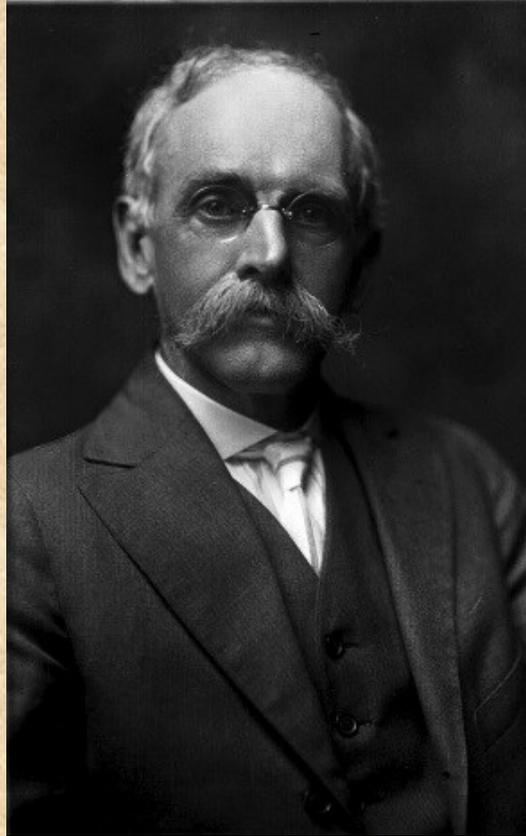


A Gallery of Work by Edwin Bradbury Luce: Massachusetts Photographer, ca. 1881 to 1938



*Edwin Bradbury Luce, no date, ca.1930s
Courtesy of the Worcester Historical Museum*

This sample of work by the Massachusetts photographer Edwin Bradbury Luce is an online supplement to “*Portraits of Commercial Subjects: The Worcester Historical Museum’s E. B. Luce Collection*,” an article by Ryck Lent appearing in the 2016 *New England Journal of Photographic History*.¹ As detailed in that piece, Luce ran photographic studios in Millbury, Holliston, and Worcester, Massachusetts beginning about 1881. His principal studio was in Worcester, which he operated from ca. 1884 until his death in 1938 at age 74. The firm was then taken over by his assistant, Willard C. Gould, and continued under Luce’s name until 2007.

Unless otherwise noted, all images in this gallery are courtesy of the E.B. Luce Collection, Worcester Historical Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts. An extensive collection of Luce’s work may be viewed online at <http://worcesterhistory.pastperfectonline.com/>

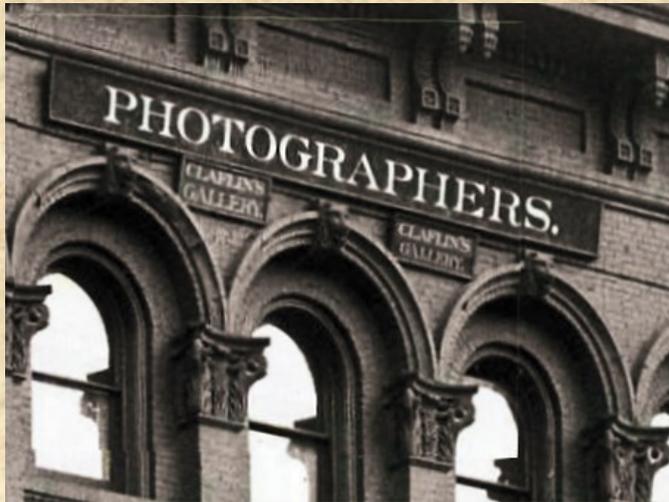
1. *The New England Journal of Photographic History*, 2016, Issue 174 is published by the Photographic Historical Society of New England (PHSNE.org) and available in print or electronic formats at <http://www.magcloud.com/browse/magazine/876415>



Figure 1. View of the Walker Building, 405 Main Street, at the corner of Mechanic Street, Worcester, Massachusetts, ca. 1891 to 1892. The 1891 Worcester city directory indicates E. B. Luce worked as a photographer here for one year, and after several subsequent locations he returned to open a studio in May 1895, which he was still operating at his death in May 1938. Built in 1854 as the Clark Block and acquired by J.H. Walker in 1884, the building is still very much in use today, with most of the original exterior of the two top floors still visible.

In this view, a large sign on the Main Street side, centered above the top windows, reads “Photographers,” two smaller signs just below read “Claflin’s Gallery.” (see enlarged view, next page). According to the Worcester directories, Charles R. B. Claflin operated a photographic gallery in this building during 1891 and 1892; Luce is only listed in the resident section of the 1891 directory as a photographer at 43 Clark Block, a term also used for the Walker Building.²

On May 1, 1895, Luce rented north-facing space on the top floor of the Walker Building (the Mechanic Street side, at left above). His lease, part of his papers at the Worcester Historical Museum, state the space was to be used *as a photograph gallery for which purposes they are now be used by our Marion*, almost certainly referring to John S. Marion, the photographer renting that space from 1894 to 1895, having taken over from his brother, Tony W. Marion, who operated the gallery from 1892 to 1894.



Inset at left, a close-up of the “Photographers.” and two smaller “Claflin’s Gallery” signs.

Inset below, an enlarged view of the building entrance and the surrounding sidewalks. Note the woman (left) standing at the corner of the building, the woman looking into the shop window of the “Protective Union Grocery” to the right of the Walker Building entrance, and the man standing further to the right gazing into W. A. Lytle & Co.

A closer look also reveals faint shadows of people in motion during the photograph’s long time exposure. At first glance, it seems as if downtown Worcester was deserted. But in fact, the sidewalks in front and along the left (Mechanic Street) side of the building were bustling with pedestrians.



Luce’s first Worcester studio was located at 492 Main Street, ca. 1884 to 1885. The 1886 city directory indicates Luce had left the city and he is next listed at 561 Main Street in 1889, at 43 Clark Block in 1891, and again at 561 Main from 1892 to 1895. He moved to 405 Main (the building above) in May of that year.

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2. There is a possibility the “43 Clark Block” notation refers to the Clark Building at 492 Main Street. The term was used for both locations, depending on the source.



Figure 2. Interior of E. B. Luce's photograph gallery at 405 Main Street, Worcester, Massachusetts, date unknown. Luce began renting this space on May 1, 1895 for \$500 a year.

The lease states: *... a certain suite of rooms fifty feet by forty feet on the fourth floor above the stores on the north side in Walker Building situated on Main Street at the corner of Mechanic Street...*

The above image was printed from a damaged glass negative, part of the Worcester Historical Museum's ongoing conservation and preservation efforts with the Luce Collection.

Inset at right is a close-up of the camera positioned along the wall on the left in the photograph above.





Figure 3. (left) Cabinet print from the E. B. Luce Studio, 11 Main Street, Millbury, Massachusetts, no date. A traditional late nineteenth-century pose with common studio props and a faux background. *Collection of Ron Polito.*

(right) A “Diamond” portrait of Clara and Addie Chase from Luce’s Worcester, Massachusetts studio at 405 Main Street, no date. The diamond format, generally measuring $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches square, became popular in the 1890s through the turn of the twentieth century.

E. B. Luce began his career as a portrait photographer in Millbury, Massachusetts, perhaps as early as 1881. He later opened studios in Holliston and Worcester, Massachusetts. Extant, but spotty, city directories show him active in Millbury from 1889 to 1894, in 1896, and in 1898. There are no directories listing his Holliston studio, but several photographs bear that imprint, including one cabinet print, copyright 1889, and an undated cabinet print listing Edwin B. Luce as proprietor of the Hillside Studio, Holliston.

Figures 4 to 14. As Luce developed as a photographer he began to work outside the studio and moved away from traditional portraiture. His advertisement in the 1916 *Worcester Directory* characterizes him as a “Commercial Photographer” specializing in “Photographs for Illustrating and Advertising, Lantern Slides, Copying Old Pictures, Finishing for Amateurs, Etc.” The vast majority of his photographs at the Worcester Historical Museum offer “portraits” of the industries and cityscapes of Worcester, and to a lesser degree, Millbury. Mostly commissioned, they richly document the society of the period and its people.



Figure 4. An 8 x 10-inch copy of a cabinet print, or perhaps a boudoir-size print, imprinted “E. B. Luce Studio, 11 Main Street, Millbury,” no date. The view shows a heavily-occupied horse-drawn trolley operated out of Millbury by W. A. Harris.



Figure 5. A “pouring” at The Millbury Steel Foundry Company, Millbury, Massachusetts, contact print from a 4 x 5-inch negative, no date. *The Centennial History of Millbury* reports this firm was incorporated in 1908 as the Oakley Steel Foundry Company and on July 1, 1910 changed its name to the Millbury foundry.

Reference:

https://books.google.com/books/about/Centennial_History_of_the_Town_of_Millbu.html?id=f54xAOAAMAAI



Figure 6. The Coes Wrench Company’s window display at Duncan & Godell, a retail and wholesale hardware store located at 404 Main Street, Worcester, Mass, print measures 9 ½ x 7 ½ inches, no date. The Coes Wench Company was based in Worcester and manufactured, among other things, the screw-type “Monkey Wrench” invented by Loring Coes.

Reference: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coes_Wrench_Company



Figure 7. Customers and salesmen inside the Central Supply Store, Foster Street at the corner of Commercial Street, Worcester, Massachusetts, dated 1926. Central Supply was a full-range supplier of water handling equipment: tanks, piping, fittings, windmills, as well as gas and gasoline pump engines.

Reference: Advertisement, page 1448 of the *Worcester Directory 1907*, at: <https://archive.org/stream/worcesterdirecto1907worc#page/n1041/mode/2up/search/central+supply>

Figure 8. The Worcester Historical Museum holds a number of photographs by E. B. Luce documenting several firms that manufactured “lunch wagons,” as well as their use throughout the city. One of the major companies producing these diners was the Worcester Lunch Car and Carriage Manufacturing Company, established in 1906.



The photograph on the right shows the left and rear sides the very first “American Eagle Café,” completed early in 1907. Its unique design includes a “Carriage Window” (fifth from the left) to serve customers ordering from the street. There is a “Hand Out” window on the far side to deliver orders to sidewalk patrons. Note the curved roof with railroad-style clerestory windows.

The photograph below shows the interior of this model; the man is unidentified, but the oval plate under the etched window on the left reads, in part, “Pat. Aug. 7 1906.”

Reference: Gutman, Richard J. S, *The Worcester Lunch Car Company*, Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing Company, 2004.



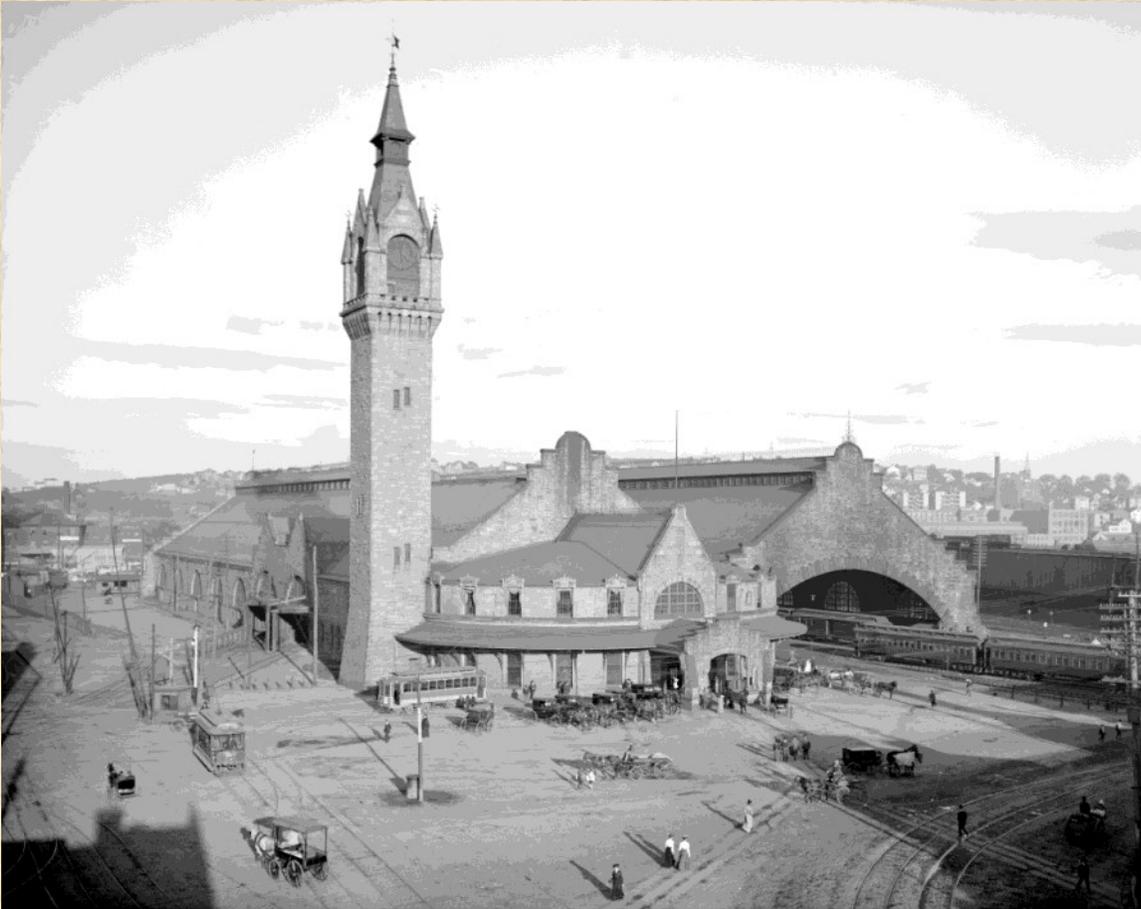


Figure 9. (above) View of the “old” Union Station, Worcester, Massachusetts, no date, but this is almost a duplicate of a 1906 image posted on Wikipedia. The old station was built in 1875 and re-built in 1911.



(left) Luce’s side view of the “new” Union Station, ca. 1915.

Reference: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_Station_\(Worcester,_Massachusetts\)#History](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_Station_(Worcester,_Massachusetts)#History)



Figure 10. A 5 x 7-inch contact print by E. B. Luce shows the Knowles Block fire, Worcester, Massachusetts, January 19, 1921. Luce also captured at least two other photographers recording the scene. (see inset right).

The *Worcester Telegram's* "Then and Now" column (October 15, 2012) retells the story: "... it was 10 degrees below zero when this four alarm fire broke out at 2:56 am at the corner of Main and Chatham Streets. Firefighters responded from as far away as Boston and sparks from the blaze ignited 48 other fires, causing almost \$2 million in damages at 1921 prices."

Reference: <http://www.telegram.com/article/20121015/THENANDNOW/110159958&Template=printart>





Figure 11. A massive ice storm struck Worcester, Massachusetts on November 29, 1921, and lasted four days. E. B. Luce executed a great many views of the storm's impact on the city, including this stunning 5 x 7-inch view of "White House on Corner."

Reported at the time as New England's most destructive ice storm, a third of the city's 40,000 shade trees were damaged and considered beyond salvage. Total damage to trees and utility lines was estimated at \$20 million in 1921 dollars. This storm is still rated at the 6th worst ice storm in our nation's history, according to weather.com.

References:

<http://www.telegram.com/article/20090226/column21/902260616>

<https://weather.com/storms/winter/news/top-10-worst-ice-storms-20131205/>

In addition to carefully documenting the cityscapes and industries of Worcester and Millbury, Massachusetts, E. B. Luce skillfully executed portraits of their residents, folios of their homes, lands, and holdings—and glimpses into their interests and activities.

Figures 12, 13 and 14 represent only a sample of the extensive and engaging E. B. Luce Collection at the Worcester Historical Museum:

<http://worcesterhistory.pastperfectonline.com/>

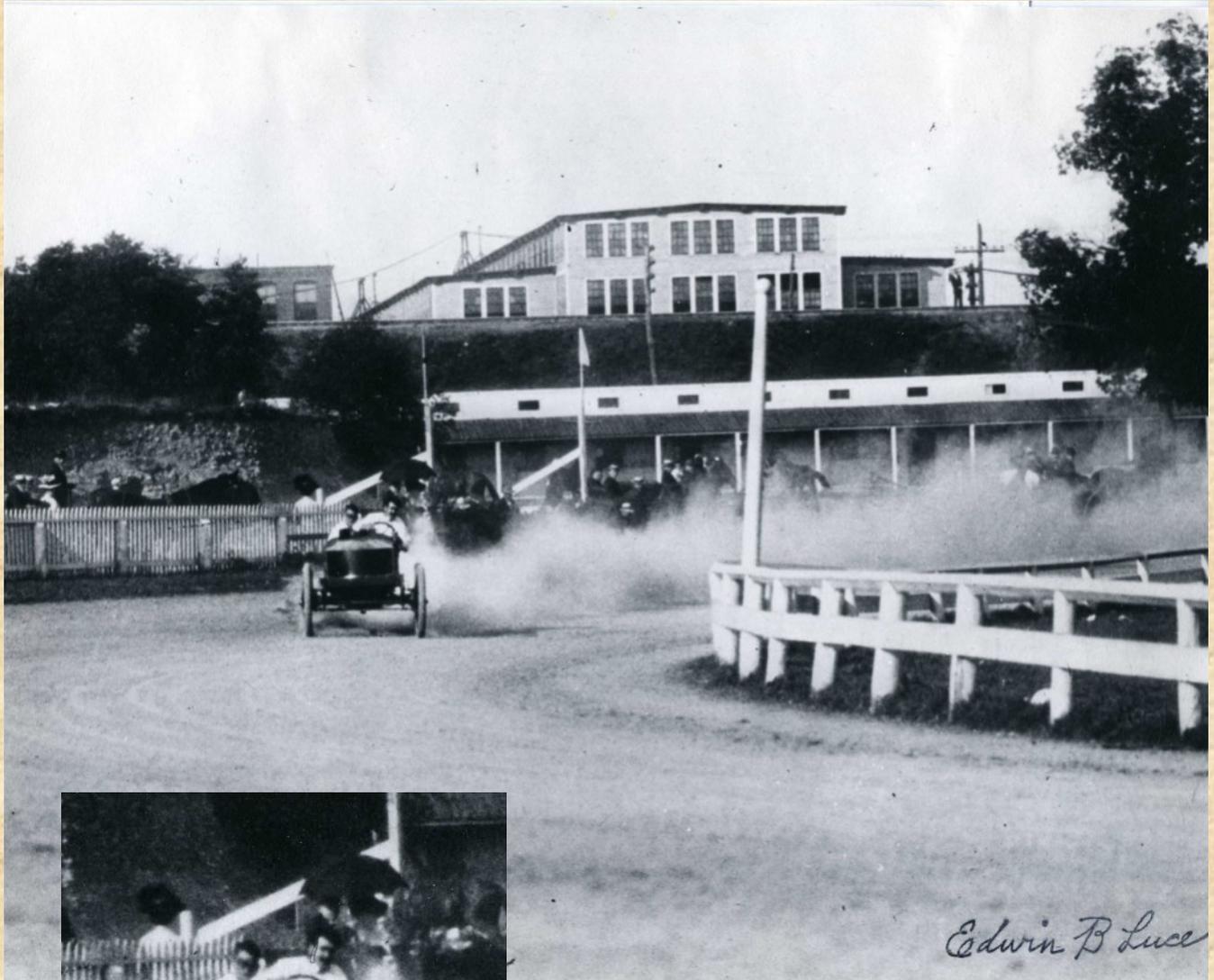


Figure 12 and inset. Auto racing at the Worcester Fairgrounds, no date. E. B. Luce strategically placed his camera at a point where the car is coming almost directly at him; a dramatic angle and having the distinct advantage of allowing him to use a slower shutter speed to freeze the car's motion, and a higher f/stop to increase depth of field.

Based on the tire width, antique auto expert George Morgan estimates this car was built ca. 1910 to 1920, and points to the rider behind the driver, likely an on-board mechanic who would also help change flat tires, a common problem at the time. (see inset)



Figure 13. Circus elephants on parade in front of City Hall, Worcester, Massachusetts, ca. 1900. The number of umbrellas shading individuals—and the ice wagon in the left foreground tempting bystanders—implies a hot, sunny day. The image does not offer any clues to the identity of the circus itself, but circus histories say the Ringling Brothers circus came to Worcester on May 21, 1900, but there had been a “nasty rain since morning.” The Barnum and Bailey circus was in Worcester on July 13, 1896, in Europe during 1900, and next performed in Worcester on June 6, 1903, and also in 1906, 1908, and 1910. The new-looking Worcester City Hall in the background was completed in 1898.

References:

<http://www.circushistory.org/Routes/PTB1891.htm>

<http://www.circushistory.org/History/Ringling1900.htm>

<http://www.circushistory.org/Routes/PTB1901.htm>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Worcester_City_Hall_and_Common

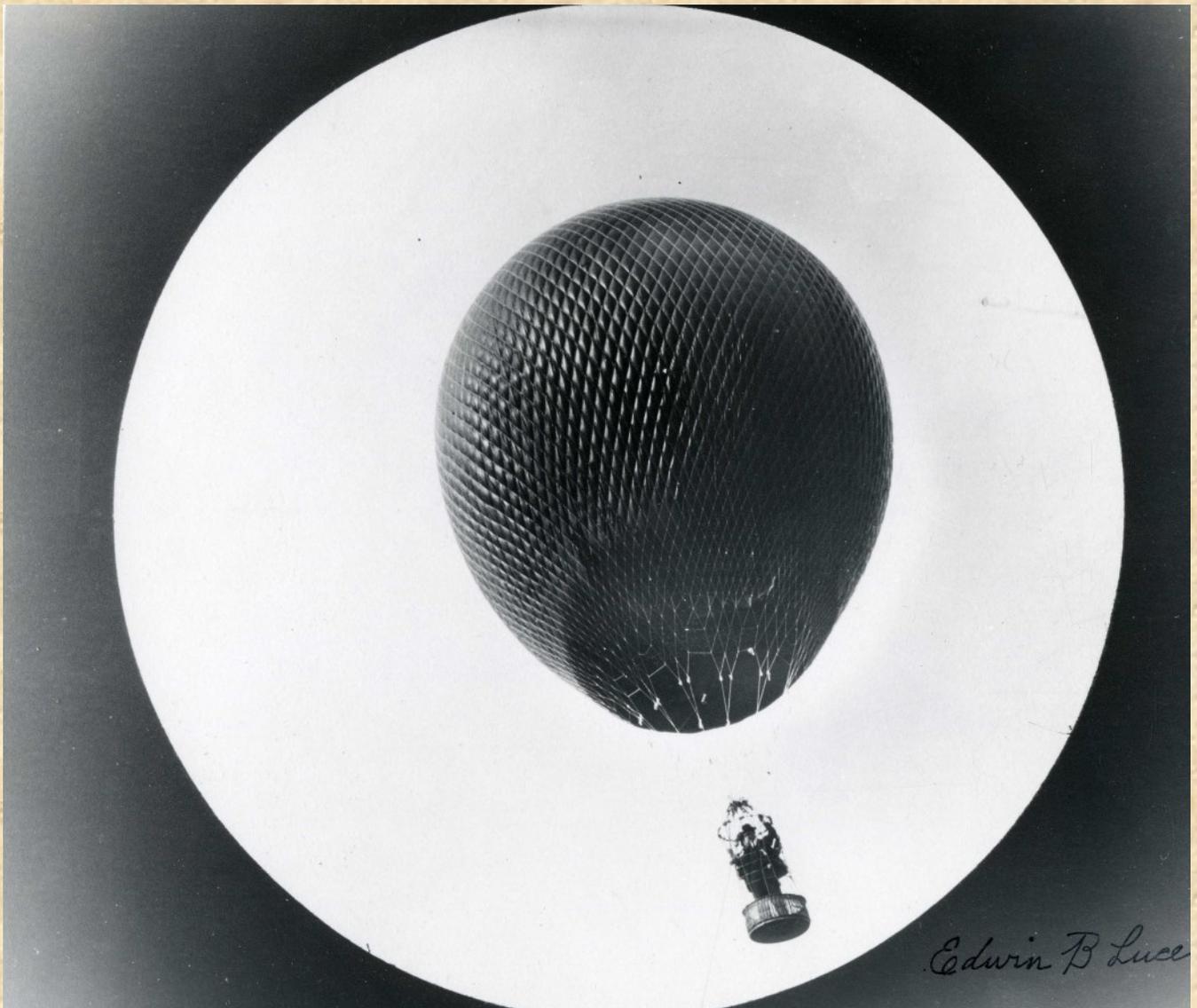


Figure 14. One of a number of E. B. Luce's photographs of gas-filled balloons—with a unique compositional twist. No date. The signature on the image resembles the one used for the Worcester Fairgrounds auto race image (figure 12), suggesting they might have been made and printed around the same time.