

— *hidden* — HISTORY

On Oct. 19, 1925, the Wilson College student body assembled in curved lines, ready to have the school picture taken. The photographer focused his camera on one end, slowly making his way around to the other end for a panoramic photograph of the entire student body.

The archives contains only a handful of these panoramic photographs found in some boxes of unprocessed materials. The 1925 photograph had been tightly rolled, but once it was flattened with weights at each end, it could be stored properly. With the weights laid out, it was much easier to view the full image.

One peculiarity immediately jumps out. There was President Warfield on one side—and there he was again on the other side, not quite turned to the camera, same dark suit and same gray beard. The girls standing nearest to him on this side seemed to be laughing. Looking closer still, at least one of those girls, dressed in a fur-trimmed coat, was also a duplicate.

Here was a mystery. How did President Warfield and the student manage to be in two places at once?

The answer was found in an anecdote in the correspondence from a student in the 1920s to her father. She described having a photograph of Wilson's student body taken: "A little freshman and I were standing beside Dr. Warfield at the end at which the camera was focused. When the camera turned away, we ran to the other end of the row. Dr. Warfield

followed us mimicing [sic] the way we ran. Thus we three are in the picture twice."

Panoramic photography was introduced soon after the invention of photography itself in 1839. Photographers wanted to be able to show landscapes, cityscapes, special events and large group portraits that could not be captured satisfactorily in a standard image. Early panoramas were created by placing daguerreotype plates side by side to "stitch" together an image much like digital imaging software today. In 1904, the Cirkut camera was patented and quickly became popular with commercial photographers. The Cirkut, and its film, rotated to create a wider view, but the resulting photograph could be distorted. One way to compensate for possible distortion was to arrange groups in a semi-circle, which in the final product would appear as a straight line.

So the mystery of the two Warfields was fully explained. While the panoramic camera rotated, the two girls—and Dr. Warfield behind them—had time to run around to the other side before it was photographed.

The panorama on its own is a great addition to Wilson's historic collection of photographs, but knowing the story behind it enriches the viewing experience.

— Leigh Rupinski



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The left and right ends from a 1925 panoramic photo of the Wilson student body, spliced together here, show the College's president and two students at both ends of photo.