gals with glasses

A new book—entitled, simply, *LaPorte, Indiana*—gathers portraits of the town’s citizenry, culled from about 18,000 old photos that had been stored for decades in a diner in the small northern Indiana city. Here, we focus on 10 women whose hairstyles, clothing, jewelry and eyewear—that most telling detail of all—define their place and time.
As co-creator of *Found Magazine*, a journal showcasing notes, to-do lists, flyers and snapshots rescued from trash bins, used books and alleyways, I've always got my eyes peeled for a good find.

A few years back, I got wind of the LaPorte County Fair and its legendary demolition derby—legendary like your ears will ring until Monday. This fair has brought people together each year since 1836—before my grandparents, even before radio. With this in mind, a friend and I drove from my home in Chicago to the fairgrounds in LaPorte, to buy tickets for that night's show.

Traveling into town, we stopped for a quick bite at B & J's American Cafe, a classic diner with an enormous counter, local gossip and friendly teens taking orders. I noticed the cinnamon rolls required an extra 15 minutes, always an indicator of quality. As we waited, I spotted a couple of beautiful, slightly yellowed photos taped to the pie case.

I asked the waitress about the portraits, and she steered me toward a small unused dining area with metal shelving units holding 22 cardboard boxes, each box stuffed with row upon row of photos. A small sign near the shelves read, “Find a family member! Photos $0.50 each.” We rifled through an entire town's population as if it were a card catalog. Initially, I guessed we were looking at two to three thousand photos; later, I hand-counted nearly 18,000.

In the 1950s and '60s, the second floor of the diner's building had been home to MuralCraft Studios, owned and operated by Frank and Gladys Pease. Frank spent his time behind the camera while Gladys scheduled appointments and hand-colored final prints. After running MuralCraft for decades, Frank Pease passed away in the early 1970s, leaving this wonderful, enormous, compelling and stunning historic record behind.

We were all taught in kindergarten to share great stuff during show-and-tell. Today we carry on that tradition with *Found*, and now with *LaPorte, Indiana*. Come take a peek at the Midwest in the '50s and '60s.

—Jason Bitner
