

Of Water, Fields, and Bricks: The Photography of A. Aubrey Bodine

"I had to go. A spirit in my feet said 'Go,' and I went." Matthew Brady, Civil War Photographer

These words also convey the drive of Maryland photographer A. Aubrey Bodine. Bodine possessed an unmatched passion and unwavering search for perfection throughout his 50-year career with the Baltimore Sunpapers. His work was not generally part of the newspaper beats, but was part of what was known as the "brown section," a three-part photogravure mixture of news in the *Sunday Sun Magazine*. One of the most popular features was the "Maryland Gallery," a full-page Bodine centerfold picture of Maryland life.

Bodine was more than a common newspaper photographer. Born in Baltimore on July 21, 1906, the second of four children of Joel Goode Bodine and Louise Adele Wilson. Bodine's career in photography came, in some ways, by way of necessity. The family lived in meager circumstances and education was an important priority; however, Bodine left St. Paul's School at age 14 to work as a messenger for the Sunpapers. Working in the commercial art department gave him the opportunity to accompany staff photographer Edward L. Christle on assignments and this launched Bodine's interest in photography.

Inspired by Matthew Brady and Edward Steichen, Bodine pursued further education at the Daguerre Memorial Institute, Winona School for Professional Photography, and the Maryland Institute College of Art. He was an active member of many professional associations including the Pictorial Photographers of America, the Photographic Society of America, and the Photo Club of Baltimore (later known as the Baltimore Camera Club). Additionally, Bodine participated in the salon circuit because, "The salons give me a gauge to apply to my work."

Bodine's style included a variety of processes—carbro, gum bromide, paper negatives, and carbons. He is best identified as a romantic pictorialist, a style hallmarked by the importance of aesthetics and the emotional impact of the image and elements that often took precedence over what was actually in front of the camera. Bodine achieved this effect on location through lenses and exposure times, but his darkroom magic of manipulating and overlapping negatives helped create his distinctive images.

Bodine's books and prints received national and international acclaim and were included in many prestigious salons. "Chesapeake Bay and Tidewater" was Bodine's most popular book, and "My Maryland" was chosen as the best lithographed book of the year in 1954.

In 1970 Bodine died as a result of a stroke while in his darkroom. He was buried at Green Mount Cemetery, a place he loved because of its unusual markers and beauty, and a subject he used for many award-winning photographs.

--Lucinda Dukes Edinberg

Resources:

Williams, Harold A., "Bodine: A Legend in His Time," Bodine & Associates, Inc., Baltimore, 1971.

Bodine, A. Aubrey; Bodine, Jennifer B., ed., "Bodine's Chesapeake Bay Country," Cornell Maritime Press, Centreville, 2005.

The Mitchell Gallery
St. John's College

October 22 – December 16, 2010

Back text – Logo

The Mitchell Gallery
St. John's College
60 College Avenue
Annapolis, MD 21401
(410) 626-2556
www.stjohnscollege.edu

Funding and support for this exhibition is provided in part by Anne Arundel County, the Arts Council of Anne Arundel County, the City of Annapolis, The Helena Foundation, the Maryland State Arts Council, Members of the Mitchell Art Gallery, the National Endowment for the Arts, William Paca Beatson, Jr., Frederick Gaul, the Estate of Mrs. Carleton Mitchell, the Lillian Vanous Nutt Mitchell Gallery Endowment, the John Ben Snow Memorial Trust, and the Clare Eddy and Eugene V. Thaw Fine Arts Fund.

This exhibition is generously loaned by Jennifer B. Bodine