



Hadley Smith Photographs

Compelling and beautiful photography isn't dependent on the most modern technology. Extraordinary photographs have been produced since the birth of photography in 1839. However, one fascinating photographic form had to wait for the development of modern aviation in the twentieth century – aerial photography. Part map, part picture, an aerial photograph is a delightful and engaging glimpse of our world from an angle previously reserved mostly for birds.

One of the great practitioners of this art form in Ithaca in the 20th century was C. Hadley Smith. Born in 1910, Smith served in the Navy in World War II, where he worked as a technical photographer documenting aircraft and missile tests, both in the air and on the ground. Smith's job was to give the Navy a clearer understanding of the workings of its (and the enemy's) equipment with his photographs. This hazardous duty gave Smith a special expertise working with a camera from the air, and after the war he brought that skill to his long and illustrious career as a commercial photographer.

Aerial photography was only one of the forms that Smith's skill took. He was also a masterly photojournalist, and his work appeared in *Newsweek*, *Time*, *Life*, and many national newspapers. He captured images of major American public figures such as Dwight Eisenhower, Martin Luther King, Jr., Wilt Chamberlain, and Bobby Kennedy. Among his many local clients perhaps the most important to him was Ithaca College. He photographed the growth and development of the college over many years, particularly the South Hill campus, and affectionately portrayed diverse aspects of life on campus.

The sheer wealth of his output (many hundreds of thousands of photographs, according to his son) and its exceptional quality is astounding. Smith attributed part of his success to his wife. She never had any formal training in photography, but, beginning in the 1950s, he taught her darkroom skills and she worked continuously as his professional partner until her death in 2000.

Thousands of Smith's photographs are contained in the Ithaca College archives, but several hundred have been generously donated to The History Center by Smith's son. This collection is a wonderful diverse sampling of the many subjects that Smith photographed during his long career, and it can be viewed at the research library at The History Center on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

Photo caption: This aerial view of Ithaca was probably taken in the 1960s. The "tuning fork" where Green Street and Seneca Street converge at the base of the State Street hill was constructed during the late 1950s. Conspicuous Ithaca landmarks, such as the Clinton House and Six Mile Creek are visible as well.