
The "Blanquart-Evrard" Cahiers in the Collection of the George Eastman Museum

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Résumé

In 1950, Kodak-Pathé donated the so-called Blanquart-Evrard cahiers to the George Eastman Museum. The company acquired the five cahiers from Henri Fontan, a World War I veteran from Douai, who claimed for them an association with Louis Désiré Blanquart-Evrard. Fontan faithfully promised to provide documentation for his claim and even proposed to undertake a trip to Lille to search out additional corroborating evidence. Although Fontan failed to produce any documented proof supporting his assertion, the museum allowed the matter to drop after the cahiers arrived in Rochester. Together, the cahiers consist of 122 waxed paper negatives and ninety salted paper and albumen silver prints made before 1856 primarily in the north of France. This material constitutes the bulk of the museum's French waxed paper negative holdings, far surpassing the number in the museum's celebrated Gabriel Cromer collection. While the cahiers are known to specialists, their precise content and association with Blanquart-Evrard have remained something of a mystery, in part because until recently they had never been fully cataloged or digitized. In my paper, I elucidate the history of the acquisition and outline the content and complexities of the cahiers. My goal is not to argue for or against their association with Blanquart-Evrard but to lay the groundwork for further study of this most tantalizing mystery.

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