

Good Pictures Tell the Best Story



It's true, "a picture is worth a thousand words." Indeed, great photos tell compelling stories; however, storytelling with photographs takes practice and planning. Successful images grab the viewer's attention, creating a desire to learn more or to become involved. Whether your focus is on artifacts or a historic downtown district, good photographs will strengthen *your heritage story*.

Starting with the Basics

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!

- Technique is more important than equipment;
- Perfect your technique by taking pictures often;
- Take your camera with you and shoot what you see;
- Share the pictures you take.

CAMERAS DON'T HAVE TO BE EXPENSIVE OR COMPLICATED.

- Digital cameras are ideal, but they don't have to be fancy.
 - Manual flash, manual and auto focus and adjustable white balance.
- Phone cameras are great for instant internet posting.
- In all cases, let your camera do the work, but tell it what to do.

THREE C'S FOR GREAT PHOTOS

- Consider the story you want to tell.
- Compose the photo to tell that story.
- Click then click again.
 - Shoot horizontal (landscape mode), and vertical (portrait mode).



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Perfecting Your Technique

COMPOSITION

- Is the subject in focus?
 - Avoid blurred images from camera or subject motion.
 - Avoid too much background or foreground drawing focus away from the focal point of the photo.
 - Try a different angle to avoid the background.
- Is the angle interesting or different?
 - The background can add depth or context.
 - Move to get the shot from another angle.



TIMING AND LIGHTING

The best times for natural light are early to mid morning and late afternoon.

- Using a flash lights the foreground and loses the background.
- No flash can create dramatic effect.



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TIMING AND LIGHTING CONT...

- Avoid using the flash when the subject is in front of a light background; it creates shadows.
- White balance
 - Different light sources can change the color of your photo:
 - Incandescent = Orange
 - Halogen = Blue
 - Florescent = Green
- Adjust the white balance setting on your camera (usually WB or AWB).
- Shadows
 - Try different times of day to avoid shadow distraction or to use shadow to create a dramatic effect.



- Windows
 - Windows are transparent when the light from behind is brighter; Windows are reflective when the light in front is brighter.
 - Reflection can be distracting and shift focus.
 - If the outside is brighter shoot from inside.
 - Shooting from a different angle adds transparency and depth.
 - Reflect light at right angles.
 - Reflection can also add depth and drama.

PEOPLE AND ACTION

Photos with people are more interesting.

- Try different angles.
- Try isolating details.
- Is there too much in the photo?
 - Avoid too much activity in the frame.
 - Zoom in or out to frame the best photo and eliminate clutter.
 - Include action.



AVOIDING OBSTACLES

- Signs
 - They're everywhere and tough to avoid.
 - Keep the good signs, avoid the distracting ones.
- Utility poles and power lines
 - They are always in the worst possible place for photos.
 - Creativity is required to avoid them.

TIPS FOR GOOD BUILDING PHOTOS

- Narrow the focus to what is special.
- Focus on details.
- Try different angles to highlight the architecture.
- Shooting at different times of day can show the architecture and hide blemishes.
- Show active maintenance work.



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WHEN TO TAKE PICTURES

- Take “before” pictures.
- Take pictures during an event, activity or restoration work.
- Take “after” pictures from the same angle as the “before” pictures.
- Avoid “Sunday morning at the museum” shots without people.
- Show cumulative change.
- Show change in vitality.

MAKING THE ORDINARY EXTRAORDINARY

- Way finding or interpretive signs: adding people changes signs from static to active and exciting.
- Show interaction with public art.
- If it lights up, show it lit.
- Share what is unique or common every day.
- Capture the nature of events. What makes them unique?
- Show people, animals or objects that make your downtown interesting.



MINOR FIXES

- Use auto correct brightness and color, but be aware that it may not correct the way you want it to.
- Rotate horizontally and vertically or by a degree or two.
- Crop unwanted clutter along edges.
- Practice taking better photos so you will need to edit them less.



Making Your Photos Work

Create awareness about your organization, its activities and events by making your images publicly accessible.

- Use a high resolution, online archive such as Flickr.com to post images. A basic account is free.
- Add tags, descriptions and mapping to all photos.
- Optimize engagement and response.

SHARING PHOTOS

- Share with groups, partners and the media.
- Illustrate your blog and your website.
- Attach them to news releases.
- Provide them to chambers of commerce, visitors convention bureaus and realtors.
- Give them to Main Street programs, tourism and film offices.
- Share them with the National Trust and Main Street Center, state and local preservation groups.
- Share your photos with businesses for use as interesting additions to their websites and brochures.
- Encourage hotels and event organizers to feature your photos in their marketing materials.

SHARING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- Snapshots are okay.
- Tag partners, volunteers, etc.
- Create albums of activities and events.
- Include photos with posts.
- ALWAYS add a photo when creating an event.
- Share your photos on partners' walls (i.e., thanks to sponsor XYZ for supporting this great event).
- Always include a description with a link.

Concept and images courtesy of Timothy Bishop.



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