

**Albert G. Lucier**  
By  
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Powell, WY is fortunate in having a wealth of photographs to document its 90+ year history. As the center of the Shoshone reclamation project, the United States Reclamation Service took over 3,000 spectacular large-format black and white photographs of the dam, irrigation works, town, and surrounding homesteads. These photographs document the growth of the project over time and in conjunction with the project histories, provide rich historic detail.

In addition to this collection of photographs, Powell was fortunate to attract a talented traveling photographer, Albert G. Lucier, as one of the earliest homesteaders on the project. Lucier, originally from Rochester, NY learned of the Shoshone Project in 1908, and came west to explore its possibilities. On November 5, 1908, he filed on homestead "J" near the SE corner of the Powell townsite and then sent word for Mrs. Lucier to join him. (The Luciers had no children; still Mrs. Lucier began calling Mr. Lucier "Pa" so then everyone said that Mrs. Lucier should be "Ma" and this is how they were subsequently known.) Mrs. A. P. Libby recalled the day that Ma Lucier arrived with her two trunks full of belongings. *"How well I remember the day Ma Lucier came; Pa met her at the train and brought her over to our store to buy their first order of groceries. Then they headed for their homestead about a quarter of a mile away, happily trudging down the dusty road, just like a couple of soldiers, Ma with a new broom over her shoulder, and Pa with a gunny sack of groceries over his."*<sup>1</sup>

The Luciers soon built their own two-room shack and dug their own well, with Ma Lucier using a windlass to pull the dirt out that had been loosened by Pa Lucier. Pa Lucier narrowly escaped death during that first summer on the project. In 1909, while irrigating, Pa thought he had killed a rattlesnake by cutting off its head with a shovel. Billy Kneir, a neighbor, was with him and retrieved the tail which he hung over a fence. Pa picked up the head and was promptly bitten in the thumb by the rattlesnake. He walked into town where Dr. F. H. Sturgeon cauterized it with permanganate of potash and loaded Pa with liquor,<sup>2</sup> an already out-of-date method for treating snake-bite.<sup>3</sup>

Sturgeon, who was likely an unlicensed homeopath, told Warren Gates to take Pa Lucier home and to instruct Ma to fill him with liquor every time he opened his mouth. Ray Trotter, a laborer on the Louis Peterson place nearby, helped hold Pa down while they poured the liquor down him.<sup>4</sup> Soon, Lucier was suffering from "dropsy" (most likely alcoholic hepatitis) and turned yellow from jaundice, swelling from the edema so that he was hardly recognizable. After about 10 days, Lucier decided to seek another opinion and took the train to Cody to find another doctor. While on the train, he encountered a geologist from Byron for whom he had done some photography. The geologist asked "Are you Lucier; what happened to you?" The geologist happened to be traveling with a doctor who was out West prospecting for oil and this doctor prescribed a heart stimulant and Epsom salts. So Pa Lucier did not consult a doctor in Cody after all but had to stay the night as there was no other means of getting back home. Soon thereafter, Lucier recovered both from the snake-bite and the more serious consequences of the homeopathic remedy.

This story of the rattlesnake bite was actually reported somewhat differently in the July 17, 1909 issue of the Powell Tribune by S. A. Nelson, the then editor of the Tribune. S. A. had a playful sense of humor as manifested by the following account of the snake-bite:

*Bitten by a Rattler*

*A G. Lucier encountered a real live rattlesnake while helping his neighbor, Wm. Kneir, irrigate last Thursday afternoon. Mr. Snake was first promptly severed, by aid of an irrigating shovel, into at least two parts and for a time allowed to remain undisturbed in said divided or chopped up condition. A little later, however, Mr. Lucier, prompted doubtless by curiosity and made bold by the thought that his recent victim must surely have given up the ghost, attempted to pick up, with his bare hands, that portion of his snakeship to which was still attached the head with attending fangs and venom, the which fangs thereupon immediately and automatically connected with A. G.'s thumb very much of course to the aforesaid A. G.'s discomfiture and embarrassment. Kneir was promptly summoned, a hurried consultation followed and Lucier was off like a flash for town—nearly two miles away. Lucier ran as he never ran before. In fact, he fairly flew and, while in the confusion and excitement of the moment he forgot to attach a speedometer, it is safe to say that his record on this particular occasion would in comparison make the ordinary long distance sprinter appear very much like the proverbial thirty cents. But that of course is neither here nor there. It is material, however, to note that no time was lost in finding a doctor and that the ordinary treatment in such cases made and provided—including very liberal doses of spirits fermenti—was resorted to at once, postus hastum, instanter, quantum primum, P. D. Q.*

*Later—Lucier is still alive and will continue indefinitely with his irrigating and photographic work. We are authorized to state, however, that he (Lucier) has no present desire or inclination to touch, handle or otherwise monkey with any snake, reptile or other venomous thing, either dead or alive, here or elsewhere, now or hereafter, in any known way, manner or particular whatsoever.*

Although Lucier was a photographer, he knew he would be unable to support his family with that trade alone and so chose to buy a stand of bees from a Mr. Turner of Cody and set up the first apiary on the Powell flat. He specialized in section comb honey and took a sample with him to a photographer's convention in Denver. There he showed this beautiful white comb honey to the president of the Colorado Honey Producer's Association, Frank Rauchfuss. Frank told his brother about the high quality white clover and alfalfa honey that could be produced in the Powell valley and subsequently, Frank's nephew Eugene Rauchfuss, moved to Powell to start in the bee business.<sup>5</sup>

The very first issue of the Powell Tribune of March 13, 1909 shows that Lucier was already soliciting work as a photographer. He likely worked out of his homestead but displayed his photos in A. P. Libby's Post Office Store.

*Photographer*

*Mr. A. G. Lucier of Powell is prepared to do all kinds of photographic work. He has all the latest improvements in cameras to work with and in all his work guarantees satisfaction. See photograph postal views at the postoffice.*

*A. G. Lucier  
Powell, Wyoming*

The first documented photo we have of Lucier's is that entitled "Business Center, 1909". This famous photo of Powell in 1909 was taken looking northwest along Clark Street. This photo preceded the incorporation of the town and therefore only five businesses houses appear, all in wooden frame structures. Along Coulter Avenue appears H.D. Edmond's lumber yard and next-door, on Clark Street can be found H.D. Edmond's general merchandise store. Flanking the general store appears the original First State Bank, followed by two other businesses: Fred Ostler's barber shop (Ostler's family actually lived in Lovell), and Dr. F. H. Sturgeon's drug store, Western Drug. This photo was likely taken on or about May of 1909 because within weeks of Powell's incorporation as a town, new business houses were rushed to completion (most on Bent Street, not Clark Street) during the summer of 1909. A note in the July 24, 1909 Powell Tribune states that "Lucier has made pictures for practically every business concern in town" and it is possible that these photos can be found in the Lucier collection.

As early as October, 1909, Lucier set up a photography studio in town in a tent just north of the Pratt Brother's Big Store on the corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> and Bent. This was an odd time of the year to be working out of a tent, but he wanted to take advantage of the business generated by the Christmas season. An ad in the October 30, 1909 Powell Tribune reads:

*Photograph Gallery*

*Having now completed my new gallery just north of Pratt Bros. Big Store, I am in a position to serve you well for all classes of picture and photographic view work. My outfit is complete and the very best to be secured anywhere. I solicit your patronage in my line; and with assurance of uniformly high grade of work and prices that are right and reasonable, I am,*

*Respectfully yours,  
A.G. Lucier*

In the September 18, 1909 issue of the Powell Tribune, a note states that Lucier has taken some choice views of crops and things about the flat. Subsequent notes indicate that Lucier also traveled to surrounding towns such as Cody and Meeteetsee and took photos of these towns as well.

In 1910, Lucier took some photos of the Shoshone Dam for C. J. Blanchard, the Shoshone Project statistician. One of these photos appeared in an article about the Project in the National Geographic.<sup>6,7</sup> (See attachments)

In the December 17, 1910 issue of the Powell Tribune, Lucier is here for the purpose of "making an artistic write-up of the town and vicinity and illustrate the same with views of the various mercantile establishments and points of natural interest in the country."

Later, Lucier was hired by Tex Holms to take photos during a trip through Yellowstone Park. Tex took sightseers on 18 day tours of the Park. A year or so later, he signed up as photographer with Ned Frost on one of his Yellowstone Park tours.

In 1912 and 1913, a series of photos (881-1027) by AGL appear in the United States Reclamation Service (USRS) collection. One set of contiguous photos (881A-E) taken in the spring of 1912 (before the groundbreaking for the Powell school) show a panoramic view of the town of Powell taken from a central location just east of the USRS office. The photos complete a nearly 360 degree circle. Other photos in this collection are spectacular large format black and white photographs of USRS work on the drainage system, surrounding farms, and crops.

The issues of the Powell Tribune from March, 1912 through March, 1914 are missing but review of the Cody Enterprise during this period of time reveals additional information on the photographic adventures of A. G. Lucier. In the June, 18, 1913 issue of the Cody Enterprise, Lucier was hired by the Holm Transportation company to operate a "modern moving picture camera." This company was interested in capturing scenes from the West from the Fourth of July celebration in Cody: "*Bucking contests, cowboy and cowgirl parades, cowpony races, branding, and all the various phases of the wild and wooly west will be caught with the cameras and afterwards shown all over the world on the movie screens.*" The Holm Transportation Company film was to be used by Dr. Herbert Yeull, a noted lecturer, who frequently gave talks at chautauquas. One of his lectures, "The Cody Road to the Park" would utilize the films furnished by the Holm Transportation Company, and Lucier accompanied by Yeull were scheduled to make a trip to and through the Park to obtain scenes for this film.

The October 11, 1913 issue of the Cody Enterprise states that Lucier received a telegram from Manager Warton of the Special Film Company instructing him to report to the Pine Ridge Agency in South Dakota for filming special scenic effects for the Associated Press. About 25,000 feet of film was produced during this visit, re-enacting several Indian battles, including the Battle of the Mission and the Battle of Wounded Knee. Other scenes included the grand surrender of the Indians to General Miles, and a review of the U.S. troops after the battles. Also filmed were scenes from the badlands which were made for the purpose of showing the handicap under which the soldiers fought the Indians. Colonel Cody and Major Burke accompanied Lucier to the reservation.

Once back in Powell, Lucier continued his work with still photography. The May 14, 1915 Powell Tribune notes the following:

*A Good Photograph*

*A G. Lucier has just executed a photograph of Powell and the surrounding country which is by far the handsomest piece of work of the kind that we have every seen...it is taken from a central position in town with a special camera mounted on a pivot so that a perfectly circular view is obtained. The photograph which is about 4 feet long by perhaps eight inches in width is seemingly flawless and shows the country and town in accurate detail and clearness.*

In September of 1915, competition for the photography business in Powell arrived. Mrs. Kneir, Lucier's neighbor and friend, set up her own photography studio at her homestead adjoining the Powell townsite.<sup>8</sup>

In January of 1916, the Powell Tribune detailed all of the new buildings that were erected in 1915 in Powell, including two new wooden structures to house the photography studios of Mrs. Kneir and A. G. Lucier.<sup>9</sup>

In the March 10, 1916 issue of the Powell Tribune, Lucier reveals some of his philosophy of photography, writing the following article and founding a camera club.

*Better Kodak Pictures*

*Now that spring is almost here, the owners of Kodaks and cameras are looking forward to much enjoyment from them. The recording of our week-end trips, scenes around the home, farm, etc, are always a source of great delight, if properly made.*

*Picture making is a mechanical art and simple as harnessing a horse or plowing a furrow, if we understand the working part of our camera. Unfortunately, a great percentage of Kodakers do not understand the adjustments of their instruments, the results being the proof.*

*During my twenty years of experience in developing and printing amateur pictures, I find that about fifty per cent of the films exposed are ruined in one way or another. It is needless to say that this is a great waste of money, and how about the disappointment? Well, we photographers are also disappointed when we can't deliver to you the pictures you think you ought to have from your films.*

*I have given the matter much thought of late and have concluded that I would organize a camera club for the purpose of instructing my patrons and friends free of charge. This will be an exceptional opportunity for you to start right if you are intending to get a Kodak. If you are interested come in and tell me or write me a card. The date of the first meeting will be announced later.*

*Yours for better pictures,  
A. G. Lucier*

In April of 1916, Lucier received a very flattering letter from Columbia University about his recent photographs of Elk Basin. Copies were on display at the Project Clothing Store.<sup>10</sup>

In the same issue of the Powell Tribune is a story about Reverend Wardlow's fishing successes in the Gravel Pit. Reverend Wardlow was the Baptist minister in Powell for two years, retiring in June of 1916. He wrote an article for Outdoor Life with accompanying photos by Lucier. The article and the photos appear in the September 8, 1916 issue of the Powell Tribune. (See attachments)

In May of 1916, on Arbor Day, the school children above the fifth grade planted a double row of trees around the school building (would have been the old Eastside School, about where the current gymnasium stands). Lucier took photographs of some of the children "which may be interesting in later years."<sup>11</sup>

In July, 1917, the following article appears in the Powell Tribune<sup>12</sup>:

*Powell Recognized*

*Our local photographer, AG Lucier, is wearing another feather in his cap through outside recognition of the superior line of photography he is producing. He has just had accepted 150 feet of films, pictures of the Shoshone dam and canyon, which, he sent for submission to the Pathe-Hearst corporation, whose pictures are now shown in nearly every town of importance in the United States and other countries as well. The pictures*

*will be shown in Powell within a short time. These pictures of Mr. Lucier will serve a good purpose in advertising this section of the country, and it is hoped that he will later be able to give similar publicity to some of the scenes and activities down here on the Project.*

In the 1920's, Lucier set up a campsite near the current Buffalo Bill Dam Visitor's center and sold photos of the Park and wildlife to the tourists who came through on Park tours.<sup>13</sup>

Lucier and his wife participated in all the community activities of the growing town of Powell. Lucier played piccolo for the newly formed concert band organized on June 7, 1910. Ma Lucier loved to horseback ride with other women on the Flat and claimed to have investigated every rock and hill on the Flat.<sup>14</sup>

Over his lifetime, Lucier served as president of the Powell Chamber of Commerce and two terms on the Powell school board with one year as its president. He was a member of the Absaroka Lodge No 30, serving as its master in 1936. He was also a member of Rabonni chapter No. 20 Royal Arch of Powell Knights Templar Commandery of Cody, Consistory of Sheridan and 33<sup>rd</sup> degree mason. He served the Park County Republican Committee as chairman for one year and was a member of the Powell Rotary Club, White Shrine of Jerusalem of Powell, Eastern Star and Kalif Temple Shrine of Sheridan.<sup>15</sup>

Mrs. Lucier died October 14, 1954. In 1959, Mr. Lucier summed up his life for the 1959 Anniversary booklet: "When one notes the development taking place where one has a part in founding a community, it is one of the most interesting things that can happen to an individual."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 1959 Powell Trib Anniversary issue, p 25

<sup>2</sup> 1959 Powell Trib Anniversary issue, p 10

<sup>3</sup> Reference Handbook of The Medical Sciences, vol. VI, ed. Albert H. Buck, M.D., (New York City: William Wood and Company), 1903, p 715.

<sup>4</sup> 1959 Powell Trib Anniversary issue, p 27

<sup>5</sup> 1959 Powell Trib Anniversary issue, p 10

<sup>6</sup> 1959 Powell Trib Anniversary issue, p 10

<sup>7</sup> C. J. Blanchard, "The Spirit of the West: The wonderful agricultural development since the dawn of irrigation." National Geographic Magazine, 1910, p 333-363. Photograph appears on page 354.

<sup>8</sup> September 3, 1915 Powell Trib

<sup>9</sup> Jan 7, 1916 Powell Trib

<sup>10</sup> April 7, 1916 Powell Trib

<sup>11</sup> May 5, 1916 Powell Trib

<sup>12</sup> July 20, 1917, Powell Trib

<sup>13</sup> 1959 Powell Trib Anniversary issue, p 10

<sup>14</sup> 1959 Powell Trib Anniversary issue, p 10

<sup>15</sup> 1959 Powell Trib Anniversary issue, p 10

<sup>16</sup> 1959 Powell Trib Anniversary issue, p 10