Photography is a hobby that offers so many possibilities for creative expression, technical expertise, and sheer variety of ways to capture an image. It is a great way to record history. Age is not a barrier and you can start with the camera on your phone if that’s what you have available.

L. J. Hersey was a pioneer in the field of Natural Photography and carefully recorded his work in his scrapbook. The Wray Museum has his cameras, his 1907 photograph album of birds from Barr Lake, and several bird mounts.

Luman J. Hersey  (1852-1924)

Luman J. Hersey was born in Worchester, Vermont on May 9, 1852. The day after her married Miss Laurette Davis on May 7, 1872, he left Vermont to head west to Colorado with his new wife’s family. They settled with Union Colony (present day Evans, Colorado) were he learned the carpenter’s trade. Since he didn’t own a horse, he had to walk 5 miles to town in the morning to work and then return home again on foot. He used to see antelope often from his front door, and occasionally a Native American or two. He met Chief Ouray of the Utes, and they became lasting friends. Life was tough and when he and his wife lost their first child in childbirth, they decided to move back to Vermont. They stayed in Vermont for 15 years were all of their children were born. In 1889 they again journeyed west, and located this time in the City of Denver where he worked as architect and contractor. In 1914 they moved to Wray and established a homestead on the Dry Willow that became known as the Hersey Ranch. L. J. was also an avid naturalist and had a large collection at his home. He was connected with the Museum of Natural History in Denver for many years and served as the Curator of Ornithology. He studied and photograph birds in their natural habitat as well as had several species mounted. These birds are on display at the Wray Museum. He passed away quietly in his home on January 24, 1924.
Photography has come a long way in its relatively short history. In almost 200 years, the camera developed from a plain box that took blurry photos to the high-tech mini computers found in today's smartphones. The basic concept of photography has been around since about the 5th century B.C.E. It wasn't until an Iraqi scientist developed something called the camera obscura in the 11th century that the art was born. Even then, the camera did not actually record images, it simply projected them onto another surface. The images were also upside down, though they could be traced to create accurate drawings of real objects such as buildings.

Photography, as we know it today, began in the late 1830s in France. Joseph Nicéphore Niépce used a portable camera obscura to expose a pewter plate coated with bitumen to light. This is the first recorded image that did not fade quickly. His success led to a number of other experiments and photography progressed very rapidly. Daguerreotypes, emulsion plates, and wet plates were developed almost simultaneously in the mid- to late-1800s. With each type of emulsion, photographers experimented with different chemicals and techniques.

Photography was only for professionals and the very rich until George Eastman started a company called Kodak in the 1880s. Eastman created a flexible roll film that did not require constantly changing the solid plates. This allowed him to develop a self-contained box camera that held 100 film exposures. The camera had a small single lens with no focusing adjustment. The consumer would take pictures and send the camera back to the factory for the film to be developed and prints made, much like modern disposable cameras. This was the first camera inexpensive enough for the average person to afford. The film was still large in comparison to today's 35mm film. It was not until the late 1940s that 35mm film became cheap enough for the majority of consumers to use.

Polaroid introduced the Model 95. Model 95 used a secret chemical process to develop film inside the camera in less than a minute. This new camera was fairly expensive but the novelty of instant images caught the public's attention. By the mid-1960s, Polaroid had many models on the market and the price had dropped so that even more people could afford it.
In the late 1970s and early 1980s, compact cameras that were capable of making image control decisions on their own were introduced. These "point and shoot" cameras calculated shutter speed, aperture, and focus, leaving photographers free to concentrate on composition. The automatic cameras became immensely popular with casual photographers.

In the 1980s and 1990s, numerous manufacturers worked on cameras that stored images electronically. The first of these were point-and-shoot cameras that used digital media instead of film. By 1991, Kodak had produced the first digital camera that was advanced enough to be used successfully by professionals. Other manufacturers quickly followed and today Canon, Nikon, Pentax, and other manufacturers offer advanced digital SLR (DSLR) cameras. Even the most basic point-and-shoot camera now takes higher quality images than Niépce’s pewter plate, and smartphones can easily pull off a high-quality printed photograph.

**Photography Tips For Beginners**

There’s plenty of tips and tricks in photography that can help elevate your skills and take to you the next level as a photographer. From sticking to the golden hour for portraits to understanding the rule of thirds, check out our favorite photography tips for beginners below:

1. Get in close. Zoom decreases your photo quality, but your feet don’t. As long as it’s safe, physically move closer to your subject for a better photo.
2. Practice every day. Practice makes perfect and photography is no exception. Get out there and start taking photos.
3. Check for even lighting. Harsh shadows or lack of light will severely impact the look of your photo. Get an external light source or schedule your photoshoot for the right time.
4. Keep an eye out for composition. Photo composition, or the arrangement of visual elements, is key to telling your whole story.
5. Keep your batteries charged. Nothing puts a stop to a photoshoot faster than dead batteries.
6. Plan out your depth of field. How far away is your subject? Is you subject clear and in focus? These questions all have to deal with your depth of focus.
7. Watch for the golden hour. The Golden hour is the time when natural light is diffused and even. This time occurs in the two hours after sunrise or two hours before sunset.
8. Stick to the rule of thirds. The rule of thirds will help you compose your photo so that nothing is dead center or framed in a visually boring way. Keep your subject or composition filling two of three grid lines for this trick.
9. Edit your photos. After your photoshoot make sure to take the time to edit your favorite photos. Often this will be the step that makes them outstanding finished projects. Look to our guide on best photo editing apps for help.
10. Keep your photos organized. Make sure to record place, date, and subject of your photograph. Use a digital scrapbooking app to help make sure nothing is ever lost.