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**ARIZONA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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**PC 207**

**Benjamin T. "Ben" Maxey, ca. 1900-1987**

**Photograph Collection, ca. 1945-ca. 1970**

**DESCRIPTION**

Ben Maxey was a commercial photographer, concentrating largely on studio portraiture. This collection provides a record of social mores, fashion, and architecture in Tucson, Arizona during the period from approximately 1950-1975.

Like many commercial photographers, Maxey was not conscientious about preserving his images. Consequently, many of his images are dry-mounted on non-acid-free matboard, pasted onto boards, and often badly deteriorated due, largely, to poor processing. In the same vein, most of the portraits in this collection are not identified.

Approximately 20 prints in this collection were donated by Wick Communications and incorporated into the Maxey collection. These prints were evidently part of an exhibit titled "Arizona Territorial cover photos by Ben Maxey," suggesting that these images were published as cover art for the *Arizona Territorial* newspapers. These images are identified with the words "Wick Communications" pencilled on the back of each photo.

14 boxes, 16½ linear ft.

**ACQUISITION**

Benjamin T. Maxey donated the majority of this collection in 1987; a small portion of the collection was donated by Wick Communications, ca. 1997.

**RELATED MATERIALS**

See also AG 112, Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson

**ACCESS**

There are no restrictions on access to this collection.

**COPYRIGHT**

Requests for permission to publish material from this collection should be addressed to the Arizona Historical Society-Tucson, Archives Department.

**PROCESSING**

Dena McDuffie processed the collection in November 2001.

**ARRANGEMENT**

The collection is arranged topically.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Benjamin "Ben" T. Maxey was born in Illinois and raised in Kansas. He graduated from Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas where he met Lois Rogers who became his wife in 1930. From 1923 to 1930, Maxey was a traveling salesman for United Drug Company (later known as Rexall) in Kansas and Ohio. In 1930, he became editor of United Drugs' salesmen's bulletin, "Bee Hive," writing and editing all instructions for field staff out of Rexall's headquarters in Chicago. In 1932, Maxey became the contact man between United Drug Co. and the 50 Marshall Rexall Drug Stores of Cleveland, Ohio. In 1936, the United Drug Company decided that, rather than hold its annual conventions of druggists, it would field a display train to tour the country. Pullman remodeled 12 cars, painting the exteriors a tasteful blue and white. The interiors were refurbished as: 1) displays of a typical corner drugstore (including advertisements for Stork nipples and castor oil, endorsed by the Dionne Quintuplets), complete with soda fountain; 2) lecture halls; 3) a lounge car (with bar, dance floor and a band that traveled with the train); 4) sleeping cars for personnel; and 5) a private car for Louis Liggett, president of the company. In eight months, the train traveled over 25,000 miles through 47 states, hosting local druggists and the general public by day and traveling on to the next city by night. Maxey was director of the Rexall Streamlined Train. Lois Maxey accompanied him and they lived in a private car on the train. An article at the time described Maxey as "a combination of seer, salesman, auditor, railroad and electrical engineer, as well as father confessor and adviser to the train personnel of fifty who worked under him and with him." Ben Maxey most likely did *not* take the Rexall Train photographs in this collection.

Rexall relocated its headquarters to Los Angeles in 1946. The Maxeys may have moved to Los Angeles, evidenced by negatives in the collection captioned "our home in Mandeville Canyon, L.A." But by 1948, Maxey was back in Chicago, working for Sears Roebuck Co. During that time, while on a visit to Tucson, Maxey fell in love with the area. He brought Lois to visit and she also was impressed. Around 1950, the Maxeys moved to Tucson and rented a home on East Pima Street. Maxey set out to fulfill a longtime dream of running his own photo studio. He made friends with Chuck and Esther Abbott, owners of Photocenter, located at 2360 East Broadway. Maxey soon acquired the camera store and photo department of Photocenter; he later took over the portrait studio and photofinishing department as well. In 1951, the Maxeys bought a house at 2101 East Copper Street in Tucson where they lived the rest of their lives. Maxey was an active member of the community. He was President of the Tucson Professional Photographers Association in 1952 and again in 1961-1962. He was a dog lover, an active member of the Exchange Club, and a Shriner. In 1960, Maxey opened Ben Maxey Portrait Studios in the then-new Casas Adobes Plaza at 7109 North Oracle Road. He remained in business there until he retired around 1969. He continued photographing after he retired, working out of his home.

Lois Maxey died around 1985; Ben died in 1987.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Ben Maxey collection is significant for its images of Tucson during the sixties and seventies. Maxey chronicled the architecture, fashion and culture of the area during that time. The Historical Society's collection of imagery from this time period is somewhat sparse, making this collection all the more important.

In his business as a commercial photographer, Maxey photographed many of Tucson's elite...doctors, lawyers, actors, members of the Exchange Club, children and beauty queens. Among the liveliest of Maxey's images are those he took for the Sunshine Climate Club (see Album 2, Box 12), a part of the Tucson Chamber of Commerce whose mission was to promote tourism in Arizona (or, more specifically, to woo vacationers away from Phoenix). These images are humorous and whimsical and represent some of Maxey's finest work.

## SERIES NOTES

**Series 1: Personal.** There is very little personal information about Ben Maxey in this collection. In addition, nothing is available in the AHS archives. The dates relating to the Maxey's time in Tucson are taken largely from Tucson City Directories.

**Series 2: Professional.** Ben Maxey's professional experience is documented well in the imagery he left behind. He was obviously a studio portrait photographer, although he did some location shoots as well.

## **BOX & FOLDER LIST**

### **Series 1: Personal**

#### **Box 1, F. 1-12**

F. 1 Biographical Information

#### **Photographs**

F. 2 Portraits—Ben Maxey

F. 3 Portraits—Lois Maxey

F. 4 Portraits—Ben and Lois Maxey

### **Series 2: Professional**

#### **Correspondence**

F. 5 Portraits—Barry Goldwater, 1968-1973

F. 6 Professional Photographers Organizations, 1959-1963 and Miscellaneous

F. 7 Rudy Vallee, 1973-1983

#### **Publications**

F. 8 Publications—St. Philip's in the Hills Episcopal Church brochure; *The Magazine Tucson*, October 1950; *Commercial Camera Magazine*, Vol.3, No. 3, 1950

#### **Photographs**

F. 9-10 Rexall Drugs, Rexall Train

F. 11 Ben Maxey Studio

F. 12 Ben Maxey Studio—Promotional Materials

#### **Box 2, F. 13-27**

F. 13 Ben Maxey Studio—Professional Organizations

F. 14 Ben Maxey Studio—Fashion Shows

#### **Portraits**

F. 15 Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits—Artists. Includes: Ted DeGrazia (1909-1982, known for his naive Indian/Hispanic imagery), C.S. Paola, Gerry Peirce (1900-1969, known for his landscapes, etchings, and illustrations), Ray Strang (1893-1957, known for his cowboy and figure art), and Fred Harman Jr. (1902-1982, known for his cartoons and cowboy/western art), all photos dated 1954.

F. 16 Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits—Well-known people. Portrait of Jack Spieden, Barry Goldwater and Walter Fathauer, 1961

F. 17 Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits—Group

F. 18 Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits—Children

F. 19 Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits—Men. Includes: T.B. Freeman

F. 20 Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits—Men—Clergy

F. 21 Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits—Women

F. 22 Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits—Weddings

#### **Subjects**

F. 23 Ben Maxey Studio—Architecture—Churches & Religious

F. 24 Ben Maxey Studio—Architecture—Homes—Exteriors

F. 25 Ben Maxey Studio—Architecture—Homes—Interiors

F. 26 Ben Maxey Studio—Architecture—Los Angeles

F. 27 Ben Maxey Studio—Architecture—Miscellaneous

**Box 3, F. 28-40**

- F. 28 Ben Maxey Studio—Business—Casas Adobes
- F. 29 Ben Maxey Studio—Business—Exteriors
- F. 30 Ben Maxey Studio—Business—Interiors
- F. 31 Ben Maxey Studio—Business—Cemeteries
- F. 32 Ben Maxey Studio—Business—Nannini Financial Center
- F. 33 Ben Maxey Studio—Business—Old Tucson Studios. Cast members of the TV series, "High Chaparral," Cameron Mitchell (Buck), Leif Erikson (John Gannon), Mark Slade (Billy Blue), Rudolpho Acosta and Harry Darrow (Manalita) posing at Tucson Studios
- F. 34 Ben Maxey Studio—Business—St. Philip's in the Hills. Photographs taken by Maxey for publication in brochure for St. Philip's in the Hills Episcopal Church (see also Publications)
- F. 35 Ben Maxey Studio—Business—Tucson Inn
- F. 36 Ben Maxey Studio—Business—Tucson National Golf Club
- F. 37 Ben Maxey Studio—Business—University of Arizona
- F. 38 Ben Maxey Studio—Dogs
- F. 39 Ben Maxey Studio—Fashion—Formal Attire-Women
- F. 40 Ben Maxey Studio—Fashion—Business Attire-Women

**Box 4, F. 41-44a**

- F. 41 Ben Maxey Studio—Fashion—Casual Attire-Women
- F. 42 Ben Maxey Studio—Fashion—Swimwear-Women
- F. 43 Ben Maxey Studio—Fashion—Clothing-Men
- F. 44 Ben Maxey Studio—Fashion—Shoes-Men
- F. 44a Ben Maxey Studio—Organizations-Exchange Club of North Tucson

**Box 5, F. 45-57****Color images****Series 1: Personal**

- F. 45 Portraits—Ben and Lois Maxey

**Series 2: Professional****Portraits**

- F. 45a Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits—Artists. Photos of Fred Harman
- F. 45b Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits—Well-known people. Photos of Barry Goldwater
- F. 46 Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits—Group
- F. 47-48 Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits—Children
- F. 49 Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits—Men
- F. 50 Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits—Men-Clergy
- F. 51 Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits—Women
- F. 52-54 Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits—Weddings

**Subjects**

- F. 54a Ben Maxey Studio—Architecture—Homes—Interiors. Home of Sam Nannini
- F. 54b Ben Maxey Studio—Business—St. Philip's in the Hills. Photographs taken by Maxey for publication in brochure for St. Philip's in the Hills Episcopal Church (see also Publications)
- F. 55 Ben Maxey Studio—Business—Miscellaneous. Postcards made from photos taken by Maxey. Among those businesses represented are Tucson National Golf Course, St. Philip's in the Hills Episcopal Church, Casas Adobes Plaza, all in Tucson, and The Cavern Cafe in Nogales.
- F. 56 Ben Maxey Studio—Fashion—Women-Casual Attire
- F. 57 Ben Maxey Studio—Fashion—Women-Swimwear
- F. 57a Ben Maxey Studio—Organizations-Exchange Club of North Tucson

**Box 6, F. 58-65****Black & white-oversize**

- F. 58 Ben Maxey-Personal-Ben and Lois Maxey
- F. 59 Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits—Well-known people. Portraits of Bill Russel, Sam Nannini, Dr. W. L. "Bill" Manning, Fred Harvey, and J.F. Weadock
- F. 60 Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits-Group
- F. 61 Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits—Children. Portrait of Robert Onorato
- F. 62-64 Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits—Men. Portraits include: Jack Jewett and David Nelson
- F. 65 Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits—Men-Clergy. Portraits of Rt. Rev. Bishop Frances Green, Rev. McGee, and Rev. George Ferguson

**Box 7, F. 66-71**

- F. 66-71 Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits—Women. Portraits include: Bonnie Wallace, Sue Green, Lynn Lesemann, Marilyn Hansen, Connie Brethauer, Mugsy Manning, Miss Arizona 1962, and promotional photographs for the Sunshine Climate Club.

**Box 8, F. 72-81**

- F. 72 Ben Maxey Studio— Portraits—Weddings

**Subjects**

- F. 73 Ben Maxey Studio—Architecture-Churches & Religious
- F. 74 Ben Maxey Studio—Architecture-Exteriors
- F. 75 Ben Maxey Studio—Business—Casas Adobes Plaza
- F. 76 Ben Maxey Studio—Business—Exteriors
- F. 77 Ben Maxey Studio—Business—St. Philip's in the Hills. Photographs taken by Maxey for publication in brochure for St. Philip's in the Hills Episcopal Church (see Publications)
- F. 78 Ben Maxey Studio—Business—Tucson Inn
- F. 79 Ben Maxey Studio—Business—University of Arizona
- F. 80 Ben Maxey Studio—Copy work
- F. 81 Ben Maxey Studio—Cowboys

**Box 9, F. 82-85**

- F. 82 Ben Maxey Studio—Dogs
- F. 83 Ben Maxey Studio—Fashion-Women-Swimwear
- F. 84 Ben Maxey Studio—Sports
- F. 85 Ben Maxey Studio—Landscape

**Box 10, F. 86-93**

**Color-oversize**

- F. 86 Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits-Group
- F. 87 Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits-Children
- F. 88 Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits-Men
- F. 89 Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits-Men-Clergy
- F. 90 Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits-Women
- F. 91 Ben Maxey Studio—Portraits-Women-Weddings
- F. 92 Ben Maxey Studio—Business-Interiors
- F. 93 Ben Maxey Studio—Sports

**Box 11, Album 1**

These photographs may have been Maxey's portfolio. Included are portraits of women, wedding photographs, home interiors and exteriors.

**Box 12, Album 2**

These photographs were labeled "Sunshine Climate Club" and were probably promotional pictures for this organization. The Sunshine Climate Club was formed in 1922 to encourage tourism in Tucson. By 1931, the Tucson Chamber of Commerce consolidated with the Sunshine Climate Club into one entity, with the Sunshine Climate Club assuming the role of publicity department for the Chamber. Among the gimmicks conceived by the Club were a saguaro cactus rigged with a beer tap to dispense cold brew to travel writers and smoke signals rising from A-Mountain to greet the Cleveland Indians arriving for spring training. Maxey's photographs are almost equally as outrageous.

**Box 13, Client File Cards**

**Box 14, Film**