

PHOTOGRAPHERS AT FORT SUMNER

1862 – 1869

There were at least three and possibly four photographers active at Fort Sumner between 1862 and 1869. Their names were J. G. Gaige, William A. Smith, George Woodward and Valentine Wolfenstein.

1. **J. G. Gaige** (possible the same as George A. Gaige) was a daguerreotypist, ambrotypist and photographer who worked in Arizona and New Mexico from about 1862 until his death at Camp Goodwin (A.T.) in July 1869. Gaige was the official photographer of the Military District of New Mexico in 1865. Most or all of the historic photographs of Fort Sumner that we have were taken by him in August/September 1865. His studio was located at the southwest corner of the plaza in Santa Fe (about where the Woolworth's is now). If he is the same man who identified himself as George A. Gaige, then he also had a studio on the plaza at Albuquerque in 1863.

2. **William A. Smith** was an ambrotypist who worked in Santa Fe and Fort Union in 1866. He had a partner with the last name Wertz. He was hired as a photographic assistant for Julius K. Graves, a U.S. Special Indian Agent for New Mexico investigating the Bosque Redondo for Congress. He is known to have photographed Navajos at Fort Sumner, but none of the extant photographs can be firmly attributed to him.

3. **George Woodward** is mentioned in William A. Smith's diary as a photographer traveling with Julius K. Graves. It's unclear why Graves would hire Smith if he had a photographer with him. Graves and company arrived in New Mexico in December 1865 and conducted investigations through February 26, 1866. It's unknown whether he took any photographs.

4. **Valentine Wolfenstein** received his training as a photographer from a Mr. Booth (Linley Booth?) who had a studio in Las Vegas in 1868. Judging from excerpts of his diary, Wolfenstein came to Fort Sumner in May/June of 1868 while he still owed Booth for his training. Wolfenstein was a native of Sweden, and the Post Office forwarded him Swedish newspapers while he was here. He is supposed to have photographed the end of the Navajo confinement, the treaty negotiations and the signing ceremony (with General William T. Sherman). Unfortunately, his photographs from this period have not been located. He moved to Los Angeles in 1872 and opened a studio, which he operated for many years. While not quite a Ben Wittick, Wolfenstein's work is probably the most highly regarded of these four and can be found in several museums.

Other photographers active in New Mexico in the 1850s or 1860s are listed briefly below:

E. Andrews & Co.	Santa Fe	1861-1881
Dr. William Bell	Palmer-Wright-Calhoun RR survey	1867
Mr. (Linley?) Booth	Las Vegas	1868
Nicolas Brown & Son	Santa Fe	1866-1872
R.E. Cable	Santa Fe	1861
Mr. Corkins	Santa Fe	early 1866
H.G. Hendrick	Mesilla and Santa Fe	1860-1861
John Martin	Santa Fe	1863
Professor McEwen	Santa Fe	1858
James E. Sabine	Santa Fe	1855-1857
Thomas Word	Santa Fe	March/April 1865

From the diary of Valentine Wolfenstein—1868 (an excerpt, pp. 93-97):

March 18 - Wednesday

. . . . written to Pappa with my "business card." Left Fort Union seven in the morning and at eleven I arrived at Las Vegas. I make arrangement with Booth (Linley Booth, a photographer based in Las Vegas, NM) to stay with him some time until he has his gallery in good shape. He offers me free board.

March 19 - Thursday

We start arranging things.

March 20 - Friday

Written to Fallstrom. Written for materials from Booth. Got "Journal of Photography" from Tillford. Nothing succeeds.

March 21 - Saturday

Letter from Fallstrom. Worked frantically all day in the gallery. No luck.

March 23 - Monday

Impossible to get a good portrait.

March 27 - Friday

All pictures now are good. No good "fero-types." Paper from New York with "Ett Faderligt Adjo."

April 5 - Sunday

All week rain. I have been terribly depressed. The days I have spent with Setherens. He has been very generous with me. This afternoon I make preparations to, next Wednesday, leave for Las Vegas, Fort Sumner or Santa Fe. Visited a cockfight. My partner won seven dollars. Letter from Lieutenant Monahan (1st Lieut. Dean E. Monahan, U.S. 3rd Cavalry).

April 8 - Wednesday

Left Las Vegas for Fort Sumner. Left a demand for nine dollars and fifty cents from Booth.

April 9 - Thursday

Four o'clock I arrive at Fort Sumner. 8,000 Indians are at the Fort.

April 10 - Friday

Sergeant Butson invites me to board with him.

April 12 - Sunday

Worked all day with arranging my future gallery. Everything in good shape. I still doubt my success.

April 14 - Tuesday

Today everything is in order. The Indians are 8,000 Navajos.

April 15 - Wednesday

Started to work without success. My gold is almost useless.

April 16 - Thursday

Taken in six dollars. No success.

April 18 - Saturday

Sent letter to Tillford for thirty dollars worth of materials, and to Booth. Today it goes somewhat better. I take in fourteen dollars.

April 22 - Wednesday

Had visit by Deperison in the evening.

April 23 - Thursday

Today I make improvement in my profession.

April 25 - Saturday

Sent to New York for a Cornett.

April 27 - Monday

I am invited to Ltnt. Colonel Brown's ball tomorrow (Oscar M. Brown, formerly of the 1st California Cavalry, then post sutler at Fort Sumner).

April 29 - Wednesday

Rehearsal to La Rue's in the evening with the "Minstrells," a company I am joining.

May 1 - Friday

I got three letters and five Swedish papers.

May 2 - Saturday

In the evening, for the first time, on the stage in front of a distinguished audience. I play my solo from "Previosa" whereafter follows great applause and I must repeat it twice.

May 3 - Sunday

Sent \$50.00 to Henry Harris, Fort Union.

May 15 - Friday

Nothing of importance has transpired. Written to Manilla with eleven pictures of Indians. Letter to Engberg, Paris. Yesterday Deperisen was demoted from Sergeant Major to private, and sent to company "D" in Fort Bascom. Got a letter from Blum. Sent thirty dollars to Henry Harris, Fort Union. Rain, could not do anything in photography.

May 25 -Tuesday

General W. T. Sherman arrived at this Fort today with great pomp and celebration. (Post Returns, Fort Sumner, indicate that Sherman arrived on May 27th).

May 27 - Wednesday

Mrs. Sutorius (wife of 1st Lieutenant Alexander Sutorius, U.S. 3rd Cavalry) and Mary Brown honored me with a visit and I take their pictures.

May 28 - Thursday

Invoice from Tillford but no goods. Today at eleven in the forenoon the great conference takes its start. I succeed in taking some good negatives of it. All goes well . . .

May 29 - Saturday

Offered my outfit to Lawrence, Las Vegas. Written to Henry Harris.

June 1 - Monday

Eight o'clock in the morning General Roberts (Brevet Brigadier General Benjamin Stone Roberts, commanding Fort Sumner.) sends a messenger asking me to take some pictures of a new contingent. The day is cloudy which helps me greatly. General Sherman puts the camera in order, arranges the group and himself. I take the best pictures I have so far. General Sherman leaves for Santa Fe. He says farewell to me and asks me to send some pictures to Fort Union.

June 4 - Thursday

I quit eating at Dohlenkers. In the evening I take some pictures to La Rue's (J. A. LaRue was the post trader for the Navajos at this time.). He is greatly pleased with them. Upset over not having received my goods from Fort Union.

June 5 - Friday

Printed the biggest lot of pictures I have ever made—80 half sizes. All good.

June 6 - Saturday

Taken in twenty three dollars. Taken groups of officers quarters, and of the store. Sent letter and eight portraits to Gen. Sherman at Fort Union. I get free rations at the Quartermasters.

June 18 - Thursday

I accompany the music band to Fort Union to play flute at Captain Holy's ball (Captain Wenzel Holy, U.S.A.). I have three hundred dollars in cash. I take along seventy five dollars worth of pictures of Indians. The Indians leave Fort Sumner in the escort of Major Whiting. They have with them about 5,000 sheep, 1,000 oxen, 130 wagons at a cost of \$150.00.

June 20 - Saturday

Passed "Taylor's Ranch" where five wounded Indians were kept. They had been in a fight with Ltnt. Monohan and had killed eight white men and stolen their stock. Arrived at Las Vegas. In the evening played in the band and was invited to supper.

June 21 - Sunday

Arrived at Fort Union.

June 24 - Wednesday

Captain Holy's wedding.

June 25 - Thursday

Ball at Dr. Peters' (Major DeWitt Clinton Peters, Surgeon, U.S.A.).

June 29 - Monday

Follow Ltnt. Monohan in a buggy to Fort Sumner. Captain Holy and wife accompany us eight miles on the road. On the wild ride we pass Colonel Motts on the way to pay the soldiers at Fort Sumner. Five o'clock in the evening a group of Comanche Indians met us. The Lieutenant got frightened and raced faster. Six o'clock we were still 10 miles from the Fort when the buggy capsized and broke a wheel. I take the mule and go to the Fort to report. The mule gets scared and throws me off and runs away. I went on foot to the Fort. I got a sergeant to bring an ambulance to get the Lieutenant. He was on the mule when they found him. It was then one o'clock in the morning.

July 1 - Wednesday

In the evening we get orders to turn out lights at nine o'clock. I refuse. The Sergeant tries to take me to the Guard House, but is prevented by the Lieutenant. He did not give me permission to turn them on. I do it out of spite. I at once pack my things.