

Photographs by Harold Haliday Costain

Harold Haliday Costain (1897-1994)

Harold Haliday Costain's career as a photographer spanned almost eight decades, producing a large and varied body of work that propelled him to the forefront of the New York art and design world. An award winning modernist photographer, Costain was responsible for creating thousands of works in a wide range of genres.

Costain believed that his job was not complete until he personally developed the negative and printed the photo. Using avant-garde techniques with an eye toward modernism and an understanding of cubist, surrealist and expressionist ideas, Costain's photos stand alone. It is important to understand the printing process that Costain mastered, called Carbro. A carbon print is a photographic print with an image consisting of pigmented gelatin, rather than of silver or other metallic particles suspended in a uniform layer of gelatin, as in typical black-and-white prints, or of chromogenic dyes, as in typical photographic color prints. However, in an important early 20th century variation of the process, known as carbro printing, contact with a conventional silver bromide paper print, rather than exposure to light, was used to selectively harden the gelatin. A wide variety of colored pigments can be used instead of carbon black.

The process can produce images of very high quality which are exceptionally resistant to fading and other deterioration. It was developed in the mid-19th century in response to concerns about the fading of early types of silver-based black-and-white prints, which was already becoming apparent within a relatively few years of their introduction. The benefits of this process are obviously apparent in the quality & condition of this collection.

Costain was born in Scrub Oak, New York into a family with an artistic slant. Costain studied music and graphic arts at The Art Students League in New York. After enlisting during WWI he was stationed as a musician to the crew ship "Leviathan" (German Ocean Liner Vaterland, seized by the US). When it was found out that Costain carried a camera he was given the job of ship's photographer and offered the task of recording the activity around the vessel. During his time in the Navy he played first cornet under the direction of John Philip Sousa.

After the war Costain worked in the early silent movie industry in New York and Florida. He was introduced to the inventive motion picture producer Gerald J. Badgeley while teaching Badgeley's daughter to play the cornet. Costain was offered a job as a still photographer and assistant to the chief cinematographer. Using a large format camera, it was his job to record the action in each scene. His time in the movie industry taught him about light, shadows, make up and even a bit of acting. He once played a bit part that required him to fight with Lionel Barrymore. It was at this time that Costain met his wife and life-long business partner, beauty queen and actress Maude Allison Price (Miss New Orleans, 1922).

In the early 20s when the movie industry moved west Costain stayed behind and opened "Costain Studios" in Scarsdale, NY as well as a studio in New York City. Costain's photography emphasized design and architecture and was well known in the world of advertising. Noteworthy commissions included the Avery Salt Mines in Louisiana, the Jack Frost Sugar Factory, fashion shots for Coty Perfume, Chrysler and Rolls Royce. His photos were in great demand for high-end style and society magazines such as *Town & Country*, *Fortune*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Country Life* and *House & Gardens*. Costain photographed the homes and gardens of the rich and famous with an artistic eye. One of his most important shoots was to document the redecoration of "Government House" the Nassau, Bahamas home of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. Other well-known figures captured by Costain's camera were Norman Rockwell and Harry S. Truman. Over his long and illustrious career Costain exhibited his work on six continents and won a large variety of awards from groups such as the Photographers Association of America, the International Exposition Salon and the Preston Scientific Society Salon.

James D. Julia's is extremely pleased to have been chosen by Costain's only child, Allison Haliday Costain, to represent this collection which was given to her by her father to represent a cross section in his life.

