, January 25, 2018.

Hahn's expression and must imagine what he is thinking about as he sits there, Hahn's family and viewers of the album do not know what Hahn experienced during World War II or why he created the album and must, instead, speculate and imagine what led him to choose to be silent and leave an incomplete album.

Hahn died in 2003 and his choice to remain silent about the war created a void in the historical record, albeit minor in the grand scheme, as he was just one person who was not particularly noteworthy during World War II. Since he did not write down his experiences during World War II or share his memories in the form of stories or an oral history, his death meant that they were lost. While this may not have caused any problems for the general historical record, his story is one of many in which soldiers chose to ignore or suppress memories of the war. As more veterans, who chose to remain silent, pass away, their stories are lost and, over time, this leads to a larger impact on the historical record. Yet, these stories are not always completely lost as evidenced by Hahn's album. While it is not clear what Hahn's purpose for the album was or what led to its incomplete nature, it does provide clues as to what Hahn experienced during World War II and fills in some of the gaps left by Hahn's death.

Although Hahn did not share his experiences regarding World War II in the form of an oral history or detailed story told to his children, he did leave a form of historical record which can be studied and interpreted. His brown photograph album collects his experiences in the form of photographs which the viewer can page through in order to glean some understanding of what Hahn experienced during World War II. While the album itself is incomplete, this, too, can contribute to the understanding of Hahn following the war. It informs the viewer that at some point after the war, he decided to assemble a photograph album and, after making some progress, was unable to complete it for unknown reasons.

In constructing the album, Hahn was forced to reexamine his memories of the war. By looking through photographs and placing them in the album, Hahn had to grapple with the trauma and stress he had undergone during the war and contend with any residual trauma. While he refused to discuss the war and, seemingly, ignored it as part of his experiences, the album captured it and immortalized it. The album, in some ways, functioned as a physical place that Hahn could suppress his memories and not deal with them after the initial re-evaluation. His re-evaluation, however, was incomplete. While Hahn created a beginning and end for the album, the middle is less clear. This may have been, in part, due to Hahn being pulled away from the project as he was determining the overall narrative of the album or, even, not knowing where to begin with the middle.

While it would be preferable to have complete answers to the questions posed by the brown album, the album, ultimately, leaves more questions than it answers. The album itself is messy, both physically and metaphorically. The album is incomplete and Hahn's initial vision is not realized in the album. Photographs are both included on the pages as well in-between the pages and the photographs on the page devolve into hasty and, somewhat, sloppy arrangement. Additionally, the story told by the album jumps and the relationships between the photographs are not always clear. The album is not quick to reveal its secrets or Hahn's intentions. While it provides glimpses of Hahn's experiences during the war, it withholds more information than it gives. Rather than answer questions, the album forces the viewer to speculate. It does not provide a neat ending for the viewer, rather, it leaves them questioning, wishing for more information.

## Immortality of the Brown Photograph Album

Photograph albums can provide a sense of immortality, in that the creator can preserve themselves through the carefully constructed narratives and their choices made during its construction and arrangement.<sup>219</sup> While Hahn's album is not carefully constructed, in that it is not complete, it does reflect his choices made regarding the construction of the album and, in some ways, provides him with a little immortality. In the pages of the brown album, the viewer can "find" Herbert Hahn, at least, as he was during World War II.<sup>220</sup> The Herbert Hahn that the viewer finds in the brown album is eternally young and fit, captured surviving the harrowing experiences of World War II. While this version of Hahn is one of many, it is the one captured in the album's pages and provided a form of immortality.

In addition to preserving himself in the brown album, Hahn also created a lasting record which preserved his experiences during the war. While this may not have been Hahn's original purpose—in that he may have used the album to deal with and suppress his memories of the war—a natural byproduct of the album is the preservation of Hahn's military experiences. The album captures and preserves the meaning that Hahn attributed to the photographs, although this may not always be discernable to newer viewers. While viewers aware of additional context may be able to understand what Hahn meant by his choices regarding the arrangement of the photographs, this will not always be the case. Additionally, it is not necessary that all viewers be able to discern Hahn's original meaning from the album in order for it to still be present. As Bernard-Donals argued in his article, photographs—and by extension this album—do not lose their original meaning simply because the viewer cannot discern it or applies new meaning.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 63.

<sup>220</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflection on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York City, New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, Inc., 1981), 63.

<sup>221</sup> Bernard-Donals, "Forgetful Memory and Images of the Holocaust," 384-385.

Meaning, instead, is flexible and can change with time, although it is never replaced.<sup>222</sup> While new viewers may add additional meanings, their new understandings do not replace or remove the original meaning attributed to the object. The meaning that Hahn originally attributed to the photographs and the album is no longer clear to the viewer, but it has not been removed as the meanings applied by later views have been added to the perceptions of and the meanings ascertained from the brown photograph album.

The brown photograph album is entering its third stage of “life” in that its purpose and meaning have once again changed. Initially, the photographs in it were created to communicate Hahn’s experiences abroad during the war. When he returned home, the purpose of the photographs ended and the first “life” of the photographs concluded. They were no longer needed to convey his experiences to his family, so they were given a new purpose. The second “life” of the photographs began when Hahn gave them a new purpose and used them assemble his photograph album. In the album, used the photographs to grapple with his experiences during World War II and attempt to come to terms with the trauma he had experienced during the war. The album functioned a device which Hahn could use to work through his experiences and then suppress them. With Hahn’s death in 2003, this purpose, too, came to a close as the album was no longer needed to hide away memories, however, it was not the end of the album. The brown album now serves as a device which documents Hahn’s experiences, although its deeper meanings and purposes, are, for the most part, beyond the viewer. While the original purpose of and meaning present in the brown album were lost with Hahn’s death, new viewers are able to examine the photographs and apply new meanings which reflect their backgrounds and understandings.

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<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*

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## Appendix

### **In Hindsight: Reflecting on Writing This Thesis**

History often puts us in conversations with the dead. While this is not always the case with historical research, it occurs more often than we sometimes realize, as we generally must navigate and discern meaning from documents produced by people who have since passed on, people we often have not personally known or encountered, who we know only from the physical records they left behind. We, as historians, hope that these items have accurately captured these individuals and that the meaning they imbued into these documents is the same meaning that we pick out. Our research is based upon our ability to observe, analyze, and disseminate information that we have gathered from documents produced by others, that we have spent long hours having a one-sided conversation with.

With this thesis, I found myself in conversation with a familiar presence—my own grandfather. Rather than navigating the documents of someone that I had only encountered in textbooks or through film or audio, I was dealing with the materials of someone who I had known first-hand. Unlike the other subjects that I had researched previously, Herbert Hahn seemed more tangible. He was someone who had been a part of my childhood, who I had interacted with, who I had seen die. He was not just a name in a textbook or someone I had been introduced to during my education, he was a person who had always meant something to me.

Despite this, my connection to my grandfather was somewhat limited. I was ten years old when my grandfather died in 2003 and, as such, my memories of my grandfather are few. I remember a frail man who I had seen on monthly trips to Iowa, who I had avoided the company of because I rather be in the park playing with my cousins rather than sitting in my grandparents'

living room for hours while the adults talked. It was because of these limited experiences and memories that I was particularly excited about this topic.

This thesis would put me in direct conversation with my grandfather, someone who I had few memories of. It would allow me to learn more about him and fill in the gaps of my own memories by providing a more complete understanding of his life. Rather than see him as only a frail man in his eighties, I would encounter my grandfather as a young man, at a similar point in his life as I was in my own. I would learn more about what events had shaped my grandfather to become the man I remembered and that my mother recounted to me in family stories. I would understand my grandfather in a way that I never had previously and it would all happen in my thesis.

To say I was excited about this premise, would be an understatement. My thesis, which I would live and work on for the next year, would be about a topic very personal to me. In addition to learning about the big concepts of soldier photography and soldiers' personal photograph collections, I would learn about my grandfather. My knowledge of him would expand past my brief memories of him and he would become more complete, more whole. At the time of writing this thesis, I would be around the same age of my grandfather when he fought in World War II. Whereas he was twenty-one to twenty-five during this time, I was presently twenty-five. This comparison was not lost on me and I considered it often in my research, sometimes asking what I would have done were I in his position.

By writing about my grandfather's photograph album, my thesis would not be simply a subject I was passionate about. My thesis, instead, would navigate larger topics with my grandfather set as the central player. I would walk through history with my grandfather, placing him in situations that always seemed so large and vague in history textbooks. Rather than look at

World War II from a distance, I would follow my grandfather as he left home to train in Texas to be sent abroad. I would, to an extent, see what he had seen through his photographs, assuming the role of his siblings who had received his letters and photographs—more than once during my thesis, I was grateful for my grandfather’s overly descriptive nature.

Writing about such a personal subject, however, was not without its drawbacks. I was aware of the potential pitfalls in writing about a topic “close to home.” Given that I had a “personal stake” in this topic, I could be severely biased, I could subconsciously seek to make my grandfather the hero and ignore his flaws. I stressed over this in the initial proposal and in my early research. I feared becoming a researcher who had an agenda and used their thesis as a platform to promote their own family. At times, my fears led me to creating more trouble for myself in drafts and outlines as I sought to prove to both myself and the audience that, despite this man being my grandfather, I had removed all personal interests and I was handling this project as though this man was a complete stranger I had encountered in the archive. I was embarrassed to admit that this man was my grandfather in discussion with other historians or researchers, taking advantage of the fact that he was my maternal grandfather and we did not share last names. I often spoke of him as though he was just another person I had discovered digging in the archives, distant and removed, as though my being related to him reflected badly on me as a researcher and historian. I had not done what others had done, I had not found my topic in the archive or a library. My topic was not the result of a struggle or the reward at the end of a long quest in the archive, instead, it had been something I had been shown and had, seemingly, handed to me.

My mother had first introduced me to the brown photograph album when I was around seventeen. She had told me that my grandfather—who had long since passed away—had an

album in which he had pictures of Hiroshima and dead soldiers. The album that she described did not match up to my image of my grandfather. My grandfather had been a devout Lutheran and I could not imagine a situation in which he would keep photographs of the dead. This dichotomy left me puzzled and I had tried to reconcile the two men I now knew—my grandfather, the deeply religious man, and my grandfather, a collector of photographs depicting the dead—but I never could. The two men, instead, represented different halves of the same person and I tried to understand them within the context of the album:

What was the photograph album and who had my grandfather been when he made it?

And, perhaps, more baffling, why did he have photographs of the dead?

Looking back, I find it funny how closely these questions I had back then mirror the questions that drove this thesis. While my final guiding questions were adjusted slightly to reflect what I know now at twenty-five but did not know at seventeen, there is a similar theme running throughout. In some ways, I am disappointed that with time, I have not been able to answer these questions any better than I could then. The answers then were complicated and speculation because the album refused to divulge its secrets to me. The answers remain complicated and my speculation now educated speculation. My thesis, in its examination of the album, only managed—I think—to skim the surface of the information held in the photograph album.

In the end, my concerns about having a personal connection were mostly unfounded. While I often struggled with looking at the “big picture” beyond all the small details that I knew prior to and learned along the way, writing about this topic felt no different than other topics I had researched in the past. With time, I got over my sense of embarrassment over my topic and admitted more freely in conversations with others that the man in these photographs was my

grandfather. This topic, ultimately, felt no different than any other subject I had studied and that eased a lot of my fears associated with such a personal topic.

There were differences, however, and they appeared when I talked about my research with my family, particularly, my mother's side of the family. Usually, my research was on things completely irrelevant to my family, things that they didn't have a particular stance on. What I told them was, generally, always acceptable and reasonable. With this topic, however, discussing my research meant navigating a minefield of feelings and opinions. This topic, unlike others, was something they were all keenly familiar with in way or another. My grandfather was their grandfather, their uncle, or their father. He didn't only mean something to me, he meant something to them as well. This was particularly clear in my interactions with mother about my thesis.

Whereas I found some joy in my topic—in that I was now seeing my grandfather beyond my limited memories—my mother found sadness. When I would tell her about things that I had read in letters, she would be disinterested, saying that this only reminded her of how many people she had known in her life that had died. Whereas I found life in this research, my mother saw death. I believed that my active remembering and engaging with their materials and memories gave them new life, that this experience would be a positive one for both myself and my family, but I had forgotten that I had not known them in life so well that I had been spared feeling the pain of their loss. Yes, I had mourned my grandfather and felt his loss, but I had been ten years old. My memories of him had been stunted, his connection to my life brief and inadequate. My mother, on the hand, had been forty-three when he died and his loss had meant the loss of her parent, someone who had been a constant in her life, who she had known well. Worst, yet, my thesis didn't just require my mother to think back about her father, but also his



siblings, her aunts and uncles. In asking her questions about her memories and perceptions, I asked her to open old wounds and think about the people she had lost and dwell on what those people had done and what they had meant to her.

Ultimately, I think this process of involving my mother—as well as her siblings—in my thesis changed our relationship in some ways. She grew to distrust my questions, asking me if this was going to be included in my thesis when I would ask about her family. My questions about her father and childhood now always seemed to carry an agenda, in which I was attempting to obtain new information for my thesis. I was mining her history for bits and pieces to include in my thesis. This tension, I think, resolved with the completion of my thesis.

In some ways, I betrayed my family in writing about my grandfather. I betrayed his wishes to suppress his experiences about the war. I betrayed my family's secrets, spilling them onto the page for the public to read. While this seems an overdramatizing of what I did with my thesis, I think there is a kernel of truth in this sentiment. I did disregard what my grandfather wanted, ignoring the efforts he went to repress and ignore his experiences during World War II. Additionally, I shared information that my family considered secret in my thesis in order to provide a complete image of my grandfather.

I do not regret my thesis topic. I would do the entire process over again in a heartbeat as this experience has been enlightening and left me feeling much closer to my grandfather in ways that I had previously never. In reading his letters and viewing his photographs, I see myself reflected in my grandfather. He is not stranger he once was, nor is he confined to being a frail, old man in my memory.

At the time of writing this thesis, I am twenty-five years old. I am the same age as my grandfather was when he first stepped onto the rubble of Hiroshima and surveyed the impact of

the atomic bomb firsthand. I cannot begin to fathom how he must have felt in that moment or how I would have handled being placed in the same situation. I like to imagine that I would have handled it as well as him, that I would have emerged from the war appearing well-adjusted and carried on with my life, however, I don't know that. In some ways, I still don't even know how he did it.