

# Katherine Barker Drake

## Glass-Plate Negative Collection

© Windsor Historical Society  
96 Palisado Avenue, Windsor, CT 06095

**Creator:** Katherine Barker Drake, 1861-1956  
**Dates:** 1890-1930, bulk 1910-1920  
**Extent:** 403 glass-plate negatives; 16 linear feet  
**Accession #:** 2008.5

### Biographical Note

Katherine Barker Drake (1861-1956) was born in Windsor, Connecticut and became a local historian and photographer. Along with photographing her neighbors, friends, and possibly clients, she photographed over 150 historic Windsor buildings in the 1910s and printed multiple copies of the images during the next several decades.

She compiled 125 of her photographs in an annotated volume for Windsor's 300th anniversary in 1933. The Connecticut State Library in Hartford, Connecticut owns a photostat copy of this official collection entitled *Photographs and Epitomes of Old Houses, Historic Buildings, Gravestones, Places, and Objects of Interest in Windsor, Connecticut; also miscellaneous group of photographs taken outside of Windsor, 1900-1933*. The glass-plate negatives in the Windsor Historical Society's collection total approximately 90-95% of the images in the Connecticut Historical Society's volume. According to Gerald and Mildred Rose Barker, Drake's great niece and nephew, Drake's original copy of *Photographs and Epitomes of Old Houses...* is owned by the Barker family. The location of the remaining glass-plate negatives is unknown.

*From her obituary in the Hartford Courant, January 30, 1956:*

Born March 4, 1861 in Windsor, daughter of Ellsworth and Sarah King Barker, Katherine Barker Drake lived in Windsor her entire life. She was a member of Eureka Chapter, OED, past noble grand of Orhap, Rebekah Lodge, and the Abigail Wolcott Ellsworth chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. She did geological research for the DAR. She was the widow of Frederick Drake.

She grew up at 335 Palisado Avenue, and once married in 1885, lived at 44 Maple Avenue. She had two brothers, Charles Ellsworth Barker and Sidney Bissell Barker, and she attended the Campbell School for Girls as a youth.

### Scope and Contents

This collection of 403 glass-plate negatives was photographed by Katherine Barker Drake (1861-1956) between 1900 and 1930. The majority of the photographs were taken in the 1910s. Drake photographed over 100 historic Windsor, Connecticut, buildings and landscapes. Other groupings of images depict buildings and landscapes in Hartford, Suffield, the Connecticut coastline, and Connecticut tobacco fields. Ten photos have been identified as Colorado Landscapes.

Her collection also contains over 200 portraits of people, many of whom are unidentified. These people are probably relatives and friends, and many are posing with their animals and pets. There are several photos of Drake herself in the collection.

### **Arrangement**

The collection is arranged into two series according to size of the negative. Each series is then arranged by subject.

Series I: 4 x 5" glass-plate negatives

Series II: 3.5 x 3.5" glass-plate negatives

### **Box and Folder Lists**

#### **Series I. Glass-Plate Negatives 4 x 5"**

Collection of 339 glass plate-negatives sized 4" x 5" featuring images of historic houses in Windsor and unidentified portraits.

Box 1-8: Negatives 1-79:  
Windsor, CT Buildings and Landscapes

Box 9-12: Negatives 80-120:  
Unidentified Buildings and Landscapes

Box 13: Negatives 121-131:  
Windsor, CT June Fete, ca. 1914

Box 14: Negatives 132-142:  
Unidentified Coastal Landscapes and Sailing

Box 15: Negatives 143-153:  
Hartford, Suffield and other Unidentified CT Landscapes

Box 16: Negatives 154-164:  
Colorado Landscapes

Box 17-20: Negatives 165-208:  
Unidentified Portraits

Box 21: Negatives 209-219:  
Windsor, CT Landscapes

Box 22: Negatives 220-229:  
Windsor, CT Landscapes  
Tobacco Cultivation

Box 23-31: Negatives 230-328:  
Unidentified Portraits  
Animals

Box 32: Negatives 329-338:

Animals

### **Series II. Glass-Plate Negatives 3.5 x 3.5"**

Collection of 64 glass-plate negatives sized 3.5" x 3.5" featuring people, landscapes, and animals.

Box 1: Negatives 1-32:

Unidentified portraits

Box 2: Negatives 33-64:

Unidentified portraits

Animals

### **Related Materials at Windsor Historical Society**

- William S. Leek Lantern Slide Collection (1954.2.4)
- Bruce MacClintic Collection (1995.25)
- Drake Family Collection (2008.2)
- Warren and Dorothy Ball Collection (2008.14)
- Family File – Barker Family
- Family File – Drake Family
- Photo File – Houses
- Photo File – Organizations and Clubs, Rebekah Lodge

### **Related Materials at Other Repositories**

- Photographs & Epitomes of Old Houses, Historic Buildings, Gravestones, Places, and Objects of Interest in Windsor, Connecticut. Connecticut State Library, Hartford, Connecticut (974.672 qW76Dd)

### **Library of Congress Subject Terms**

Gelatin Dry Plate Negatives

Hartford (Conn.)--Pictorial works

Poquonock (Conn.)--Pictorial works

Suffield (Conn.)--Pictorial works

Tobacco farms--Connecticut

Windsor (Conn.)--Pictorial works

### **Custodial history**

This collection of glass-plate negatives was found in the Windsor Historical Society's darkroom when the Society's staff cleaned the space and improved storage for its historic photographs between 2007 and 2008. Previously, the collection was unidentified and had been mixed with other unidentified negatives. The collection has been in the historical society's possession for many years, but documentation of the negatives' donation has not been uncovered. Since an accession number could not be found for the negatives, the collection is numbered with the year it was catalogued: 2008.

The historical society houses two additional collections of Katherine Barker Drake's photographic prints. A collection of 101 prints from Drake's historic house series was donated

by Bruce MacClintic in 1995 (1995.25). Dorothy and Warren Ball's collection of historic house prints contains 35 of Drake's photographs (2008.14).

The historical society also owns a collection of lantern slides that include some of Katherine Barker Drake's images (1954.2.4), but since the slides have been mixed with other lantern slide collections over the years, there is no way to know how many of the slides were taken by Drake. She presented a lantern slide show of historic Windsor houses at the Windsor Historical Society in 1923. William S. Leek (1868-1950) also presented Windsor-themed lantern slide shows to local organizations, and the historical society owns some of his slides (also in 1954.2.4).

### **Objects History**

Gelatin dry plate negatives were the first mass-produced, gelatin-emulsion negatives used in photography. The emulsion technology was invented in 1871 and gelatin dry plate negatives were first available in the United States in 1879. The plates were mass-produced in factories, making them cheaper and easier for photographers to use than earlier wet collodion negatives. They made photography an affordable hobby for the middle class and greatly increased the number of amateur photographers in the United States by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Eastman Kodak Company was a major manufacturer of dry plate negatives, but many smaller manufacturers also produced negatives. The plates were sold in standard sizes and were packaged by the dozen in cardboard boxes. They were used from 1880 through the 1920s when film negatives became readily available.

Collection processed and finding aid compiled by Erin Stevic, Curator, December 2008. Finding aid edited by Barbara Goodwin in 2009, and Michelle Tom in 2016.