



The Photogram

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BILL RAUHAUSER & "THE FAMILY OF MAN"—A TRIBUTE

Martin K. Magid

About five years ago, Cindy Motzenbecker and I audited Bill Rauhauser's semester-long class in the history of photography at the College of Creative Studies. He spent a considerable time at one session discussing the significance of the 1955 exhibition "The Family of Man" at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. At no time did he mention that one of his photographs was in that exhibition. It is also in the catalog of the exhibition, which is still in print, and has sold millions of copies in many languages all over the world. Cindy and I talked about Bill's failure to mention his photo, and decided he is just not the kind of guy to blow his own horn.

In the last issue of *The Photogram*, Bill did it again. In his wonderful article on the Group Four Gallery, Bill's discussion of "The Family of Man" failed to mention his contribution to that "most popular exhibition in the history of photography." [Bill Rauhauser, "Group Four, 1964-1968," *The Photogram* 32, no.2 (September-October 2004): 7.] The readers of *The Photogram* ought to know of Bill's contribution to "The Family of Man." My copy, printed by Bill in 2000, is reproduced here as it was exhibited. If you compare this reproduction of the photo with the catalog of the exhibit, you will notice that the publisher cropped the photo.

Bill's story of the photo is almost as great as his photo. He was photographing in downtown Detroit in the early 1950s when a helicopter landed on the huge lawn next to the Veterans Memorial Building, the present location of Hart Plaza. The soldier got out of the helicopter and engaged in casual conversation with the two young ladies who just happened to be there. Pretty soon they all sat on a park bench facing the river. Then the soldier began smooching with one of the ladies. Rather than leave the other one out in the cold, he smooched with her, too. He continued to take turns with both of them. Bill did not tell me how long that went on.



The legend which accompanied Bill Rauhauser's photograph in the 1955 exhibition "The Family of Man" was simply "U.S.A. W. C. Rauhauser." This print is in the Martin Magid Collection.

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"HISTORY OF THE
NATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHIC
ASSOCIATION"

James S. Jensen



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THE PHOTOGRAM welcomes contributions to its pages from both MiPHS members and non-members. To submit an article, review, occasional photo ad (MiPHS members only) or informational item for publication, write to:

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SUBMISSION DEADLINES:

June 1 (July-Summer issue)

August 1 (September-October issue)

October 1 (November-December issue)

January 1 (February-March issue)

March 1 (April-May issue)

The MICHIGAN PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY is an organization dedicated to advancing an understanding and appreciation of the history of photography through membership meetings, special events and publications, and through shared endeavors with other organizations and the general public. The MiPHS is a 501c3 non-profit corporation chartered by the State of Michigan.

The MiPHS welcomes new members. Dues are \$20 per year (January 1- December 31). For information and application forms, call 248.549.6026, visit us online at www.miphs.org or write to:

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FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Cynthia Motzenbecker

Hello folks, has the chill of the coming winter touched you yet? But maybe that means you can get some indoor tasks accomplished for a change, eh? MiPHS has a few things stirring for upcoming programs, like Jim Donaldson speaking on early northern Michigan photographers. Then there's the dinner presentation on deck for the spring which will be given by Rob Cox. The new directory should be out shortly. We must thank Cynthia Read-Miller for her unflagging devotion to the details of this in her busy life.

Those MiPHS members who attended our last two events had a great time. We visited the Charles Scheeler exhibit at the Detroit Institute of Arts (guided by curator Nancy Barr) and the Jim Rutkowski photo collection at the Columbus Museum of Art (see page 15). The day after we went to the Columbus paper show. Although we were geared up to find great things, there just wasn't as much good stuff compared to what we had seen in Jim's collection. Well, maybe there were a few exceptional photos, but the prices were certainly up there, generally higher than I had seen before. Still, our members do come up with great finds. Ask Richard Vanderburg about the orotone in a dioscope case he acquired at the two day Ann Arbor-Saline antiques market.

That brings us to the latest donation to MiPHS. The family of Gene O'Neal has donated her photos to us. We thank them heartily for that donation. And what a quantity of images! There are two library card catalogs full, including two shoe boxes of hard images. (Makes me wonder how many of you camera collectors secretly collect them too?) Some will be auctioned at the trade show and the best ones will be auctioned at the dinner meeting this year. So see if you can work it into your schedule. Thank you everyone, stay warm, and be safe.

MIPHS PROGRAMS & EVENTS

Sunday, October 24. 33rd Annual Photographic Trade Show, Novi Community Center, 45175 W. Ten Mile Rd. (½ mile west of Novi Rd.), Novi, MI, 10:00AM-4:00PM.

Saturday, January 22. James Donaldson, "When Today Becomes Yesterday: History and Art in Photo Postcards of the Lake Huron Shore." Royal Oak Senior Community Center, 3500 Marias (off 13 Mile between Crooks and N. Main St.), Royal Oak, MI, 10:30AM. Jim will discuss the postcards made by A. J. Bradshaw and his successor Fred Stevens from 1905 to 1935. Their photographs represent daily life in Michigan small towns. They also raise issues of documentary and aesthetic value. Optional lunch will follow.

Spring Dinner Speaker. Rob Cox, Head of Special Collections & Maps at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, has accepted our invitation to be the dinner speaker for next Spring. He will be talking about 19th-century photography as covered in his book, *Body and Soul: A Sympathetic History of American Spiritualism*. Watch for more information in the next *Photogram*.

HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHIC ASSOCIATION

James S. Jensen

Those who study or collect nineteenth-century photographs frequently encounter an ornate monogram formed by the letters NPA on their reverse side. Dating from the late 1860s through the mid-1870's, the initials identified the photographer as a member of the National Photographic Association. Prior to its founding, local photographic organizations in America modeled themselves after European societies whose members were chiefly scientists, amateurs and dilettantes. Their experiments expanded the nascent science of the medium, and their debates began a critical inquiry of photographic aesthetics, but these elite societies ignored the practical concerns facing professionals. With the founding of the National Photographic Association in 1868, however, Americans established the first organization devoted to the business interests of working photographers.



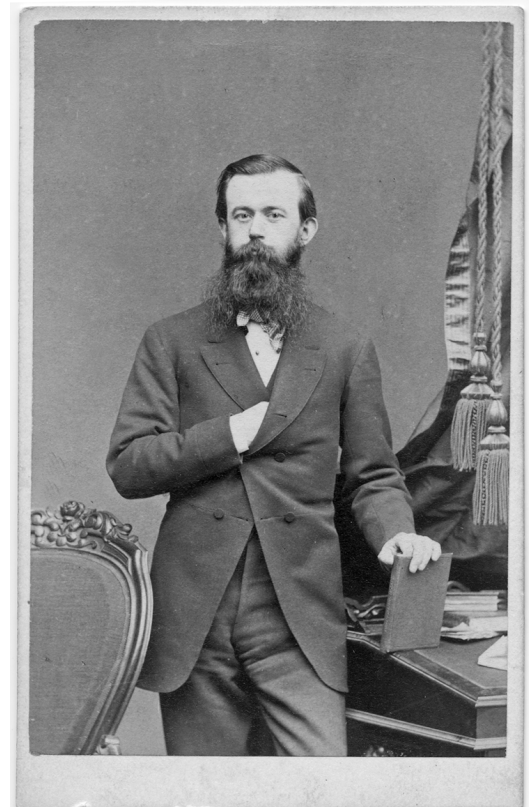
The National Photographic Association traced its origins to a controversial patent issued to James Ambrose Cutting in 1854, shortly after the collodion "wet plate" process was first introduced in America. The patent detailed a formula for collodion negatives that specified potassium bromide as an accelerator to shorten exposure times and make portraiture feasible. Most photographers at first ignored licensing fees, believing the patent invalid since the chemical was commonly used for the same purpose with the daguerreotype. The patent was only sporadically enforced until 1865 when Cutting assigned the rights to lawyer Timothy H. Hubbard in exchange for just one-eighth of any proceeds he collected. The first infringement suits he brought were against prominent photographers in New York and Boston, but it was expected that if the patent was re-issued after its July 1868 expiration, Hubbard would redouble his efforts and all photographers would be subject to an annual royalty as well as face fines for past infringements.

ABOVE: Monogram of the National Photographic Association from the reverse of a carte-de-visite, ca. 1872.

RIGHT: Edward L. Wilson, Permanent Secretary of the National Photographic Association, editor of *The Philadelphia Photographer*. Carte-de-visite by Suddards & Fennimore, ca. 1870.

Just months before the bromide patent was due to expire, photographers across the country were urged to gather in New York City and frame plans to oppose a re-issue. Other topics promised for discussion were repealing the federal tax on photographs, the problem of low prices, and "other important matters." The convention was called by photographers Abraham Bogardus of New York, David Bendann of Baltimore and G. H. Loomis of Boston. They were joined by leading manufacturers and dealers, and by Edward L. Wilson, the young editor and publisher of *The Philadelphia Photographer*, a monthly journal which began publishing in 1864.

Although two previous mass meetings in 1860 and 1865 failed to establish any unified resistance to the bromide patent, this time the situation was more desperate. The collodion process was now universally used and Hubbard was more aggressively enforcing the patent throughout the northeast and midwest. About 100 photographers, some sent as delegates by local societies, answered the call to meet at the Cooper Institute. They elected the affable Bogardus as president of the convention, Wilson as secretary and treasurer, and six vice presidents to represent different regions of the country.



The Internal Revenue laws that taxed photographs as luxury items had been amended by the time the convention met, and the photographers turned their attention to the troublesome bromide patent. While acknowledging the right of an individual to patent and profit from original invention, the assembly dismissed Cutting's claims as illegitimate and unjust. Without dissent, the photographers authorized the officers to act on their behalf and oppose any attempt to extend the patent they claimed held them in "a state of siege."



The convention then considered four resolutions written by Wilson to establish a permanent, mutual protection union. The bromide patent was seen as just one example of the need for such a safeguard. The proposal met with some pessimism, especially over questions of funding. Some leading New York photographers such as Charles Fredericks and Jeremiah Gurney pressed for any new organization to reimburse them for lobbying in Washington against the tax on photographs. After considerable debate, however, the resolutions were approved and a two-man committee from each state was appointed to collect the money needed to fight the bromide patent and to establish a national association. Wilson was optimistic and declared at the conclusion of this meeting, "A new era in photography begins with this convention, we hope, to be attended by great progress in the art and its elevation to the high standard which its wondrous excellencies demand for it."¹

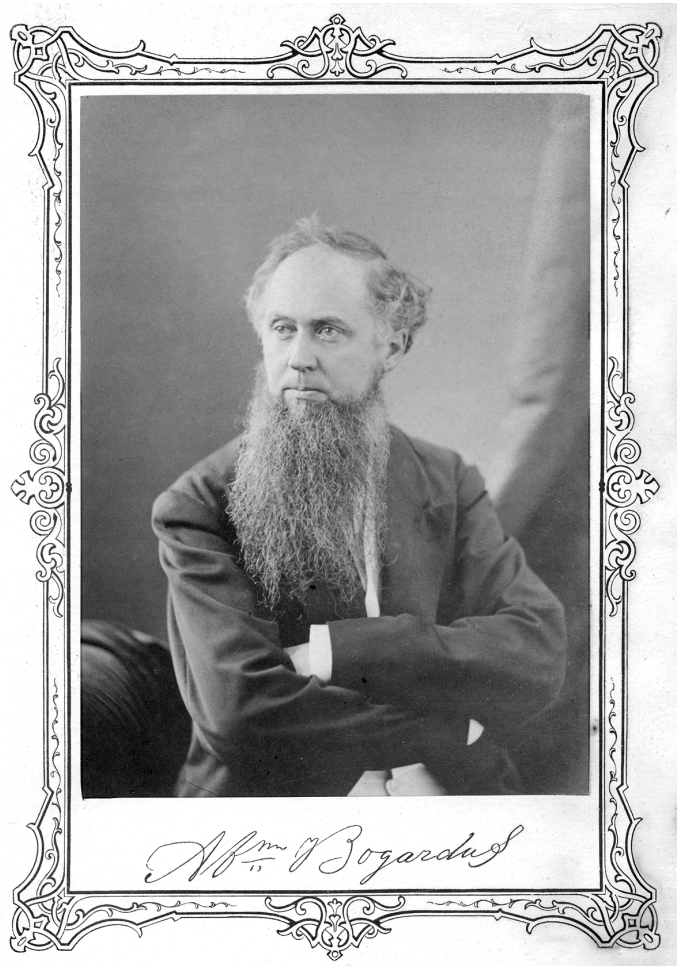
Attorneys Furman Sheppard and Henry Howson who successfully opposed the re-issue of the bromide patent in 1868. James Cremer, *The Philadelphia Photographer* 5, no. 56 (August 1868).

The two directives that the New York convention gave its officers were quickly realized. To challenge the patent Wilson hired a team of attorneys to argue the case before the Patent Office. He gathered witnesses, depositions, and publications that testified to the use of bromides in photography prior to Cutting's patent. Detroit photographer Jex Bardwell played a critical role in providing evidence. Beginning in 1853, Bardwell had been contributing technical articles to the photographic journals and in the process had accumulated an extensive library of foreign and American publications. At Wilson's request, Bardwell closed his gallery and traveled east with his books, each carefully marked to pages related to the use of collodion with bromides. All told, Bardwell produced more than twenty different citations antedating Cutting's patent application. When the Commissioner of Patents finally ruled that Cutting was not the original inventor of collodion with bromides and denied the extension, Wilson took great satisfaction in exclaiming in *The Philadelphia Photographer*, "Toll, toll, toll the funeral knell and let every sound be joy."²

Flush with the success of defeating the renewal of the bromide patent, the officers turned their attention to the convention's other mandate, to establish a national union. An organizational meeting was announced for Philadelphia on December 1, 1868. Nearly twenty local photographers also signed the call that was published in *The Philadelphia Photographer*. Because of the short notice given during the busy holiday season, only about fifty photographers gathered to institute the National Photographic Association. They adopted a constitution and by-laws and elected officers, honorary members and a Committee on the Progress of Photography. Bogardus was retained as president, Wilson became the permanent secretary, and Henry T. Anthony was elected treasurer. When he accepted an honorary membership the editor of Britain's *Photographic News*, George Wharton Simpson, declared that the NPA had no prototype, that no association before it had such comprehensive goals to promote the profession of photography.

Abraham Bogardus, President of the National Photographic Association, 1868-1874. Bogardus Studio, *The Philadelphia Photographer* 8, no. 94 (October 1871).

Not all were supportive of the efforts set in motion by the convention. *Humphrey's Journal*, the world's first photography periodical founded in 1850, was especially critical. In the face of competition from *The Philadelphia Photographer* and the intimate association of the NPA with that journal, editor Joseph H. Ladd claimed the defeat of the bromide patent was easily accomplished and accused Wilson of embezzling contributions. Following the Philadelphia meeting *Humphrey's Journal* assaulted Wilson and the new NPA with a barrage of invectives and articles which ridiculed the new organization. The meeting was denounced as a "bogus convention" since so few, and most of them from Philadelphia, claimed to represent an estimated 5000 photographers in America. It was charged that Wilson formed the NPA simply to provide material for *The Philadelphia Photographer*. There was some truth to the accusation. The NPA constitution had named *The Philadelphia Photographer* as its "official organ," giving Wilson the exclusive right to publish its proceedings in return for absorbing stenographic and publishing expenses. *Humphrey's Journal* ceased publication within the year, but it would not be the last rival journal to take Wilson to task.



Whether there were 5000 photographers in America or 15,000 according to another estimate, they fell into one of three broad groups. At the top were the "first-class operators" in the country's urban centers. The public and the profession alike recognized them as the most technically advanced and artistically accomplished. They catered to well-heeled patrons willing to pay a premium for the most stylish and best-finished portraits. At the bottom were the third-class operators who were minimally trained, offered the cheapest productions, and who cared nothing for promoting photography as an art or advancing its technology. Itinerants, mostly making tintypes, fell into this class and were deridingly called "cheap johns." In the middle were those with less prosperous city galleries and those in the thousands of small towns. Sometimes referred to as "located photographers" to distinguish them from the itinerants, this group represented the majority of professionals. Also referred to as the "country" or "humble" photographers, these individuals adopted, not invented, techniques and styles initiated by the scientific and artistic elite. The first and second-class photographers together called themselves the "fraternity," suggesting common interests that certainly did not extend to the cheap johns.

The charter documents of the NPA stated its overriding purpose was "education." This meant sharing knowledge of the materials, processes and techniques of photography. This idealistic goal was in marked contrast to the practice of closely guarding one's discoveries, or seeking protective patents for even the smallest improvements. The notion of education also extended to the public. Photography was a young medium with its aesthetic standards still in formation, and the public had to be taught how to value quality work made to professional standards. As a labor union of sorts, the NPA sought to educate photographers about sound business practices and to regulate terms of employment. More than anything, however, the NPA hoped to educate photographers and to provide them with a new mindset towards their profession. It wanted them to dedicate themselves to advancing the medium of photography itself rather than just their own careers. It wanted the second-class photographers to gain the skill and artistry of the elite and simultaneously prevent the cheap johns from assaulting the quality and prices of photography. This overarching goal was summarized in the slogan of the NPA, "Elevate Your Art and It Will Elevate You."

Following its organizational meeting in Philadelphia, the first convention of the NPA was planned for the following summer in Boston. About 150 photographers gathered in June 1869 and set the pattern for each following convention. Over a four or five day period as many as 800 photographers attended lectures, demonstrations, business meetings and an exhibition of foreign and domestic photographs. Manufacturers and dealers displayed their products, and in the evenings stereopticon lectures and orchestral music entertained the photographers and the public. Subsequent annual conventions met in Cleveland, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Buffalo, Chicago, and finally in Philadelphia again at the time of the Centennial Exhibition.



Exhibition of the National Photographic Association, Cleveland, 1870. Behind the displays of photographs and equipment hung a banner with the slogan of the NPA, "Elevate Your Art, It Will Elevate You." T. T. Sweeney, *The Philadelphia Photographer* 7, no. 80 (August 1870).

Extensive reports of the NPA conventions were published in *The Philadelphia Photographer* and in *Anthony's Photographic Bulletin* beginning in 1871. The lectures and discussions from the conventions covered every aspect of photography as a profession. The issues they addressed were categorized by photo-chemist Henry J. Newton when he told the 1871 convention in Philadelphia, "Success in photography depends primarily on an intelligent understanding of it as a *business*, as an *art*, and as a *science*."³ Although the boundaries between these different dimensions were often blurred, Newton's classification provides a convenient mechanism to trace the activities of the NPA.

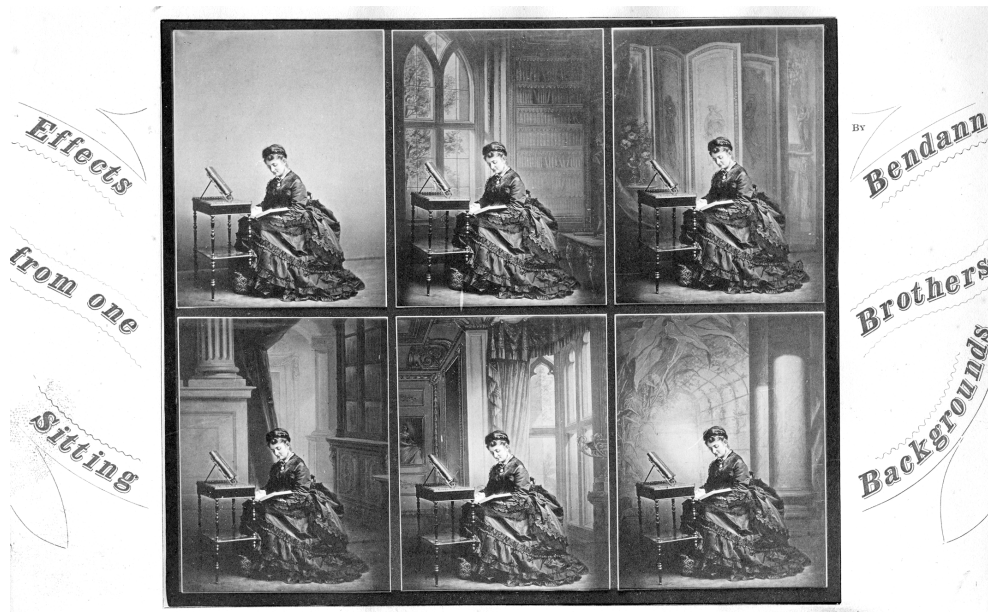
It was the science of photography—the equipment, chemistry and procedures (or "manipulations" as they were called)—that dominated NPA conventions. The technology of the wet plate era was far from standardized. Photographers prepared their own materials and devised their own techniques based on experience and experimentation as much as on published instructions. Most were loath to share their hard-earned knowledge and possibly aid a competitor. The constitution stated a fundamental purpose of the organization was to "diffuse knowledge" and the NPA hoped to convince photographers that if they freely shared their wisdom the entire medium of photography would advance and all would ultimately benefit.

Among the prominent first-class photographers in the NPA who embraced this idealistic philosophy of diffusing knowledge were Albert Southworth, James F. Ryder, Alexander Hesler, John Fitzgibbon, James Wallace Black, W. J. Baker and William H. Rulofson. Conspicuously absent, however, were the foremost New York City photographers. With the notable exception of Bogardus, neither Mathew Brady, Jeremiah Gurney, Charles Fredericks, Napoleon Sarony nor William Kurtz were ever involved with the NPA after the defeat of the bromide patent. A less distinguished New York City photographer who was an NPA member complained, "All our prominent photographers have kept resolutely aloof from all society communication. And some of them make 'no bones' of saying they will not help to teach country photographers against their own interests."⁴

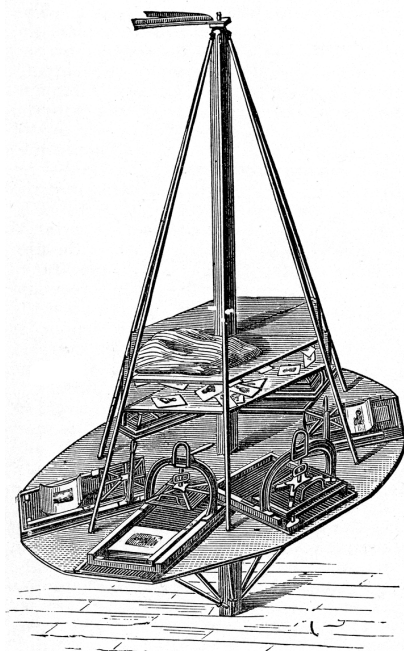
Nevertheless, at each convention there were numerous presentations on "practical matters." Lectures ranged from the physics of light to optics, to preparing collodion negatives, and to printing and mounting the final product. The usual approach was to identify common problems and then outline possible solutions. Even with the free flow of information, some members complained that the disclosed techniques failed to give the promised results. To cite one example, at four successive conventions James Wallace Black of Boston described a collodion sensitizing bath he claimed was frugal with the silver it

consumed yet still produced rich, detailed negatives. He gave a precise formula, answered many questions, but concluded after his 1871 explanation, "All these formulas require a good deal of judgment. You could scarcely follow any one of them exactly."⁵ One skeptic thought Black deliberately misstated the formula to protect his advantageous knowledge.

Illustration of Bendann Brothers method of printing in backgrounds, awarded the Scovill Silver Medal in 1872 for greatest improvement by a North American. *The Philadelphia Photographer* 9, no. 107 (November 1872).



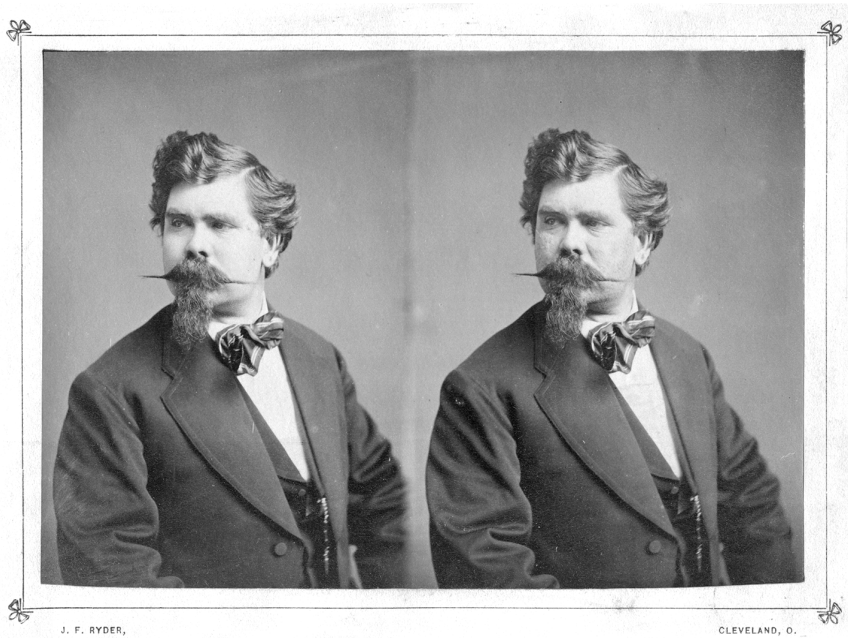
Each year the NPA elected a Committee on the Progress of Photography to report valuable discoveries and inventions to the membership. Dr. Herman Vogel, an internationally acclaimed photo-chemist, and George Wharton Simpson each contributed annual papers disclosing German and English improvements. Vogel also appeared in person and lectured at the 1870 and 1876 conventions. Although every report acknowledged steady progress, the improvements cited were only modifications of existing equipment and techniques rather than a wholesale replacement of the complex and temperamental wet plate process. The Scovill Company, one of the largest manufacturers and distributors of photographic supplies in America, annually awarded gold and silver medals to NPA members for the greatest advances of the year. The medals recognized improvements such as a method of printing in backgrounds, a fuming box to increase the sensitivity of albumen paper, a more efficient print washer, and an enameling machine that gave prints a hard, glossy surface. These too were so minor that one year the judging committee was forced to note that the winners "were not entitled to the dignity of a national medal."



The improvements most desired by photographers were for a reliable dry plate and for permanent prints not susceptible to the fading common with albumen pictures. Experiments with dry plates were reported, but the Committee on Progress found the earliest versions less sensitive and even less predictable than wet plates. Through the 1870s advances made with pigment and photomechanical printing also were reported. Both the carbon and woodburytype processes of permanent printing were demonstrated at NPA conventions. In 1870 the Executive Committee was directed to purchase the rights to the most promising method for the benefit of NPA members. They eventually concluded, however, that all the competing processes were too complicated and costly for the average photographer and were only appropriate for publishers who needed large numbers of images to illustrate books.

Equipment used for the woodburytype method of permanent printing. Chicago photographer John Carbutt purchased the United States rights to the process and demonstrated it throughout the 1870 NPA convention. *Wilson's Cyclopaedic Photography*, Edward L. Wilson (New York: Edward L. Wilson, 1894): 446.

One technique repeatedly discussed at NPA conventions was retouching the negative, a practice initiated in Europe. After seeing examples sent to Wilson by Dr. Vogel, James F. Ryder of Cleveland hired a German retoucher and showed the results at the first NPA exhibition in Boston. Retouching could correct negative flaws, smooth a person's hair or complexion, straighten a nose, or soften contrast. By the time of the next convention, the Committee on Progress reported that most leading galleries throughout the country had adopted retouching. Within two years, however, most NPA lectures were admonitions to limit the practice. At the 1871 Philadelphia convention George Ayres, author of the popular manual *How to Paint Photographs*, told his audience, "All appearance of flesh is gone. Our pictures that we see nowadays are, in general effect, like a wax figure or billiard ball or something very smooth; now is that flesh? Certainly not. There are too many trying to become artists when they are simply photographers."⁶ Others described the over-retouched faces as looking like dough, potatoes or eggshells. Albert Southworth was the most succinct critic, simply saying, "You cannot touch it without hurting it."⁷



Illustrating before and after results of retouching the negative, the technique was introduced to America by James F. Ryder of Cleveland at the first NPA convention in Boston, 1869. *The Philadelphia Photographer* 7, no. 75 (March 1870)

It is apparent in these papers that it was the "country photographers" who were being lectured about clumsy and overzealous retouching. They faced a dilemma, however, because the public now found the new finish flattering and would simply patronize someone else if they abandoned the technique. The controversy was never resolved, forcing Bogardus, for example, to simply conclude, "When people want pictures of themselves as they actually are, then the photographers' millennium will have come."⁸

A related debate arose over the practice of hand-coloring portraits, usually enlargements. In this case the protests were aimed in the opposite direction, at the prosperous urban galleries who made them a specialty. The source of the conflict was the annual exhibition that accompanied each convention. The second-class photographers were intimidated and reluctant to exhibit their small, plain prints in the presence of such elaborate productions. John Fitzgibbon of St. Louis was one critic who thought such work was not legitimate photography at all. He complained that wealthy galleries could hire professional artists and thus "buy their greatness." W. J. Baker of Buffalo agreed, asking, "Is not the genius of the photograph eclipsed in the precise ratio of the handwork that has been placed on it?"⁹

As much as the NPA promoted diffusion of knowledge about the science of photography, it also tried to help photographers operate profitable businesses. The most grievous financial burdens were the fees required to license patented processes and equipment. In the same breath that Wilson announced the defeat of the bromide patent, he warned against another considered equally unjust. This was the sliding-box patent granted to Albert Southworth in 1855 and assigned by him to camera manufacturer Simon Wing. The device permitted four different exposures to be made on a single plate by successively rotating it inside a frame. The contested re-issue eventually went all the way to the Supreme Court where the extension was overturned. Southworth was indignant to be included among "the bogus patent men" and lamented it was the only thing he had after thirty years of labor. Aggravating the dispute was the fact that the NPA sponsored the opposition even though it was illegal for a union to have its members defy a legitimate patent.

Two other significant fights were lost by the NPA. The first was over the 1871 re-issue of D. A. Woodward's patent for the solar camera used to make enlargements. The other was a drawn-out confrontation with the Shaw and Wilcox Company patent for recovering silver and gold from spent chemicals. The patent was so broad that photographers had no choice but to let the company refine their waste and take half its value. In response to resistance orchestrated by the NPA, in 1873 Shaw offered to sell the patent to the membership for \$200,000. Southworth insisted that the NPA could not act a group, as it had illegally done with him, and that photographers must individually settle with Shaw after the convention. Bogardus was among those who then formed the National Photographic Chemical Company to buy the patent, a decision that later caused him to be accused of profiteering. In the course of the patent dispute Wilson was sued for libel because of damaging testimonials printed in *The Philadelphia Photographer*. He was briefly jailed and fined \$4000. Like Bogardus, Wilson's integrity was also challenged because some thought he did not pay the fine in return for secretly agreeing not to further oppose the patent in his journal.

The NPA constitution pledged that it would "oppose imposition," a reference to unfair patents and the related practice of selling secret processes. The "process mongers" as they were often called, tempted individuals to gain competitive advantage by securing some new formula or procedure that would differentiate their work from others. Some falsely claimed that their processes were patented and many were said to be copied from journals that the ignorant had failed to read. To promote membership, it was promised that if an advance was truly significant, the NPA could buy it at an advantageous price on behalf of all members. With its goal of diffusing knowledge, the NPA claimed it could help curb the practice by keeping members informed of bogus processes. The inherent flaw with this lofty goal was that the NPA proceedings were widely published. Convention reports included the text of all the speeches, papers and discussions, sometimes even the verbatim dialog that took place on the floor. On one hand, the detailed publications admirably demonstrated the goal of diffusing knowledge, but on the other hand the information became available to all, whether they were a dues-paying NPA member or not.

Photographers, however, had more serious business problems than patents and process mongers. Prices for their pictures were "ruinously low." It was repeatedly acknowledged that there were too many photographers and the intense competition caused an unrelenting downward pressure on prices. One NPA member described the result as "suicidal competition." The already substantial overhead of a gallery was increased even more when photographers felt they had to adopt every new style, format, background or novelty to remain competitive. Exacerbating the situation were itinerants and cheap johns, especially those making tintypes. An outraged NPA member complained that unfortunately it was illegal to shoot them, there were too many to burn, and not enough water to drown them.

Photographers frequently complained that the public held their profession in low esteem. They resented being described as "only a photographer." The cause was the conundrum of low prices. While first-class galleries sold cabinet card portraits in the 1870s for as much as \$12 per dozen, the same number of tintypes could be purchased for 25 cents. When photographs were available for so little money, it implied that the photographer's time, skill and culture were also of little value. In their convention lectures the first-class photographers often told their country counterparts to simply set higher prices for quality work and the public would eventually come to appreciate and demand it. They insisted that photography was only overcrowded at the bottom of the ladder. With a condescending tone they lectured them not to chew tobacco or have whiskey on their breath, to remove spittoons from the reception room, and to be polite to ladies and kind to babies.

Some of the most serious problems photographers faced were self-inflicted. Not requiring pre-payment, releasing proof prints before an order was given, and allowing patrons to re-sit for their portrait until satisfied, were called by one NPA photographer "the whirlpool of disaster." Without pre-paying, customers visited multiple galleries, compared the results, and only then placed a single order. Permitting proofs to leave the gallery facilitated comparison. Even if a patron was at first satisfied, by the time family and neighbors joined the critique, the result was likely to be judged unsatisfactory. All these practices favored the public, with the predictable result that as soon as one photographer offered such inducements, others were at a disadvantage unless they followed suit. Photographers looked to the NPA to establish and enforce work rules and, as one member put it, "defend us from ourselves."

Although members frequently complained of their dilemma at NPA conventions, the steps taken by the organization proved largely ineffectual. In 1870 they passed an unenforceable resolution to "maintain the dignity of our profession by charging fair prices." After three years of study, the Committee on Apprenticeship proposed to control entry to the profession by requiring a three-year period of study before a trainee could earn a certificate and work for another NPA member. Wilson thought of the plan, "There is nothing more essential to correct the evils which hold photography down in the dust by means of incompetents who are allowed to enter the profession."¹⁰ The apprenticeship plan was adopted and certificates were printed,

but it shared the same fate as other proposed solutions. The problem, of course, was that the cheap Johns were not NPA members in the first place. Anyone with a modest investment could learn the tintype trade in a matter of days and do business with a public seemingly satisfied with any photographic likeness. Establishing a national college to educate new photographers was another proposal to guarantee skilled and responsible workers. John Fitzgibbon recommended that a national museum of photography be established in conjunction with it. In 1873 the NPA managed to introduce a bill in Congress authorizing \$30,000 for the plan. Unfortunately, it was never acted upon.

National Photographic Association
OF THE UNITED STATES.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY, That Mr., of,
County of, State of, has completed a regular
studentship in the Photographic Art with Mr., of
....., County of, State of

His term commenced on the of, 18—. His
age at that date years. He served with three
years and months. His term closed, 18—.

His moral character while in employ

He has become proficient in the following branches

Excels in.....

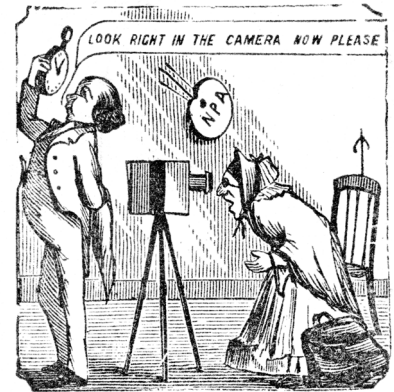
Apprenticeship certificate attesting that a trainee studied for three years and was qualified to work for a NPA member. *The Philadelphia Photographer* 10, no. 117 (September 1873): 304.

In 1873 the NPA issued a manual containing its constitution, by-laws and a roster of over 1000 members. It also included "The NPA Price List" based on a survey of 60 photographers from 24 states. Prices were set to encourage larger orders and added a fee for each additional figure in the picture to reflect the extra time needed for posing and retouching. Compiled by Wilson, the manual acknowledged there were great variations in price depending on locale and circumstances, and that the scale could not be considered binding. Rather, its intent was to motivate photographers to reach higher price points as soon as possible. For those who already exceeded the published prices, Wilson added, "You are urgently requested to get even more if you can." The ambitious price scale could not have been published at a more unpropitious time as the country sank into a long and deep depression following the bank panic of 1873.

Other NPA efforts to improve the business of photography for its members included fire and life insurance proposals. Insurance companies felt photographers posed an especially high fire risk because of the volatile chemicals used and they increased premiums for the entire block in which a gallery was located. Photographers argued they posed no more risk than druggists did. Abraham Bogardus cited a six-fold increase in his rent because of the additional insurance his landlord was forced to pay. The accumulated negatives of a gallery were a valuable asset for re-orders, but were impossible to value and insure. Plans for the NPA to form its own insurance company were dropped after a long study concluded it would be too complicated and costly. Various life insurance plans were also proposed, the most popular being for each person to give \$1 to the surviving family of another NPA member (providing he had not been addicted to intemperance). A Relief Fund to aid the families of deceased or disabled members was adopted in 1870. Donations and profits from the sale of group portraits made at each convention brought the Relief Fund to \$2000 by 1873 when it was announced payments would begin the next year. This was the last time the money or the Relief Fund was ever mentioned!

To complete its comprehensive mission to advance the medium, the NPA also sought to improve the art of photography. With as many as 250 displays, the annual exhibition at each NPA convention was the chief means to educate photographers about art. Only foreign exhibitors competed for medals in a gesture to minimize competition and anxiety among Americans. In an idealistic vein, photographers were urged to compare their own work to that on display and then emulate the best that they saw. That was frequently the foreign work, and it became the standard by which to judge artistic effect. Although American photographers were also said to trail Europeans in landscape and genre photography at this time, portraiture became the focus of the NPA discussions as it was the livelihood of virtually all its members.

Comic imprint on the reverse of a carte-de-visite, ca. 1873. The NPA monogram within the artist's palette suggests the goal of the organization to improve the art of photography.



The reviews of the annual exhibitions tried to identify why the European work was perceived as superior. Of first importance was the careful lighting that created a long scale of middle tones, distinct modeling of the figure, and bold relief in draperies and accessories. An increased awareness of lighting encouraged some photographers to adopt the “Rembrandt” or “shadow” style of portrait. Rather than placing the subject in direct light to obtain the shortest possible exposure, photographers now illuminated the sitter from behind and to the side, leaving most of the figure in broad shadow. It required skilled printers to realize the effect from the negative, and as the lowest paid among a gallery’s employees they were noted as being in desperately short supply. Not all admired “Rembrandts.” At the 1873 convention Albert Southworth said their muddy shadows made them “the most hateful things that were ever met with.” Three years later at the Centennial convention and exhibition, he did not find one example of a Rembrandt in Photographic Hall. Southworth commented, “The shadow of every picture is lighted to the bottom; it is clear, transparent. . . Our mistake was in imitating photographs and European pictures when they were first introduced into this country.”¹¹



The “shadow” or “Rembrandt style of portrait represents the emphasis on expressive lighting advocated by the NPA. W. J. Baker, *The Philadelphia Photographer* 7, no. 79 (July 1870).

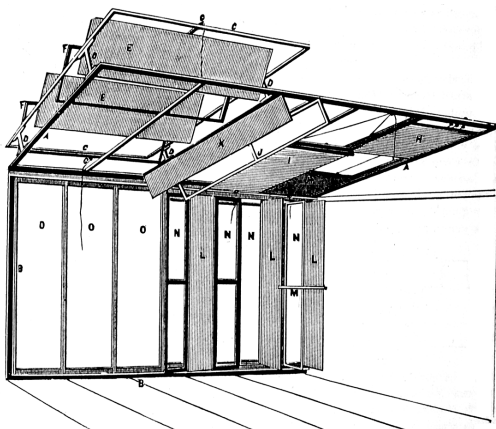
Skillful posing was the other quality admired in the work of foreign photographers. Their subjects assumed graceful, natural positions revealing character and individuality. Southworth shocked the 1873 convention by saying that one-half of members’ photographs in the annual exhibition were “not worth burning up” because of poor posing. It was a challenge for Americans to introduce these qualities because in the business of photography both patron and proprietor expected the sitting to take as little time as possible. One member cited five minutes as the time typically allotted to arrange pose, lighting, and accessories. Alexander Hesler of Chicago was one of the more outspoken advocates for individual treatment of every subject. He warned the NPA convention in 1873, “Without proper pose, lighting and expression, our resulting pictures will only be stiff, hard, soulless images.” He urged photographers to discover the good, noble or beautiful that was in every person, and then, as a practical matter, to take the picture when the subject was unaware it was being done. Hesler concluded his entreaty by noting, “No man can successfully portray the good and noble and others without first making it the rule and guide of his own life.”¹² In truth, it was misleading to use the NPA exhibitions as the standard of

comparison since only the most accomplished photographers from all of England and Europe contributed work. One of the most admired was Antoine Adam-Salomon of Paris whose lofty prices allowed him to make just three portraits a day.

Albert Southworth also repeatedly spoke at the NPA conventions about the art of portraiture. Although he was no longer a working photographer, Southworth was a dedicated member and a frequent contributor to NPA discussions. He drew on his experience as a celebrated daguerreian when at the 1870 NPA convention he offered this poetic explanation of the photographer's duty in making a portrait, "Nature is not at all to be represented as it is, but as it ought to be, and might possibly have been; and it is required of and should be the aim of the artist-photographer to produce in the likeness the best possible character and finest expression of which that particular face or figure could ever have been capable. But in the result there is to be no departure from truth in the delineation and representation of beauty, expression, and character." More than 130 years later, Southworth's remarks seem prescient, expressing a contemporary understanding that photography has the potential to idealize and interpret while still remaining factual. To gain the necessary insight, Southworth told NPA members to study painting, sculpture, literature, history, and especially nature itself. With diligent study, he continued, "No scene can be found vacant or uninteresting . . . The artist is conscious of something besides the mere physical in every object in nature."¹³

This and similar appeals for photographers to become broadly cultured if they were to become artists, contained the implicit recognition that photography is capable of self-expression. It was a struggle, however, to explain how this could be true when photographs were made with machines and chemicals, when they seemed so literal in describing the world. In these first decades of the medium most photographers as well as the public assumed photographs were mechanical and objective, necessarily accurate and truthful. G. Frank Pearsall, a photographer at the Jeremiah Gurney gallery, was one who directly challenged this presumption when at the Buffalo convention he showed pairs of photographs of the same subject but each with a widely divergent effect. He asked, "With these two pictures before you, can you still cling to the theory that all photographs must be truthful?"¹⁴

It was Southworth, however, who addressed the question of art most directly: "The mere handling of the chisel, or the brush, or the pencil, is mechanical, and requires only the same talents as the arrangement of the camera, or the use of chemicals, in the practice of photography. It is our vision that must be trained and educated."¹⁵ The "vision" that Southworth alluded to included a photographer's ability to mentally visualize the final image even before the shutter of the camera was released. While others also tried to explain this concept, it was the NPA's attorney, E. Y. Bell, who provided the clearest statement, "The photographer, in the faces and forms before him, and even before the lens of the camera is set to receive the impressions of his subjects, sees in imagination the well-defined photograph, the beautiful and artistic effects which add to the charm and value of the work about to be developed."¹⁶ Twentieth-century photographers would eventually come to enshrine "pre-visualization" as a central tenet of their modernist art.



Model of a Skylight used at the Sessions of the National Photographic Association in Philadelphia, 1871.

Skylight erected at the 1871 NPA convention in Philadelphia to demonstrate how curtains and reflectors could be used to control lighting. *The Philadelphia Photographer* 8, no. 92 (August 1871): 269.

Such theoretical and inspirational speeches had their practical counterparts at the NPA conventions. Demonstrations were given on artistic "posturing" and composition. In one of the few lectures Wilson delivered at a convention, in 1873 he presented an illustrated talk titled "How To Manage the Lines." In it he showed examples from paintings and engravings that used classical compositional strategies such as pyramidal, circular or linear arrangements. Following the convention, however, he was forced to admit "his lecture was not as well understood as he wished it had been." Some conventions also included

lighting demonstrations. In 1871 a model skylight was erected at the convention site to show how curtains and reflectors could harmoniously mix direct, diffused and reflected sunlight. One device demonstrated was a small reflector attached to the end of a pole. It could be moved during the time of exposure and modify the light falling on a face. The hand screen was a simple appliance but it caused a minor controversy after being patented by J. H. Kent, a vice-president of the NPA. Lambasted for his hypocrisy, Kent withdrew the patent and invited all NPA members to freely use his invention.

The efforts of the NPA to elevate the art of photography were widely acknowledged to have been successful. To cite one example, G. O. Brown, editor of *The Photographer's Friend*, a journal first published in 1871, declared, "The public now value and appreciate photography as an art. This encouraging epoch in the history of our art may be mainly attributed to the National Photographic Association."¹⁷ Letters to the editor in *The Philadelphia Photographer* and *Anthony's Photographic Bulletin* were also largely supportive of the goals and efforts of the NPA. Even so, following the 1874 convention in Chicago, the fortunes of the association seriously deteriorated. The immediate cause was the cancellation of the next year's convention planned for San Francisco. With the depression continuing and the expensive travel for the majority of NPA members in the east and midwest, a light attendance was predicted. Rather than risk the depressing effect it would have on the NPA, the convention was cancelled just weeks before it was scheduled to begin.

More than this, however, a number of grievances had developed within the NPA. As they grew, members ceased to pay their dues despite constant dunning by Wilson and the treasurer. The first complaint was that the NPA was being run for the benefit of the manufacturers and stockdealers while the photographers paid the bills with their dues. In this respect the NPA got off to an unfortunate start at its founding when money expended by individuals to fight the tax on photographs was subsumed into the NPA budget. There was a related controversy over publishing the NPA proceedings. *The Philadelphia Photographer* lost its exclusive rights in 1871 when challenged by *Anthony's Photographic Bulletin*, which had been founded the previous year. Even though NPA news was now more widely published, Wilson still made it as difficult as possible for others to obtain the stenographic notes from the conventions. To settle the dispute, in 1874 the NPA voted to independently publish and sell the convention report. In the end, however, the minimal demand failed to justify the expense of the separate printing.

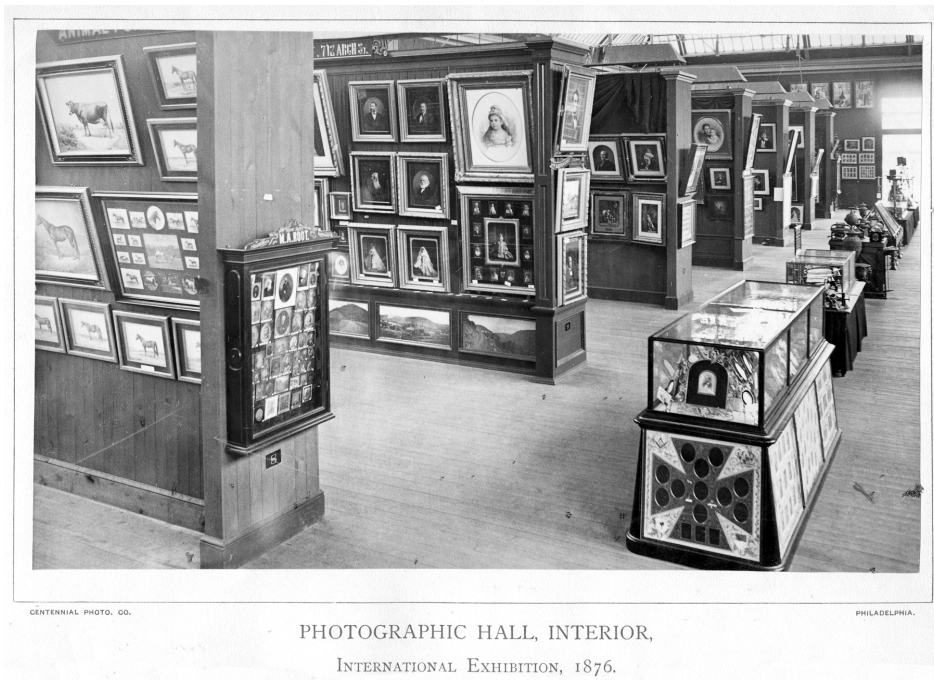
William H. Rulofson, elected the second president of the National Photographic Association in 1874. Rulofson died in 1878 in a fall from the roof of his San Francisco gallery. *Proceedings of the Sixth Annual Convention of the National Photographic Association* (1874).

Related to the publishing squabble was a more general feeling that Wilson was profiting at the expense of the membership. Some thought he was using the NPA to garner wider sales for his journal and the products it advertised, many of which were goods he manufactured or distributed. The criticism spread to all the officers who "took all the glory" for the successes of the association. Despite several en masse resignations to allay these charges, the same officers were elected year after year: Bogardus as president, Wilson as permanent secretary, and Albert Moore as treasurer after an initial year of service by H. T. Anthony. Finally, in 1874 Bogardus refused to serve another term and William H. Rulofson of San Francisco was elected in his place. Rulofson was a popular choice and a generous contributor, but he inherited a moribund organization deeply in debt.



Without a convention to plan, the officers devoted their efforts to raising \$20,000 for a separate photography building at the upcoming Centennial Exhibition. This was Wilson's idea that was then supported by other members of the executive committee. Although the NPA had voted to have Wilson and Bogardus represent the organization before the United States Centennial Commission and lobby for this honor, the success in securing Photographic Hall was more a personal victory than

it was an accomplishment of the association. The effort was also a telling example of why some were suspicious of Wilson's motives. In 1876 he was still permanent secretary of the NPA and Washington Irving Adams of the Scovill Company was chairman of the executive committee. At the same time they were pleading with photographers to send contributions to build Photographic Hall, they paid \$15,000 for the exclusive concession to photograph on Centennial grounds. Together with William Notman of Montreal, they formed the Centennial Photographic Company and published over 4000 stereographs and views documenting the exposition. The company employed three operators who also made thousands of portraits of visitors and even provided photo identification passes.



Interior of the Photographic Hall at the Centennial Exhibition, site of the last convention of the National Photographic Association, 1876. Centennial Photographic Company, *The Philadelphia Photographer* 13, no. 153 (September 1876).

As a final test to see if there was any interest left in the association, the officers arranged for an NPA convention to be held on the Centennial grounds. The weather was hot, the depression continued, and attendance by photographers was sparse. John Fitzgibbon replaced Wilson as permanent secretary at this convention. The following year he founded a new photographic journal, *The St. Louis Practical Photographer*, and no doubt hoped to replicate Wilson's business plan of promoting his magazine through the activities of the NPA. Fitzgibbon tried to revive interest in the NPA but at the same time was merciless in denouncing his predecessor. His charges of financial and journalistic malfeasance were moot accusations, however, because few any longer cared and fewer still were paying dues.

It seems on the surface that the National Photographic Association experienced far more failures than successes. Despite promises that "it will pay," the officers could not convince members of the long-term benefits to be gained from the association. Partially to blame was the problem that some advantages secured by the NPA were shared by all photographers whether members or not. Without a central issue such as the bromide patent to rally around, the members split into factions, grew jealous and suspicious of each other and lost sight of their original goals. In truth, the officers contributed to the demise of the NPA. They failed to delegate power, obscured its financial condition, often adopted a condescending posture, and out of idealism they promised more than they could deliver.

Still, the National Photographic Association made significant contributions to American photography. If nothing else, it was a testing ground for a future association that would endure. In the years immediately after the Centennial photographers periodically appealed for the revival of the NPA. But when a convention was finally called again in 1880, it was sponsored by a new organization, the Photographers' Association of America. The objectives and constitution of the new organization were almost identical to those of the previous NPA. Although it had many of the same members and officers, they avoided the mistakes of their predecessor by insuring that the agenda was controlled by photographers themselves and not by editors and manufacturers. That organization continues to this day under its new name, the Professional Photographers of America.

Monogram of the Photographers' Association of America, successor to the NPA founded in 1880.
Wilson's Cyclopaedic Photography, Edward L. Wilson (New York: Edward L. Wilson, 1894): 279.



The NPA could also point to its own legitimate accomplishments. It identified and gave voice to the concerns of average, "humble" photographers and gave them a sense of pride and accomplishment. It opened the door to cooperation and proved that united action could achieve success. It set high standards for the future of the medium and was widely acknowledged to have elevated the quality of American photography. It established a link to European photography, instigated greater awareness of artistic issues, and provided a site where a codification of photographic aesthetics could begin. As Wilson said before the final meeting of the NPA in 1876, "He who is familiar with or studies the history of the Association cannot but see the good work it has done."¹⁸

James S. Jensen is a professor in the Department of Fine Arts at Loyola University Chicago where he teaches photography and the history of photography. He has published a monograph on Illinois photographer W. E. Bowman and articles on vernacular photography and on the career of Edward L. Wilson. Jim collects Wilson publications and all types of multiple and manipulated imagery.

Notes: The vast majority of news, notices and convention reports of the National Photographic Association appear in *The Philadelphia Photographer* beginning in 1868. It ceased to be the exclusive publisher of NPA proceedings in 1871 and thereafter identical convention reports can also be found in *Anthony's Photographic Bulletin*. In the interest of simplicity, all citations are credited to *The Philadelphia Photographer*, abbreviated as PP. All illustrations are from the collection of James Jensen.

¹ PP 5 (1868): 150. ² PP 5 (1868): 278. ³ PP 8 (1871): 219. ⁴ PP 13 (1876): 68. ⁵ PP 8 (1871): 199. ⁶ PP 8 (1871): 229-230. ⁷ PP 10 (1873): 437. ⁸ PP 10 (1873): 296. ⁹ PP 10 (1873): 156. ¹⁰ PP 10 (1873): 482. ¹¹ PP 13 (1876): 278. ¹² PP 10 (1873): 272. ¹³ PP 8 (1871): 321-322. ¹⁴ PP 10 (1873): 345. ¹⁵ PP 9 (1872): 178. ¹⁶ PP 8 (1871): 204. ¹⁷ PP 9 (1872): 165. ¹⁸ PP 13 (1876): 195.

MIPHS PHOTO TRIPS TO THE DIA & THE COLUMBUS MUSEUM OF ART

Cynthia Motzenbecker

Quite a few MiPHS members came for the two museum events we had in September. The Charles Scheeler exhibit was quite well attended. The early 10:00AM time must have been agreeable. A few of us lingered over lunch in the new DIA cafeteria, though most disappeared to get something done on a lovely Saturday afternoon. We enjoyed curator Nancy Barr's discussion of the images and comments on how Scheeler's agent wanted the photos suppressed, as photos weren't considered "art." We also enjoyed the story of how member Tom Halsted was instrumental in the DIA's acquiring the Scheeler photo "Wheels," which fetched a record price of \$69,000 at Sotheby's in 1984. Gil Clark had an interesting tid-bit about one of the steamship images, that the boiler was potentially about to blow up. He could tell from how the steam was configured. (The things our members know!) Thank you everyone for attending.

Next, nine MiPHS members went on the overnight trip to the Columbus Museum of Art to view member Jim Rutkowski's "Family Album" exhibition. The exhibit itself was quite impressive. There were American Indian images to die for, occupationals, outdoor daguerreotypes, folks with masks, cake images, motorcycle images and interesting everyday life photos, among other things. (One just never knows what fellow members own until it's on display!) We were disappointed with the lighting, but maybe they were trying to save the photos from light damage. I just happened to have a flashlight which I take to the early morning flea markets. It turned out to be quite handy. There was also a large print case where you could continue to look at images. Jim had it set up so you could just make out the edge of something interesting at the rear of the drawers. It was set up that way to show the viewer that there's always more to be found. Maybe next time you'll just have to look in that big box of snapshots at the flea market!

Pausing to remember . . . MiPHS member Charlie L. Dutchess has informed *The Photogram* of the September 5th death of fellow member Norman E. LeGallee, of Comstock Park (a suburb of Grand Rapids), MI. Norm was 83. He served as a Naval photographer in World War II, and then joined the staff of the chain of Camera Center stores in western Michigan, where he soon became general manager, a position which he held for many years until his retirement. His wife predeceased him, but Norm was survived by a son and two daughters. The MiPHS Board would like to express their heartfelt sympathy to his family.

NEXT IN THE PHOTOGRAM

“AN INTERVIEW WITH CAMERA COLLECTOR ELAYNE GROSS”

Cynthia Motzenbecker

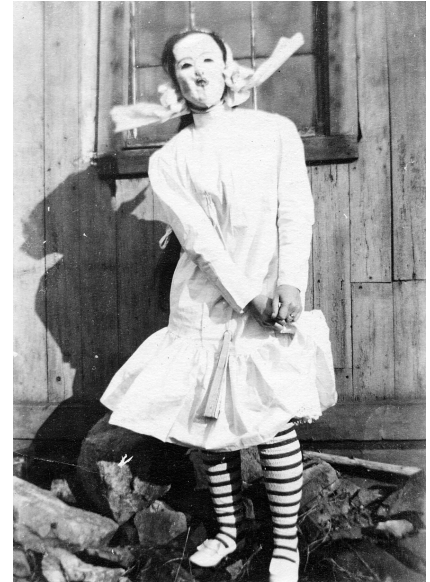


“OF TINTYPES & POKER-PLAYING DOGS—
THE ODD CAREER OF CASSIUS MARCELLUS COOLIDGE”

Philip A. Storey



“A YOUNG MAN in Michigan sued a photographer for ‘retouching away’ his moustache in his photographs. The photographer made oath that he did not see it.” *The Philadelphia Photographer* 12, no. 138 (June 1875): 192.



Snapshot, ca. 1925. Happy Halloween.

PHOTO-HISTORY CALENDAR

Exhibitions:

September 1-November 14: “The Last Battle,” photographs of Tony Vaccaro, Washtenaw County Historical Society, Museum on Main Street, Ann Arbor, MI, www.washtenawhistory.org

September 8-December 5: “The Photography of Charles Sheeler,” Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, MI, www.dia.org

September 11-January 2: “Family Album: The James Rutkowski Collection of American Photographs,” Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH, www.columbusmuseum.org

Trade Shows & Events:

October 24: **MiPHS** - 33rd Annual Photographica Trade Show, Novi Community Center, Novi, MI 10:00AM-4:00PM, www.miphs.org

October 31: Marty Raskin Postcard and Paper Show, Holiday Inn, Troy, info@martymap.com

November 7: London Photograph Fair, Bonnington Hotel, Bloomsbury, London, England, www.photofair.co.uk

November 10-14: Paris Photo, Carrousel du Louvre, Paris, France, www.parisphoto-online.com

November 11-14: The Daguerreian Society Symposium, Newport, RI, www.daguerre.org

November 13: Wally Jung Postcard Show, Cobblestone Events Center, Mason, MI, postcardwally@msn.com

November 13: Grand Rapids Camera Show & Sale, Howard Johnson Hotel, Grand Rapids, MI, www.photorama.com

November 14: Chicago Camera Show & Sale, Radisson Hotel, Schaumburg, IL, www.photorama.com

November 16: Martin Barnes, “Rural England Through a Victorian Lens: Benjamin Brecknell Turner,” 41 Kresge Art Center, MSU, East Lansing, MI, 1:00PM

November 22: Pam Roberts, “Roger Fenton & Alvin Langdon Coburn,” 108 Kresge Art Center, MSU, East Lansing, MI, 7:00PM

December 5: Cleveland Photorama USA, Cuyahoga County Fairgrounds, Berea, OH, www.photorama.com

December 11: Ann Arbor Camera Show & Sale, Best Western Inn, Ann Arbor, MI, www.photorama.com

December 12: Detroit Photorama USA, Clawson Troy Elks Lodge, Troy, MI, www.photorama.com

January 9: Marty Raskin Postcard and Paper Show, Holiday Inn, Troy, info@martymap.com

January 22: **MiPHS** - James Donaldson, “When Today Becomes Yesterday: History & Art in Photo Postcards of the Lake Huron Shore.” Royal Oak Senior Community Center, Royal Oak, MI, 10:30AM, www.miphs.org. Map: www.ci.royal-oak.mi.us/senior

January 16: Photo Antica, International Photo & Cinema Fair, Espace Champerret, Paris, France, www.photoantica.com

January 20-23: International Los Angeles Photographic Art Exposition, Santa Monica, CA, www.stephencohengallery.com

February 10-13: Association of International Photography Art Dealers (AIPAD) Photography Show 2005, New York Hilton, NYC, www.aipad.com