

CHICAGO SUN-TIMES COLLECTION FAQs

What can I find in the Chicago Sun-Times collection?

The collection consists of images produced by Chicago Sun-Times (CST) photography staff from roughly 1940-2000. Most of the images date from 1960-2000 and have not been published. The collection exists in two parts, including both a physical component and a digital component:

- The physical component consists of 2.5 million 35mm and medium format negatives (black-and-white and color). Approximately a quarter of the negatives have been digitized by previous owners and CHM is working to make those images accessible online.
- The digital component consists of 2.5 million digital images (JPG) created from negatives. Approximately half of the digital images match to negatives in CHM's collection; the other half exist as digital images only, and their correlating negatives had been sold off to other private collectors prior to CHM taking ownership.

How did the Chicago History Museum acquire the collection?

In 2009, CST sold its collection of over four million photo negatives to Rogers Photo Archive, a commercial photo-sales company in North Little Rock, Arkansas. Per the agreement, Rogers promised to provide the CST with a digitized and searchable image archive and in return, he was free to sell the physical negatives once digitized.

In 2017, following a number of legal challenges, Rogers' assets, including the CST images, were turned over to the courts and auctioned off. The CST negatives and digital files produced by Rogers were shipped to Historic Images, a photo-sales company in Memphis, and then sold to a private dealer in Dixon, Illinois. In 2018, CHM purchased the collection and worked with the CST to obtain a non-exclusive license.

How much of the collection has been digitized?

CHM acquired roughly 2.5 million digital images (created by John Rogers and scanned from the negatives) and 2.5 million physical negatives.

We are assessing the second part of the collection, the physical negatives, and plan to select additional batches for digitization in the future. Due to the volume of the collection, CHM does not have plans to digitize all negatives, but will make them accessible to researchers.

How can I research the collection?

Currently, the collection is being processed by project staff in order to make available to researchers. CHM aims to make the physical component (original negatives) available to researchers via CHM's Research Center by the end of 2021. A portion of the digital component (digital images) is now available on our website at <https://images.chicagohistory.org/chicago-sun-times>, and CHM will continue to make thousands more images available each month as they are processed

Why isn't the photographer's name listed for every image?



Photographer information wasn't consistently captured by previous owners of the collection during their digitization process. If an image was published in the newspaper, it is sometimes possible to find the photographer's name credited there. However, if the original negatives were sold after digitization and not published in the newspaper, we have no direct way to track that information down again.

For the physical negatives in the collection, photographer information is usually recorded on the negative sleeve. Wherever possible, CHM staff will record this information and make it available in the collection's finding aids.

Are all CST images owned by CHM?

No. CHM owns a large portion of historic images produced by the Chicago Sun-Times between 1940-2000. Prior owners of the collection sold off some of the negatives to private collectors. Contemporary Chicago Sun-Times images (roughly 2001-present) are owned by the Chicago Sun-Times.

LICENSING AND REPRODUCTIONS

What if I want to license a more contemporary image from the Chicago Sun-Times?

Currently, CHM is the acting licensing agent for all Chicago Sun-Times images (historic and contemporary). Requests for licensing any CST images should also be sent to rightsrepro@chicagohistory.org.

Can I get a higher resolution image than what is available online?

Sometimes. CHM can create higher-resolution digital files for those images with matching negatives in CHM's collection, but if the originals were sold by the previous owner, we are limited to the enhancements that can be made to the existing digital file.