

Historical Background:

The photos contained in the Sidney Hamilton Collection depict the city of Anchorage and the Cook Inlet area from the mid 1940's to mid 1950's. During these post war years, Anchorage experienced an economic boom and rapid population growth. As population grew so did the city, resulting in the construction of many new businesses along Fourth and Fifth Avenues. It was also around this time that the Glenn highway was completed, connecting Anchorage with the Richardson and Alaska Highways.

The images in this collection depict this period of growth, and consist of exteriors of retail and commercial businesses, various street scenes, Anchorage Post Office, the newly built Providence Hospital and Federal Building, Anchorage Harbor, Anchorage Station, Knik Arm Apartments, and nearby Mt. Susitna. Also included are images of various lodges and recreation areas and other Alaskan towns such as Juneau, Seward, Curry, and Fairbanks.

Bibliographical Background:

It is believed that Sidney Hamilton was an Englishman who first came to Alaska in the fall of 1900. The nephew of the general manager of the North Star Dredging Company, Hamilton came to join the company's expedition to establish a gold dredge at Lone Goose Lake. He eventually ended up in Anchorage, where he lived with his wife Eve from 1938 to 1963. During this time Sidney was employed as a photographer at Hewitt's Drug and Photo Shop. While Sidney took the majority of photos in this collection, Eve also contributed a number of downtown Anchorage shots. In addition, Eve hand tinted photographs, including some that may have been taken by Sidney.

At the time of Hamilton's employment, Hewitt's was owned by Lu Liston who purchased the store with Francis Bowden in 1948. Hewitt's stood downtown at the north east corner of Fourth and E, before it was demolished following the 1964 earthquake. Despite this however, Hewitt's continued to operate at other locations and was sold by Liston in 1978. While under the ownership of Liston, Hewitt's produced and sold hand tinted Sydney Laurence photo reproductions.

Anchorage Historical Background:

The history of Anchorage began in 1915, when President Woodrow Wilson authorized funds for the construction of the Alaska Railroad. Ship Creek Landing was the site chosen as construction headquarters. With construction came an influx of railroad workers and before long a tent city sprang up at the mouth of Ship Creek. The population quickly grew to over 2,000 and by 1920 Anchorage was incorporated as a city. Despite this growth, Anchorage remained a relatively small frontier town until the beginning of World War II. The bombing of Pearl Harbor brought Anchorage to the front lines of the conflict resulting in the construction of wartime roads, airfields, and other infrastructure. When the war ended the infrastructure stayed as did many of the soldier's stationed in the area. During these post war years, Anchorage experienced an economic boom and rapid population growth. As population grew so did the city, resulting in the construction of many new businesses along Fourth and Fifth Avenues. It was also around this time that the Glenn highway was completed, connecting Anchorage with the Richardson and Alaska Highways.