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June 1, 2010

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UNIQUE AMERICAN PHOTO ARCHIVE NOW AVAILABLE TO PUBLIC

Vintage Aerial, by far America’s largest photo archive of historic farms and rural homesteads, offers Americans everywhere a link to their past...

MAUMEE OHIO, June, 2010 — Vintage Aerial has nearly 25 million black and white images of farms and rural homesteads from 44 states, covering the last half-century of America’s history, and now anyone, anywhere, can find their family’s photo and order a print of it online.

“Vintage Aerial connects people with their heritage and their personal history through our vast archive of photos, and through our commitment to helping retrieve and preserve the memories and stories that go with them,” said Fritz Byers, CEO and President. “We find consistently that our work with our customers enriches their lives and deepens the sense of their pasts. It involves them in what we see as a collective effort to record and tell important, often overlooked, and endangered part of the history of our country.” Vintage Aerial grew out of a cottage industry begun fifty years ago by Gale Astles, in which people took rural photographs from two-seater prop planes and sold the images to those wanting a picture of their property. Ken Krieg, Vintage Aerial’s Director of Sales, states, “No one imagined these photographs would become an irreplaceable record of this country’s history and the personal history of millions of families.” But they have.

“I have seen the country go through a lot of changes in my fifty years of taking aerial pictures,” Mr. Astles said. “When I look at all those pictures, I see a story that you really couldn’t tell any other way. I am proud of that, and happy to share it.”
As family farms have been bought by large agri-business, urban centers have widened into suburbs and exurbs, and nature has taken its course with erosion, flooding and storm damage, the record of how most Americans used to live is being steadily erased. “That’s what’s great about our archive,” Paul Clark, Vintage Aerial’s technology director, says. “While the physical structures are eroding and changing, we are ensuring the photographic memories of the way they used to be.”

But as the connection to America’s past has eroded, interest in documenting and preserving family history and in connecting with relatives has surged with the ability to access troves of data online. Social networking sites, genealogy sites, and indexed public record archives have made it possible for connections to be forged and memories preserved that would have been lost years ago. Vintage Aerial is at the center of this emerging trend, connecting with companies who have large online networking and history search presences, such as Ancestry.com, Facebook, and Historic Map Works. These connections will allow consumers to produce full rounded personal histories, the names, the dates, the relatives who moved away, and the pictures of where it all began.

Vintage Arial uses geographic information systems (GIS) to plot areas onto historic maps showing the flight routes of those photographic aviators. This technology and Vintage’s immense database allow someone who begins only with general information about the whereabouts of a homestead, farm, or house – a county, nearby town, a crossroads -- to home in on (literally) the exact location, and then find the right image among the millions of images and thousands of rolls. This is preservation at its finest. And it’s most rewarding.

"We see it every time,” said Jon Richardson, Vintage Vice-President. “The picture calls up memories and then come the stories. Each story, close to the heart of that particular family, takes on even wider significance when we stitch it into the tapestry that is rural America of the past 50 years. And there are, literally, millions yet to be told!"

Customers begin at the website, [http://vintageaerial.com](http://vintageaerial.com), by requesting an archive search at no cost. From there an archive librarian guides them through identifying their family’s home. Kelly Hollabaugh, one of Vintage Aerial’s librarians, stumbled upon her great-grandparents’ farm. “What a powerful connection!” Hollabaugh says. “Though my great-grandparents sold the farm in 1936, having the photograph made it possible for my eighty-nine year old aunt to tell me a detailed history of what it was like to live there. It was really an amazing experience to be so connected to my great grandparents through this picture.” There is no doubt that pictures stir memories, which is why Kelly Hollabaugh is glad she found her family’s photograph when she did. “My aunt’s eyesight is failing fast.” This was her last chance to fill in a family narrative that can now be passed on, along with the photograph, forever.

“We want to be a part of recreating rural America, beginning with the visual power of our photographs, and expanding to the personal recollections of millions of Americans.”
Krieg says. “And we want to do it in a way that preserves memories for future
generations, which is why we offer our photographs as high-quality, framed prints,
because by displaying the pictures and the discussing them, connections really come
alive.”

In addition to preserving the past, Vintage Aerial continues to provide aerial
photography. “Our vast experience, network of pilots, and appreciation of rural America
allow us to provide a custom aerial fly over for just $200. I know that sounds too good to
be true, but that’s all we charge.” Mr. Krieg went on to say, “Our custom photography is
a way for anyone to preserve their homestead or business in history forever.”

Vintage Aerial grew out of a business photographing homesteads from a two-seater prop
plane, which began in 1958. Today, Vintage Aerial is the premier aerial preservation
archive in the country and has a goal to be the premier historical story archive of rural
America. With archives of well over 24 million photographs from 44 states, they have
the largest collection of rural aerial photographs in the United States. Every photograph
has been carefully preserved on film and each is meticulously transferred to a digital
format to prepare for printing. Photographs can be purchased in the form of original,
framed prints.

Vintage Aerial offices are located in Maumee, Ohio and the leadership team includes
Fritz Byers, President and CEO; Paul Clark, Director of Technology; and Ken Krieg,
Director of Sales.

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Top Photo: One of Vintage Aerial’s 25 million black and white photos. This particular
photo is from Mercer County, Ohio, taken in 1981. The magnificent St. Charles Seminary
is featured here.

Bottom Photo: One of the many beautiful farms surrounding the Village of Coldwater,
Ohio, taken in 1981.