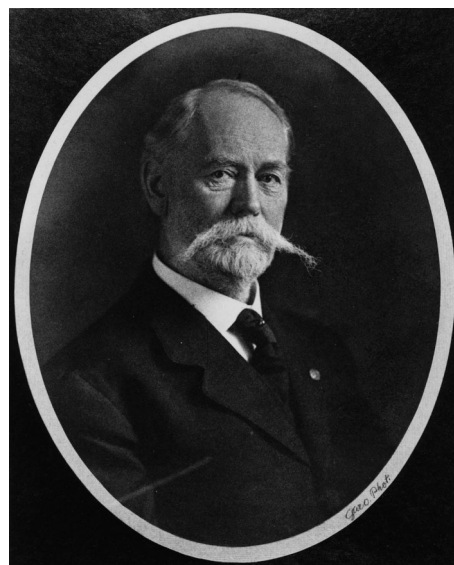


BALDWIN COOLIDGE (1845 – 1928)

Baldwin Coolidge, whose work is featured in the exhibit in Gallery Two this summer, was born in Woburn and later lived with his parents in Lawrence, Massachusetts. He was descended from John Coolidge, the ancestor of many New England Coolidges, including Calvin Coolidge.

His first career was as a civil engineer following service in the Civil War. He took up photography and by 1878 had a studio in Boston on or near Tremont Street. In 1899 he moved to 410A Boylston Street and remained there until 1917 when he moved to California. That section of Boylston Street was home to a number of professional photographers, one of whom was John Garo, who did the 1910 portrait of Coolidge seen here.



In the 1880s he produced stunning images of Maine and New Hampshire, putting them before the public in mounted sets with the title “New England Views.” These images of the 1880s are some of his most artistic and poetic photos. Around 1890 he began photographing Boston, Lawrence and following earlier visits to Martha’s Vineyard, he produced images of the Vineyard, Nantucket and the Cape. We do not know what prompted him to come to Woods Hole but this is the decade in which he began to take numerous images of the village and especially investigators and scientists at the MBL. He continued coming to Woods Hole, perhaps being hired by the Fay family, in the late 1890s and on into the early 20th century.

His main income was provided by becoming the staff photographer for the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. He photographed the interiors and material in the original MFA, which was on Copley Square, and then continued on when it moved to its current location in the Fenway in 1910. In addition he photographed many scenes in Boston and on its waterfront, Boston Harbor and in nearby Massachusetts Bay. He was clearly attracted to water and sky in his very artistic images.

Because of his work in Woods Hole, the Museum Archives owns many original prints of Coolidge as well as several original glass plate negatives in his characteristic large format of about 8 x 10 inches. The major collection of his glass plates was preserved by William Sumner Appleton, the founder of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (now called Historic New England). The Archives used a grant to purchase many copy prints of his photos of Woods Hole and photos of other locations were bought to illustrate Jane A. McLaughlin’s article on Coolidge in the first issue of *Spritsail* in 1987. Many others have been added to the Archives since then, both original prints and copy photos.



In 1998 Susan Fletcher Witzell, Jane A. McLaughlin and Mary Lou Smith produced for the Woods Hole Historical Collection a book with a selection of Coolidge’s photos: *New England Views, the Photography of Baldwin Coolidge (1845-1928)*. The book was designed by Diane Jaroch (who also designed *Spritsail* and other Collection publications) and it won first prize for design given annually by the American Association of Museums.

Susan Fletcher Witzell, Archivist

Catboat *Mary Lewis* in Nantucket Sound, c. 1900.
Photo by Baldwin Coolidge.

Summer! *In Woods Hole and Quissett*



Photos from the WHHM Archives:
Hibbard-Romer Collection, Gulesian-Fish
Collection, Marshall King Collection,
George Robinson Collection.