



Common Crow Books

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Photos by William J. Allen, Club Photographer of Pittsburgh

William J. Allen, lived at 341 Sweetbriar St., in the Mt. Washington neighborhood of Pittsburgh. According to one of his neighbors, who sold us these photographs, he was a “jack of all trades.” City directories from 1913-1917 list his occupation as “motorman” — an operator of streetcars and trollies — and his serge jacket with the brass buttons that he wears in his “Self Portrait” suggests that he was still a motorman when he was taking these photographs in the late 1920s and early 1930s. He lived on Sweetbriar St. with his wife, Mary and his two children, Joseph and May, and according to the Federal Census from 1940, Allen was 65 in that year, which would place his birthdate around 1875. By 1940 he had retired, but his wife was still employed as a telephone operator. Sometime in the 1940s the family moved from Sweetbriar St. to nearby Belonda St.

What we do know is that he was active in the Photographic Section of the Academy of Science and Art, a grandiose name usually shortened to “Pittsburgh Photo Club,” for the group of amateur photographers whose meetings and exhibitions took place at the Carnegie Museum of Art. This club, founded in 1885, was an early participant in what would become known as the Salon Movement in American photography, when amateur photographers who recognized photography as one of the fine arts showed their work around the country in various small exhibits. Allen not only presented his work in the Pittsburgh exhibits, but the tags on the verso of some of his pictures indicate widespread showing of them by other clubs in Portland (both Oregon and Maine), Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, Milwaukee, Rochester, Newark, Lansing, Fort Dearborn, Akron, and Syracuse, etc. Most of the exhibiting groups were members of the national organization, the Associated Camera Club of America. The Pittsburgh Photo Club is still in existence and regularly meets in Mt. Lebanon, in the South Hills of Pittsburgh.

All the photographs by Allen are listed by him as “bromide” prints — sometimes called silver bromide prints or silver gelatin prints. Several of the images measure 7 x 9 inches; others measure 13 x 10 inches. They are all mounted on thick paper, some with double ink lines bordering the images, others with mats. Almost all are titled on the back and have tags identifying where they have been exhibited. A few are signed and titled on the front in pencil by Allen, underneath the images.

Allen's work shows the complex influences of Stieglitz and Steichen, the two photographers most lionized by the salonistes of the late 1920s, in his choice of subjects and in his composition of the images. We find them very powerful, evocative of Pittsburgh's grime and beauty, and showing modernist features that remind us of the work of fellow Pittsburgh photographer (and Stieglitz friend) Luke Swank. **15 photos for \$2000.00.**



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Portrait - Joie

William J. Allen,
341 Sweetbriar St.,
Mt. Washington Sta.,
Pittsburgh, Penna.

"Portrait — Joie" 9 x 7 inches, mounted.



"2. Street workers under the L.

William J. Allen,
341 Sweetbriar St.,
Mt. Washington Sta.,
Pittsburgh,
Penn.

Provide

"#2. Street workers under the L." 9 x 7 inches, mounted.



"5 Street workers under the L."

William J. Allen,
341 Swetbriar St.,
Mt. Washington Sta.,
Pittsburgh,
Penn.

Provide

"#5 Street Workers under the L." 9 x 7 inches, mounted.

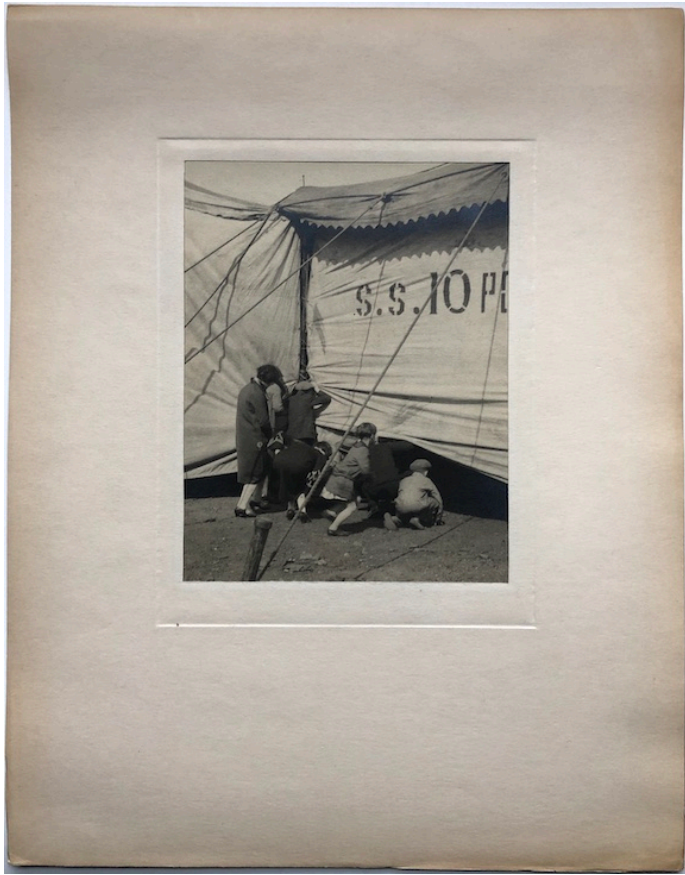


#8. Under the L

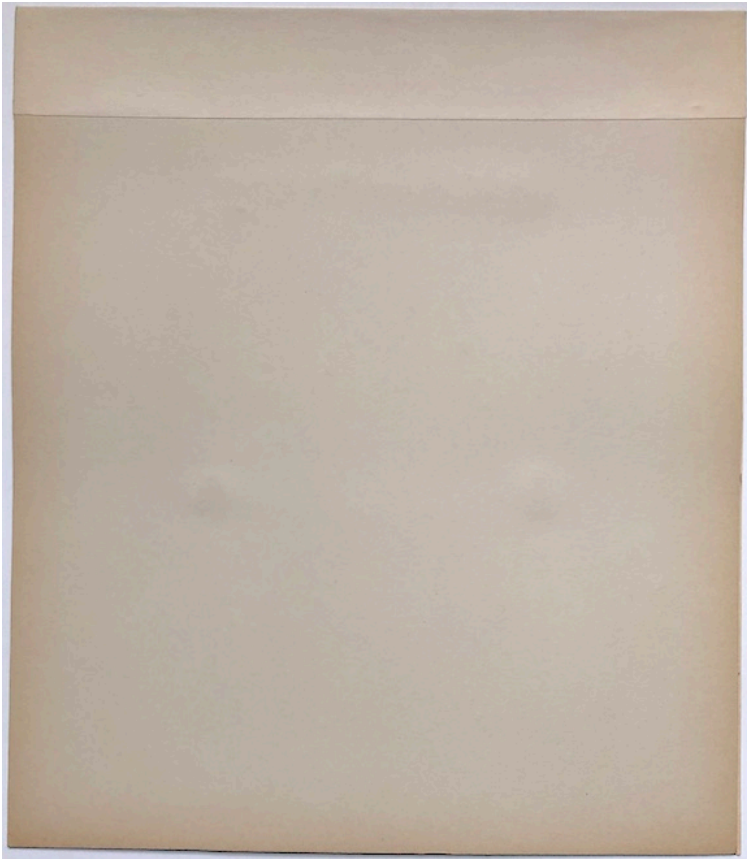
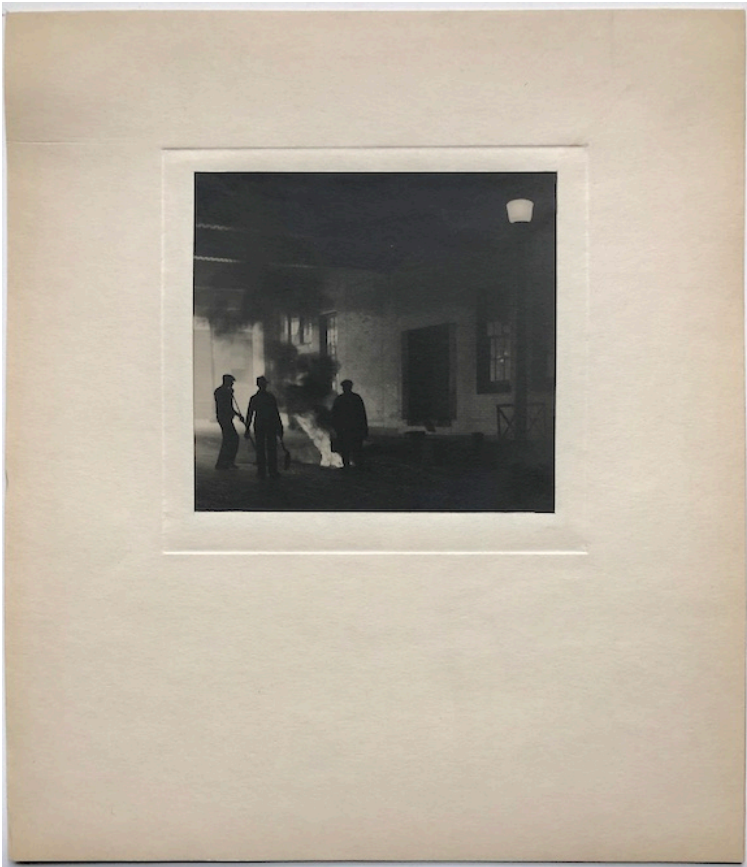
William J. Allen
34 Sweetbriar St.
Mt. Washington Sta.
Pittsburgh
Penn.

Fromide

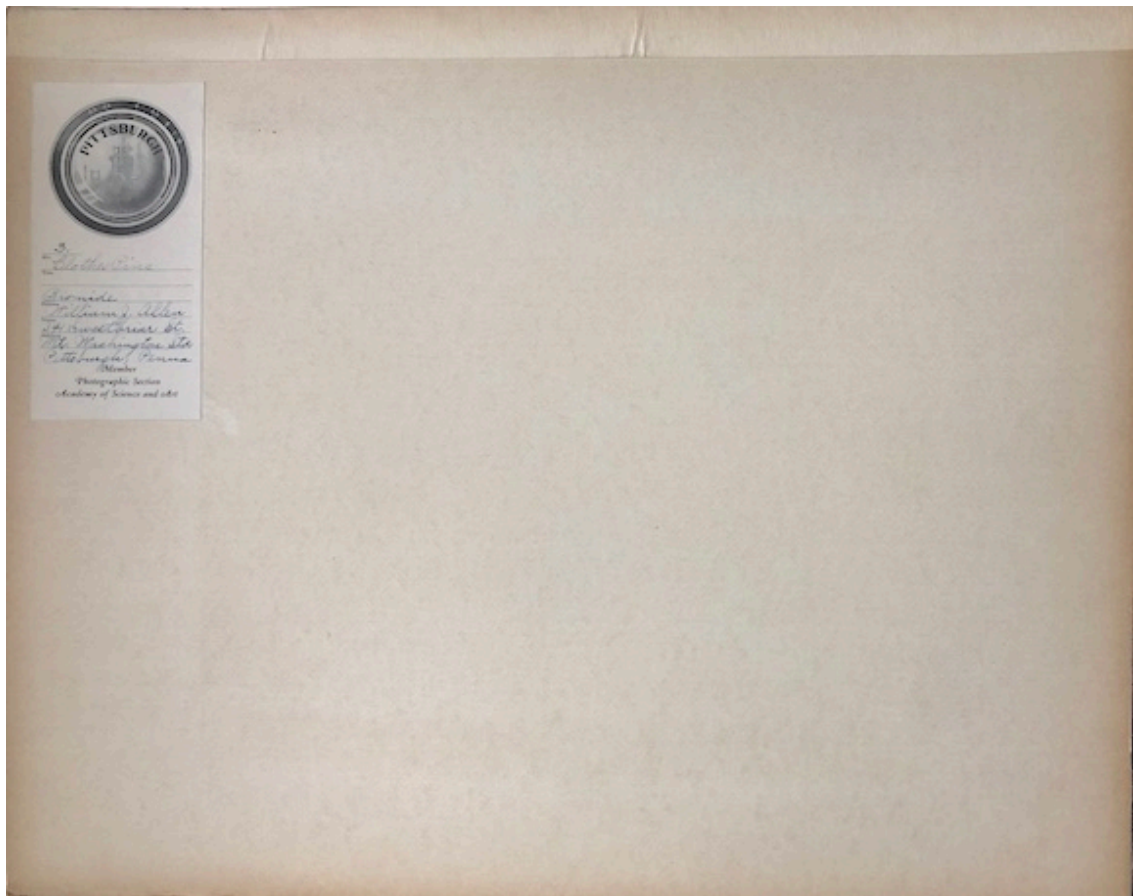
"#8. Under the L" 7 x 9 inches, mounted



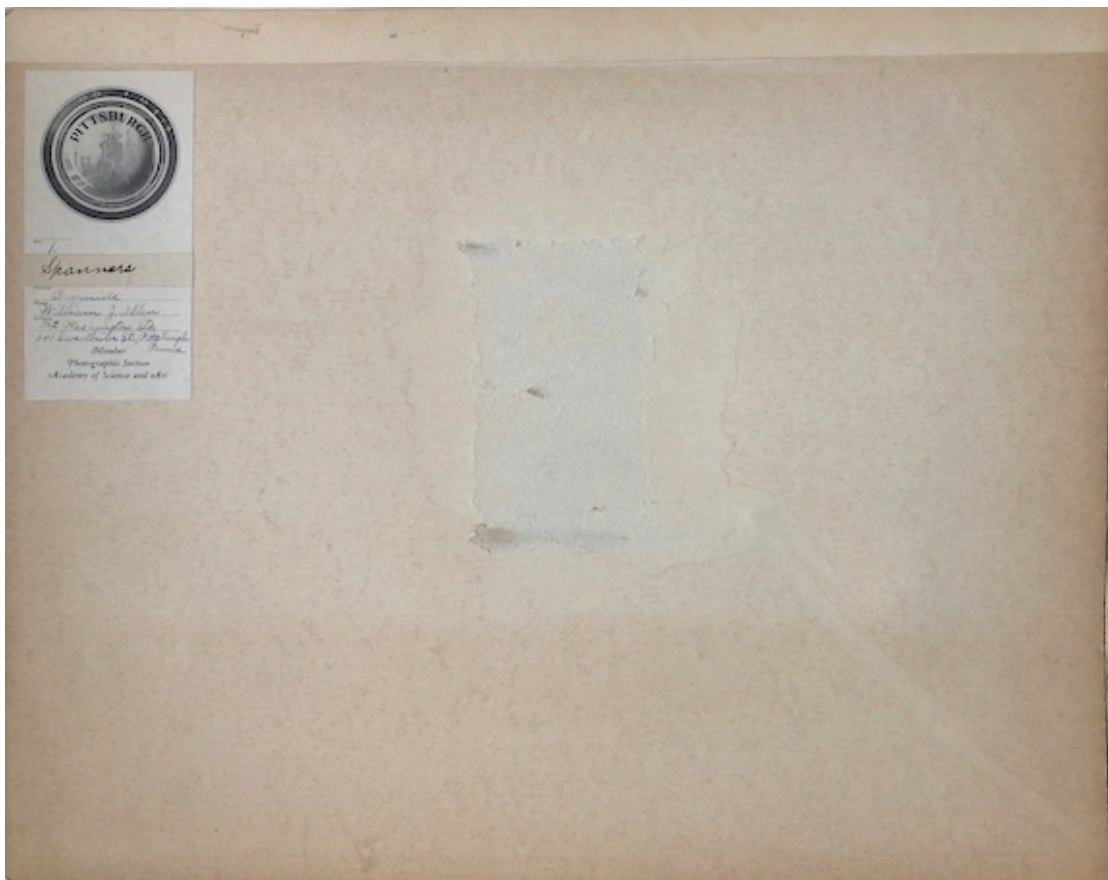
Circus Days" 7 x 9 inches, mounted.



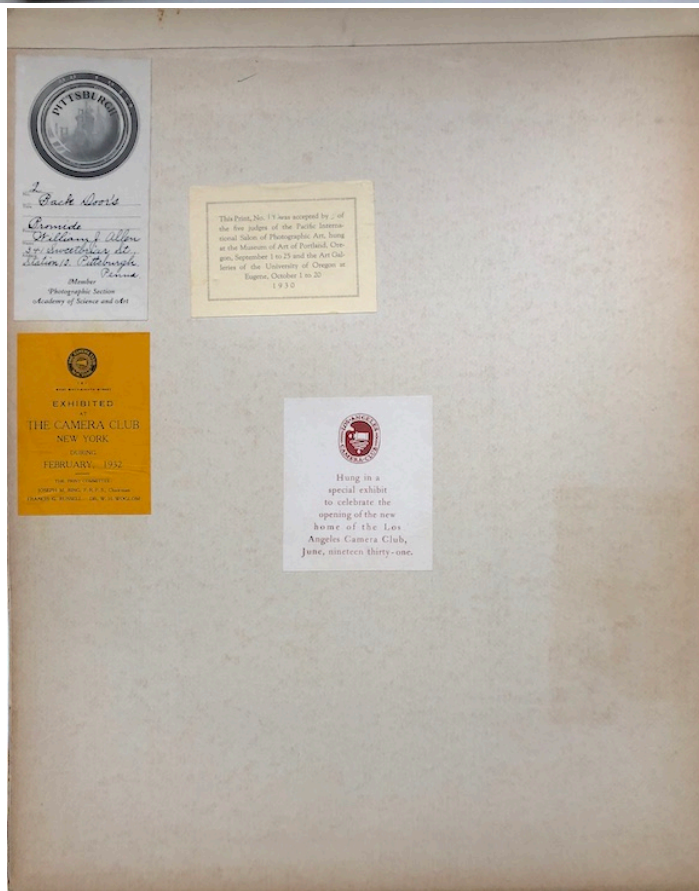
Untitled (Street Workers Under the L), 6.5 x 7 inches, mounted.



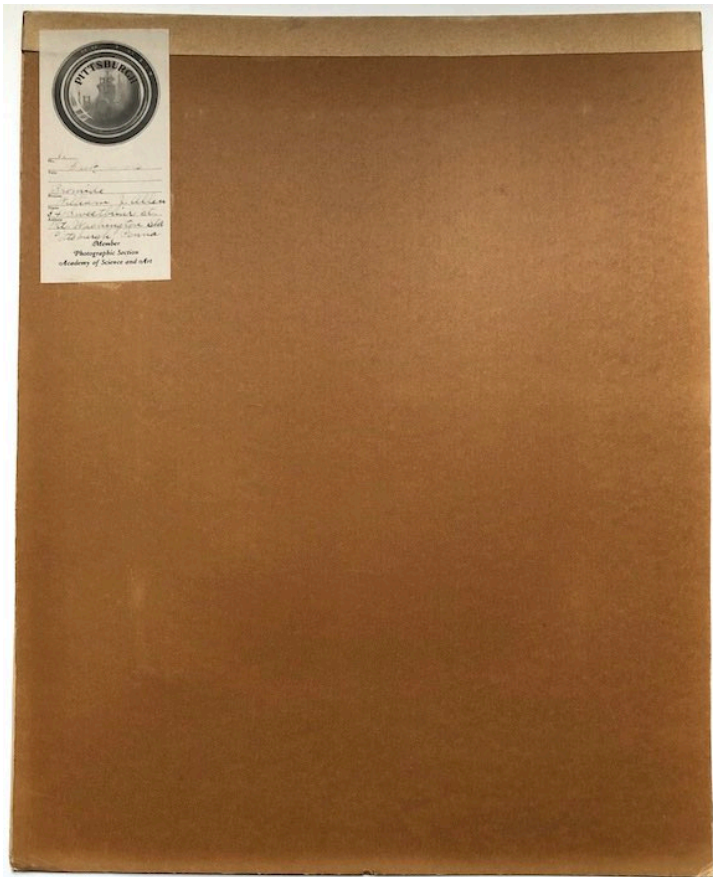
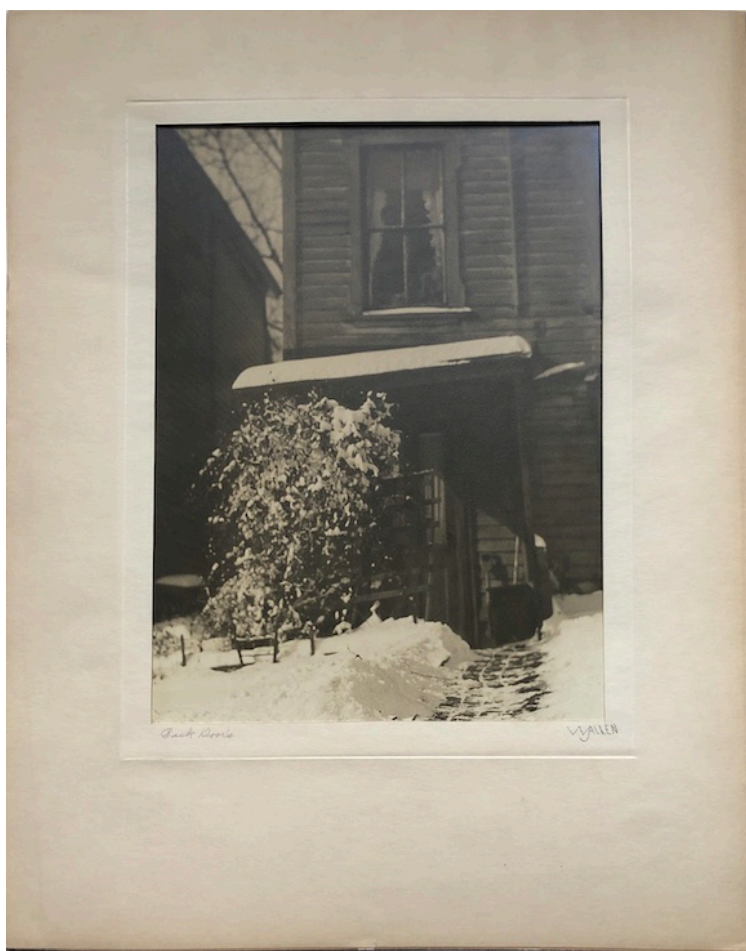
"Clothes Pins" — signed and titled in pencil. 13 x 10 inches, mounted and matted.



"1. Spanners" — signed and titled in pencil. 13 x 10 inches, mounted and matted. Matt with some tape stains to borders, not affecting image.



"2. Back Door's" — signed and titled. 13 x 10 inches, matted and mounted, exhibited at four places.



"#1. Back Door's" — signed and titled in pencil. 13 x 10 inches, mounted and matted.



The Roost

VJ

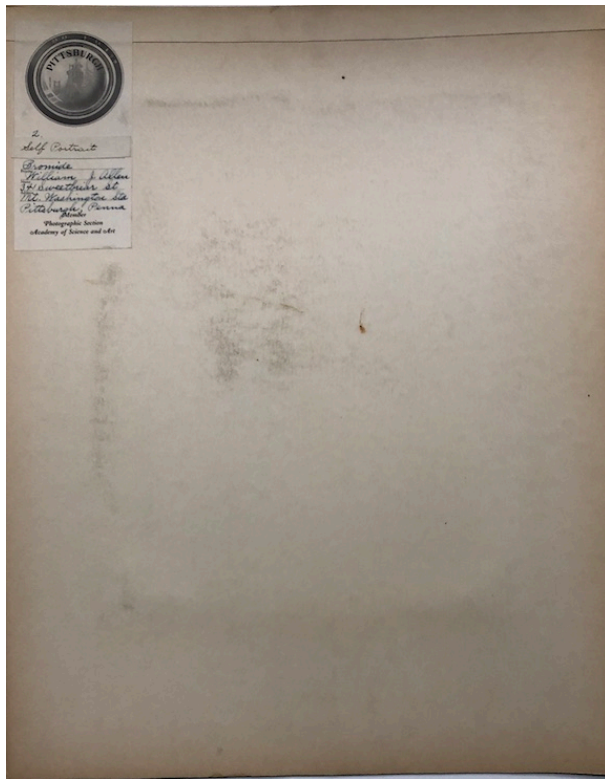
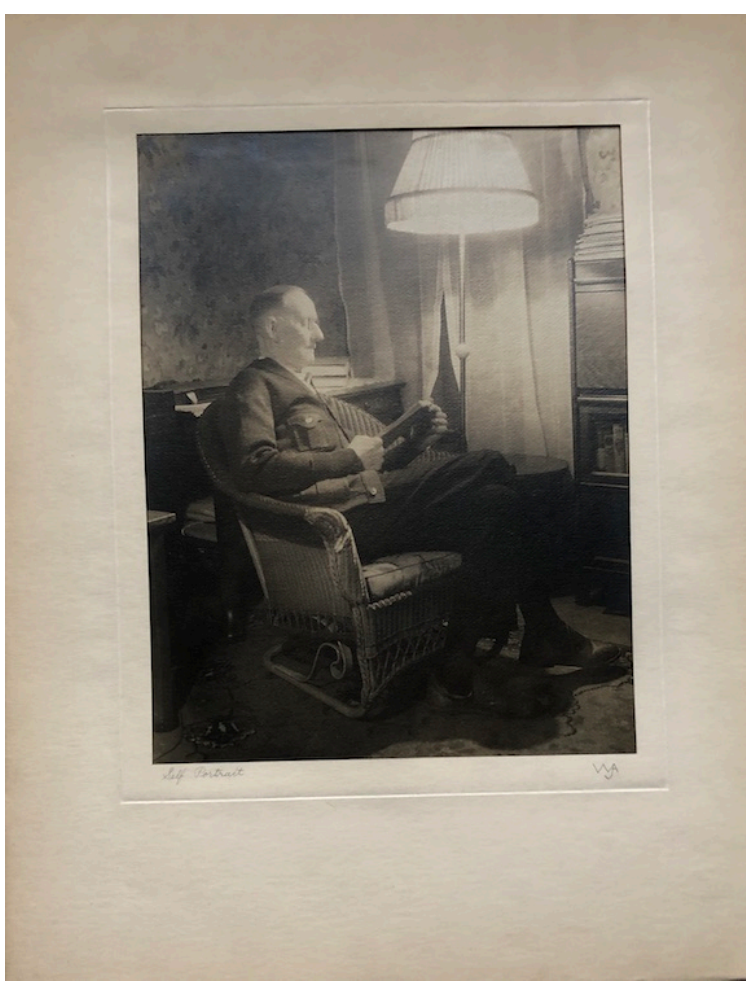


The Roost

Responsible
Pittsburgh, Pa.
of the Academy of Science and Art
The Pittsburgher
with a view to the
Member

Photographic Section
Academy of Science and Art

"2. The Roost" — signed and titled in pencil. 13 x 10 inches, mounted and matted.



"2. Self Portrait" — signed and titled in pencil on the front. 13 x 10 inches, mounted and matted.

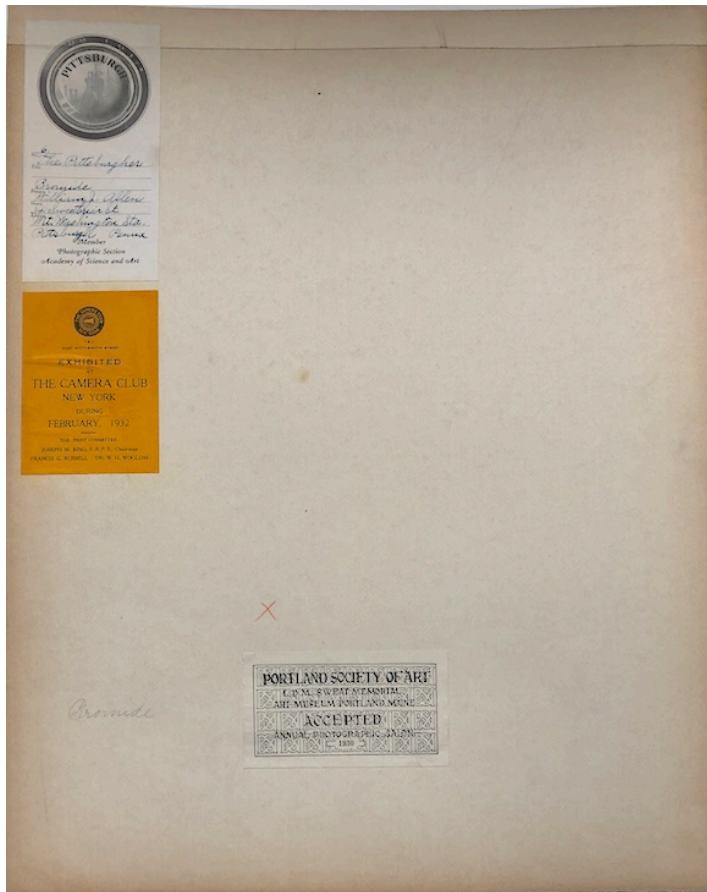


#7. Ready for the Dip

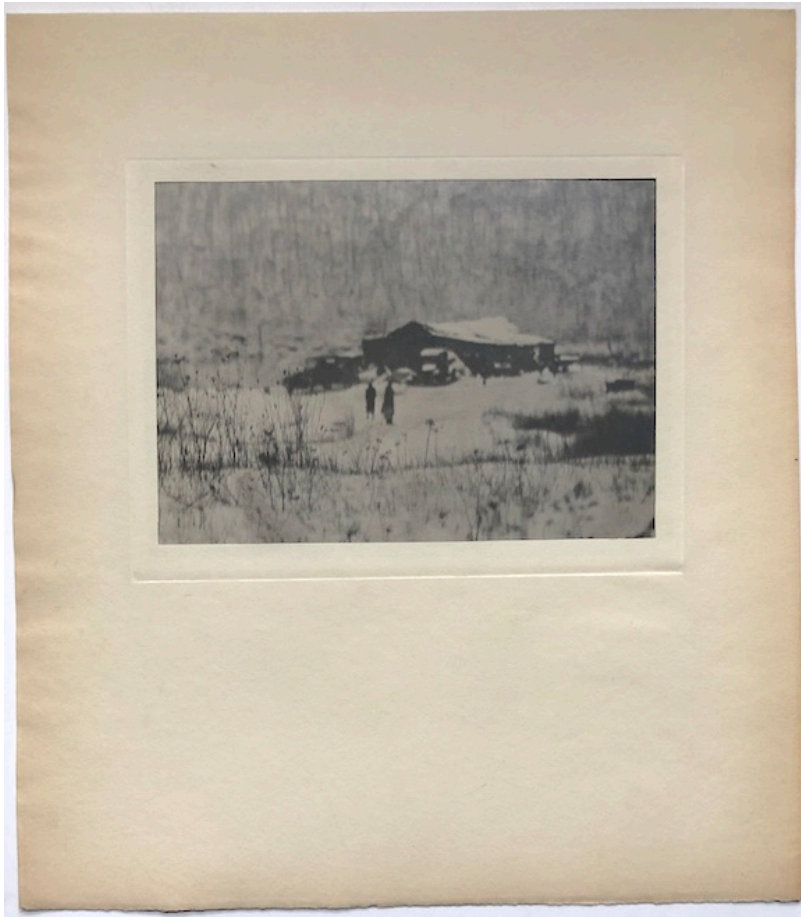
William J. Allen,
301 Sweetbriar St.,
Mt. Washington Sta.,
Pittsburgh,
Penns.

Bronze

#7. Ready for the Dip" 7 x 9 inches, mounted.



"The Pittsburger" — signed and titled in pencil on the front. 13 x 10, mounted and matted



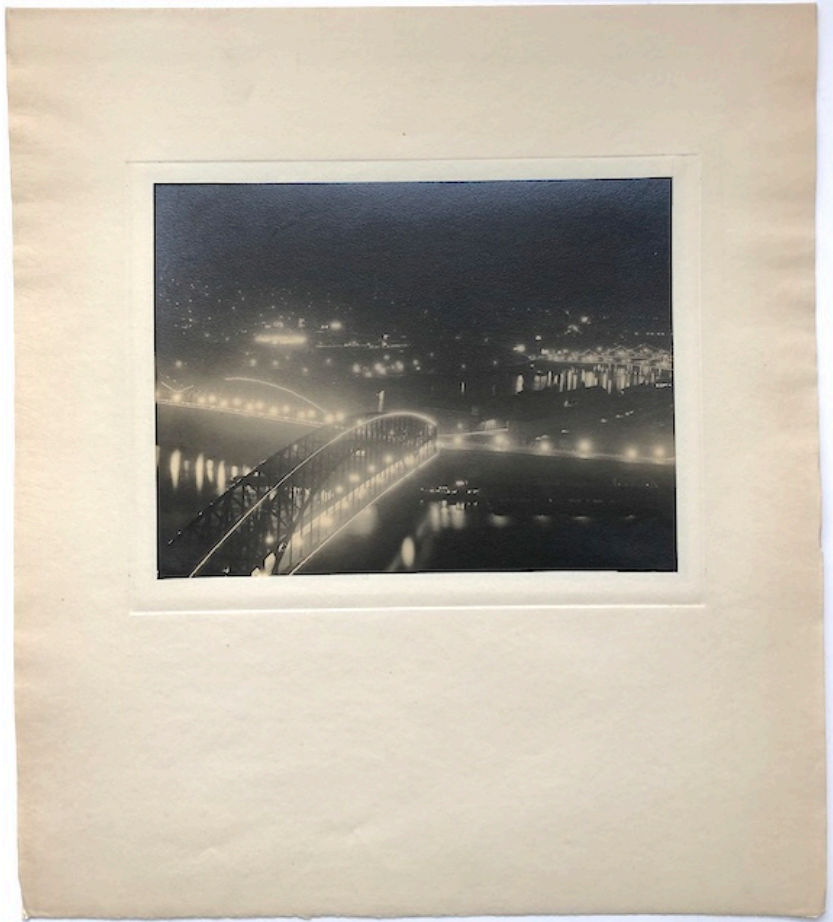
Shack taken near Pittsburgh
#4. A Nester's Shack
William J. Allen
341 Sweethear St.
Mt. Washington Sta.
Pittsburgh, Penna

A-6

"#4. A Nester's Shack" 7 x 9 inches, mounted and matted



"Books" Signed and titled in pencil on the front. 13 x 10 inches, mounted, with over 12 exhibition stickers on the verso of the mount.



Pittsburgh at Night Golden Light Anniversary

William J. Allen
341 Sweetbriar St
Mt. Washington Ste
Pittsburgh, Penna

"Pittsburgh at Night Golden Light Anniversary" 7 x 9 inches, mounted, with mat.