



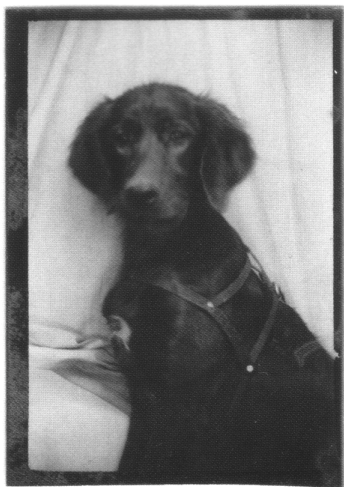
BEHIND THE CURTAIN

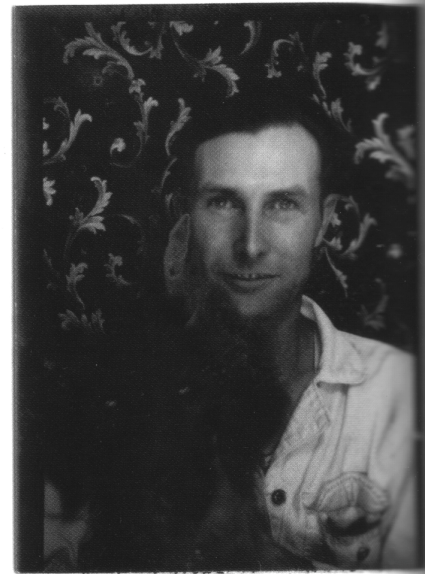
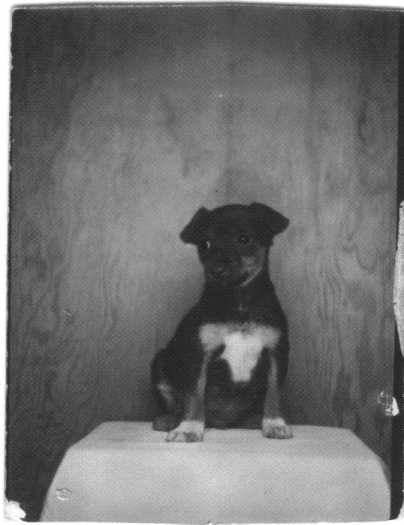
The “Photomaton,” invented by Anatol Josepho and introduced to the public in 1927, has always been a place where, thanks to a curtain and a mechanical (unmanned) lens, you are free to be whomever you like. You can invent yourself or define yourself, unconstrained by decorum or expectation. You can be a vixen or a dog owner or a cowboy, or a vixenish cowboy dog owner: Once you have drawn that liberating curtain, the choice is yours alone. ¶ When I look at these photos, it is lovely—and entertaining—to imagine the dogs (having heard about the photobooth) making their way to the bus station or the fairground to experience it for themselves. I picture them clambering onto the stool and waiting, just like everyone else, for the light to flash and the picture to emerge. It doesn’t seem entirely out of the question; there really *is* something uncanny about the way dogs in photographs always look as though they’re posing. If they stare at the camera, they look saucy, if they glance away, they appear coy. But either way, they look deliberate, which is at the very heart of the photobooth experience. ¶ When you think about it, it just makes sense that dogs should make their appearance in photobooth pictures, either alone or with a partner. The photobooth is about document and about identity. It’s a place to record, usually with an eye to the future, the things that are important to you—a fancy hat, a new beau or, in the case of these images, a best friend. It doesn’t surprise me, then, to find dog photobooth pictures dated as early as 1937. And I can imagine even earlier attempts, thwarted by the attendants who, in the beginning, assisted those unfamiliar with the booth. These combinations are as inevitable as any other portrait of a relationship, and often more long lasting. ¶ What I love about these images, besides the small brave dogs perched alone and somewhat precariously on rickety stools, is that the owners are as distinctive as their pets. And though nearly 80 years have passed since the photobooth first appeared on the scene, the pictures feel very contemporary. That is, if you love your dog enough to take him to a photobooth, you are bound to share certain characteristics with those of similar inclination—these images forge a link across time and space, from those long-gone dogs to the furry pal who sits by your side today.

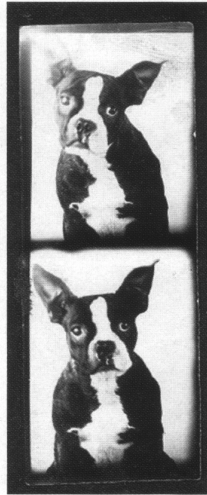
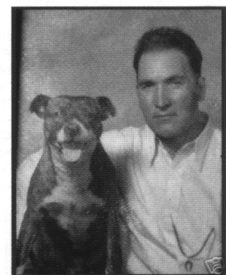
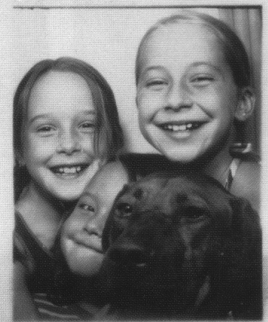
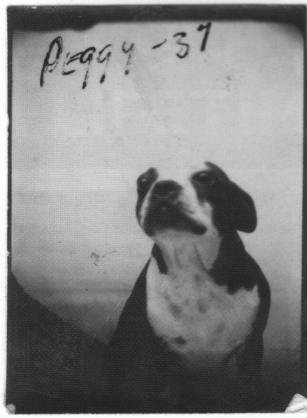
BEHIND THE LENS

By Babbette Hines











Babbette Hines is the author of *Photobooth*, presenting over 700 photographs; and *Love Letters, Lost*, published by Princeton Architectural Press. She is a collector and dealer of vernacular photography. Her gallery *Found: Photo* is located in Los Angeles. She also curates exhibits online at www.thefoundphoto.com