



# The Photogram

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George B. Sperry, *Larboard Ahoy*. Sperry of Toledo, Ohio was an outspoken advocate for the commercial possibilities of genre photography. *Wilson's Photographic Magazine/WPM* (July 1894).

**THE PHOTOGRAM** is the official bulletin of the Michigan Photographic Historical Society (MiPHS). It is published five times a year. The contents are copyrighted the year of publication.

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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 \$25 per year (January 1- December 31), \$30 outside the USA, \$15 for students with valid ID. For information and application forms, call 248.549.6026, visit us online at [www.miphs.org](http://www.miphs.org) or write to:

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## 2009 MiPHS Dinner & Presentation

The annual MiPHS Dinner and Presentation will be held at the Birmingham Athletic Club on Saturday, April 18, 2009. Chris Sneberger will be our speaker. Details and dinner reservation forms will be sent in the next issue of *The Photogram*.

## [www.cafepress.com](http://www.cafepress.com)

Items with our famous MiPHS LOGO are now available online through CafePress ([www.cafepress.com](http://www.cafepress.com)). All profits benefit MiPHS and support our educational mission.

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## Public Relations Volunteer Wanted

The Board of the Michigan Photographic Historical Society recognizes that we need a volunteer Public Relations person to assist in promoting the activities and achievements of our society. Ideally, we are looking for someone who has not previously been a member of the MiPHS Board, but would like to contribute to the advancement of the MiPHS mission. A PR person would be responsible for writing announcements of MiPHS activities, contacting other organizations that have similar interests, providing press releases to local news outlets in a timely fashion, and writing and disseminating articles to appear in print or online that feature aspects of our organization's current and future activities.

The PR volunteer would work closely with other members of the MiPHS Board, and should have good computer skills, be versed in writing concise and appealing press releases, and will also aid in upgrading the newsworthiness of the MiPHS website. If you are interested in helping our society, contact Cynthia Motzenbecker at 248-549.6026.

## Eaton Lothrop Remembered

We are saddened to report the death of MiPHS member Eaton S. Lothrop, Jr. on September 21. He was a dear friend to many of us who collect nineteenth-century photography and historic cameras. He authored a number of excellent articles for *The Photogram* in the past five years and we were looking forward to his article on "flat cameras" scheduled for the February 2009 issue. If any of you would like to send a remembrance of Eaton, we will publish those instead. Eaton was a true gentleman, gracious and generous, full of life and humor. One of the great lights of the history of photography has been extinguished. We will miss him.

— Jan Schimmelman, Editor



# PROFESSIONAL ART:

## Exhibitions of the Photographers' Association of America, 1880-1900

Photographers' Association of America logo. *Philadelphia Photographer/PP* (September 1881): 258.

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**James S. Jensen**

Since the earliest days of the daguerreotype photographers sought recognition of their medium as an independent art equal in stature to the traditional visual arts of painting and sculpture. Histories of photography locate the moment of victory in turn-of-the-century Pictorialism as practiced by enlightened amateurs who gained access to the medium when the simplified dry plate replaced the unwieldy collodion wet plate process. Professionals did not, however, simply abandon artistic concerns to amateurs but rather continued to seek their own definition. This essay traces the quest for art status by professional photographers during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. It uses the activities of The Photographers' Association of America, and especially the exhibitions it sponsored, as means to identify and analyze professional art. Doing so reveals the broader shape of the medium and puts the amateur accomplishment into a larger context.

The origin of The Photographers' Association of America (PAA) can be traced to a preceding venture, the National Photographic Association (NPA) that existed between 1868 and 1876. In turn, its comprehensive effort to advance the science, business, and art of American photography had grown out of a battle that rallied photographers to prevent the re-issue of a questionable patent that had threatened the livelihood of all professionals. The NPA had lofty goals and some successes, but it disintegrated over squabbles between officers and members, between prosperous and modest photographers, between trade interests and those of practicing photographers, between rival editors of competing journals. Nevertheless, in the years immediately following the final meeting of the NPA held at the Centennial Exhibition, the photographic press published an increasing number of letters and editorials calling for it to be resuscitated. The disastrous business conditions that plagued most photographers and the potential of the new gelatin dry plate technology had photographers looking for some authority to address their needs.

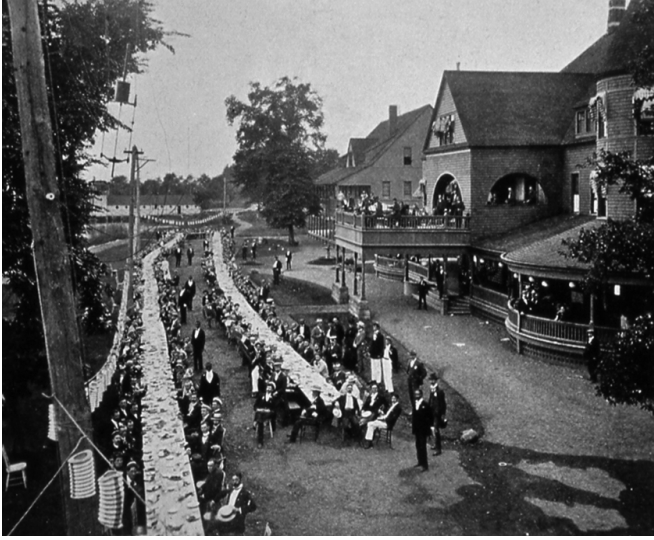
The NPA had self-destructed but vigorous local societies continued in major cities including New York, Philadelphia, Boston, St. Louis and Chicago. In January, 1880 the Chicago Photographic Association debated calling a national convention. Rather than trying to revive the troubled NPA and rekindle old antagonisms, they considered forming an entirely new association. A decision to proceed was approved the following month and by March circulars were mailed to galleries across the country and the journals posted calls to an August convention. Separate from its local officers, the Chicago group elected James F. Ryder of Cleveland as President of a new organization they named the Photographers' Association of America. Ryder was widely recognized as an accomplished artist and as a fair, effective and generous leader from his labors supporting the old NPA. Also elected was a photographer from every state, territory and some Canadian provinces to serve as a vice president to promote the convention at home. The journals cooperated

with editorials encouraging attendance, although most still managed to cast blame on their peers for the demise of the NPA.

When about 400 photographers gathered in Chicago in the summer of 1880 the PAA existed in name only. The convention immediately formed Committees on Constitution and Credentials to officially establish its mission, operating procedures and membership qualifications. Together, they chose to simply recycle the old NPA constitution but with one significant difference—manufacturers, stock dealers and the press were welcome to join but only practicing photographers would be eligible to vote. Many professionals felt the NPA had served the interests of the trade more than their own and now acted to prevent that conflict from arising again. Reports stressed the harmony of the proceedings, noting that all constitutional and procedural disagreements were amicably settled. The two most prominent journal editors, Edward L. Wilson of *The Philadelphia Photographer* and John H. Fitzgibbon of *The St. Louis Practical Photographer*, who for years had traded venomous insults and accusations, now offered congratulatory resolutions to each other. Although editors and readers were pleased with the larger than expected attendance, it represented a small fraction of the 7,000-10,000 galleries that the journals routinely cited as operating in the United States. Two distinct classes of photographers were among those potential members. There was a small group of elite photographers who operated fashionable, prosperous galleries in the country's urban centers and a far larger number in small town or modest city galleries, often referred to as "the humble photographers."

The PAA constitution reflected the state of the medium, the structure that annual conventions would come to take, and the benefits the new organization would have to provide if it was to be successful. The most obvious goal of the association was to diffuse knowledge about the science of photography. At its annual conventions that rotated to different Midwestern and eastern cities, these opportunities were called "practical

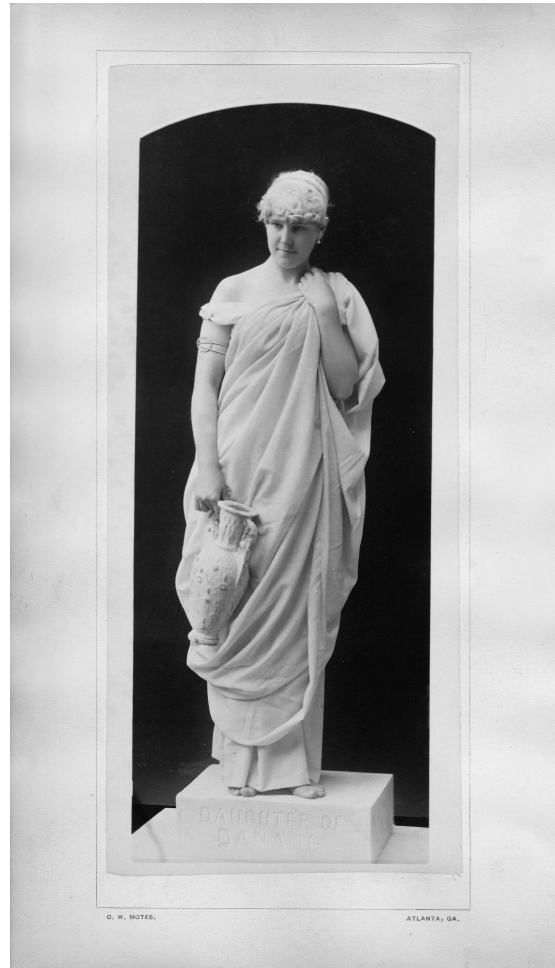




*Photographers' Convention Dinner, Celeron, 1898* by Baker's Art Gallery. The most successful PAA conventions were held between 1896 and 1899 at Celeron, New York, home of the Chautauqua Institute. Adopting its model of adult education, at this time the PAA revived interest in the professional's pursuit of artistic portraiture. *WPM* (September 1898): 405.



F. W. Guerin, *Meditation*. Among those who regularly exhibited genre photographs, Guerin's example is typical of the tender, introspective sentiments commonly depicted. *PP* (October 2, 1886).



C. W. Motes, *Statuary Portrait*. An honored exhibitor in both PAA and private exhibitions, Motes of Atlanta was especially known for his novelty portraits that mimicked classical statuary. *PP* (August 1884).



H. Randall, *Joy to the World, Alleluia*. This was the most popular of six photographs Randall exhibited in the genre class at the 1890 convention held in Washington, DC. *WPM* (March 3, 1891).



sessions.” Paramount among these during the opening years of the PAA were questions about gelatin dry plates. Although the basic terms of Richard Leach Maddox’s invention were initially published in 1871, dry plates were not commercially produced in the United States until 1879. Most photographers lacked the resources and expertise to sort through the volume of claims to confirm whether they should abandon the cumbersome, but familiar, wet plate in favor of an unproven new technology. They were uncertain whether they should make their own, or which manufactured plates were most reliable, or whether the significantly higher cost could be justified in businesses that were often just marginally profitable. At the inaugural convention the only committee established beyond the parliamentary ones was charged to investigate the promise of dry plates.

The Dry Plate Committee tested all available brands and enthusiastically reported many advantages back to the membership. Even so, one year later at the next PAA convention and exhibit in New York City, *The Philadelphia Photographer* reported that of about 85 exhibitors “only comparatively few worked dry plates.”<sup>1</sup> Returning from that 1881 convention, a Chicago photographer noted, “Nothing seemed to be talked about in New York but dry plates. I never was so sick of them in my life.”<sup>2</sup> *The Photographic Times* confirmed that impression saying the convention was “a case of gelatin on the brain.”<sup>3</sup> Questions about developers, safelights, shutters, different printing characteristics, and even what trays were best used for dry plate negatives dominated convention proceedings over the next two years. By the time of the 1883 convention in Milwaukee, *Anthony’s Photographic Bulletin* reported that among exhibited work “dry plates almost vanquished wet.”<sup>4</sup> Its editor, J. Trail Taylor, went on to predict an important consequence now that manufactured dry plates were uniform and consistent, “The aims of the photographer are higher than they have ever been before. Subjects are attempted...which previously were entirely beyond the capacity of the average photographer... Photographers stand in a more elevated position because instead of being, as in wet collodion days, the slaves of their plates, the plate now takes its proper position as being the subservient servant of the photographer.”<sup>5</sup> After dry plates were universally adopted, practical sessions included darkroom demonstrations of developing and enlarging, comparisons of the many new printing papers that became available, the use of electric light rather than the skylight, and electric retouching machines.

A related aspect of the PAA mission was to stimulate discovery, invention and manufacture of the equipment, materials and processes of photography. There was an annual “Progress of Photography” report to the membership, but the more tangible expression of this goal was a trade exhibit that accompanied each convention. To the dismay of officers, it often attracted more interest than its own sessions and they were forced to restrict the hours it was open. Dry plates not only transformed photographic practice they also revolutionized the supply industry. Previously, it was dominated by just three major firms who furnished ingredients that photographers mixed themselves. New start-up companies now offered ready-to-use products and competed to establish an identity and reputation. Beginning with just one American dry plate manufacturer in 1879, by

the early 1890s there were a dozen competing for a share of an expanding market that included amateurs. Prior to the dry plate, photographers had often been victimized by “process mongers” who peddled supposedly secret, and most often bogus, processes directly to individuals. Now free of that burden they instead became captive to corporate control.

In addition to practical matters, the constitution called for improving the business prospects of the profession. For example, as an incentive for photographers to join the new PAA it promised to investigate issuing its own fire and life insurance that were otherwise exorbitant or impossible to obtain. These were eventually judged too complex for the association to sponsor, the same conclusion the NPA reached years earlier. Near the end of the century the PAA tried to increase copyright protection for photographs. It proved to be of interest only to a very few who found their images used for commercial purposes without compensation or who published large quantities of genre and celebrity pictures that were pirated. Business meetings also included lectures and discussion about customer relations, effective advertising, opportunities to expand services beyond portraiture, and best practices for operating a gallery.

The business question that most concerned photographers, however, was low prices caused by a surplus of photographers. The situation had been acute since the end of the Civil War. Initially blamed on second-rate itinerants and tintypists, better photographers now had to compete with cut-rate galleries that offered similar products at just a fraction of what they determined were fair and remunerative prices. A dramatic example was a report that in 1898 cabinet cards were being sold in St. Louis for 40¢ per dozen compared to \$9-12 that the best galleries once commanded. The distressed state of the professionals was the subject of the very first paper presented at a PAA convention. Delivered by President Ryder and titled “Photographic Jealousies,” it outlined the self-destructive business practices photographers felt compelled to follow lest they give a competitor some advantage. All hoped for, and some demanded, the PAA to solve the problem. Proposals to combat the dire situation included boycotting stock dealers who sold supplies to the “cheap johns,” requiring apprenticeships, establishing an “art-censor” for every state to rate and value pictures, petitioning Congress to fix a uniform price for pictures, and restricting technical instruction to a secret brotherhood. Although there were PAA lectures and discussions about low prices every single year of the time span covered in this essay, by the late 1880s the issue receded as more and more photographers became resigned to the fact there was nothing the association could do about it. The 1887 *Progress of Photography Report* by journal editor Dr. John Nicols addressed the reality of the marketplace but also suggested another possibility:

Photographs...are like every other commodity, subject to the everlasting laws of supply and demand, and their prices cannot be permanently affected by any kind of artificial restriction. The man who produces photographs simply as a business, must make up his mind to compete on fair terms with others in the same line, and should cutting get below the cost of production and living profit, the weakest must, of course, go to the wall. But he who



H. Randall, *Genre Studies*. These examples from the 1895 PAA competition illustrate the broad definition of genre to encompass any portrait that attempted to express a sentiment or emotion. *WPM* (December 1895): following page 560.



H. McMichael, *Elaine*. Tennyson's poem about the characters of King Arthur's court was the subject of the 1891 Grand Prize. The entries by McMichael of Buffalo were praised for their ambition but faulted for historical inaccuracies in costume and props and he failed to take the honor. *WPM* (October 3, 1891): 579.



C. H. Stoddart, *Basil, The Blacksmith*, from Longfellow's *Evangeline*. The photographer's use of a live horse in a scene illustrating the epic poem was greatly admired. *Anthony's Photographic Bulletin* (October 26, 1889). The collection of Robert G. Wilson.



Baker's Art Gallery, *After the Ball is Over*. In the late 1890s this Columbus, Ohio gallery dominated genre competitions. The proprietor credited his chief operator, J. S. Schneider, for the compositions. *WPM* (February 1894).

succeeds in stamping his own individuality on his work lifts himself out of the arena of trade and into that of a profession, and may fix his prices to suit himself without regard to competition.<sup>6</sup>

As Nichols's comments suggest, the remaining objective voiced in the constitution was to advance the art of photography by educating both photographers and the public. Unlike amateurs for whom art might be their only goal, professionals were shaped by the scientific, business and trade issues just outlined as the greater mission of the PAA. Conventions included specifically designated "art sessions" that might be diatribes on composition, art history lectures about Old Master painters, lantern slide presentations accompanied with criticism, or demonstrations of posing and lighting by photographers acknowledged to be at the forefront of art. Dry plates were regarded as aiding the advance of art. First, they were considered more artistic by definition because they translated color and values more accurately than wet plates, and their shorter exposures permitted more natural positions without the constraint of a headrest. The 1882 *Progress of Photography* report pointed out that dry plates facilitated making much larger negatives and noted even another artistic benefit, "Allied to this is the advantage of gelatin in securing, in the walks of higher genre, art effects of a more artistic nature than were previously possible, without at any time having recourse to double or combination printing."<sup>7</sup> At the same time, in an essay titled "Art and Dry-Plates," the author reminded photographers that the public did not care about technical details but simply demanded quality results.

The PAA claimed its exhibitions represented the finest work in the country and were the most important arena for art education. Their greatest value was received when photographers both exhibited and saw the entire display in order to compare their work with others. Veteran New York photographer and former NPA president Abraham Bogardus offered typical words of encouragement to attend conventions:

No doubt the greatest benefit to be derived is from careful study of exhibits. Each exhibitor has a style of his own. Note it carefully, and then take in the work of another. They are not alike, yet each is good. See the difference in lighting, posing, finish, etc. Also note the different ways of arranging backgrounds and accessories...Devote as much time as is possible to these things, and you will go home with new ideas to incorporate in your work.<sup>8</sup>

Many of those not attending a convention, however, were still likely to be aware of art progress since the journals published lectures, exhibition reviews and reproduced key images.

Exhibiting at a national convention represented a significant commitment and expense to frame, crate and ship work to a distant city. The idealistic appeal to compare, improve, and contribute to the advance of the medium was a challenge when the humble photographers feared ridicule and the elite risked embarrassment if their productions were exceeded. On the other hand, the manufacturers devised a more tangible incentive. At the second convention in 1881 the new dry plate companies began offering cash prizes for photographs

made with their products. Although most exhibits were still made with wet plates that year, a precedent was established. The universal adoption of the dry plate proceeded rapidly. Just three years later a writer to *The St. Louis Photographer* reported that all exhibition pictures had been made with dry plates. He continued, "No doubt to the liberality of our dry plate makers, who offered large sums of money for the best collections of different styles and sizes of photographs, this result may be attributed in great measure."<sup>9</sup> *The Photographic Times* concurred, adding, "The prizes induced many to come and make an exhibit of pictures, who otherwise would not have attended the convention."<sup>10</sup> The number and dollar value of private prizes grew as competition among manufacturers escalated. In an emerging market they were willing to buy loyalty and the PAA exhibitions were an opportunity to shop for customers.

The private exhibits became the most visible aspect of an entangled relationship between the PAA and the manufacturers. The association refused to appoint judges for their competitions and limited official recognition to reading the names of winners. In 1886 the trade displays were separated from what was now called the art exhibit sponsored by the association. The blatant advertising that accompanied the private exhibits was thought to thwart the recognition of photography as a fine art. Sometimes with messianic fervor, it was the officers, journal editors and elite photographers who made this argument to keep art a pure and noble pursuit. As an example of the passion some felt for photography to reach its artistic potential, Edward L. Wilson in an 1885 convention lecture titled "The Dignity of Photographic Art" averred, "Rather would I die, than give up my faith in the ability of photography to produce works of art."<sup>11</sup> Wilson's idealism, however, had to be tempered with the reality of professional practice. He concluded that photographers must first improve their own work before the public would recognize photography as an art. They would then reject cheap productions, demand high quality, and be willing to pay more for it.

Even with separate exhibitions, relations with the trade remained restive. Manufacturers were solicited for contributions to subsidize the organization and fees charged for exhibition space made up for shortfalls that dues did not cover. Part of the problem was that many paid dues only when they were attending a convention or sending an exhibit. Between 1880 and 1900 there were never more than 1200 active members reported for any one year. Aware that the NPA had relied on membership dues and gone bankrupt, the PAA had little choice but to depend on the manufacturers for financial support. It was a dilemma one member summarized in a letter to *Wilson's Photographic Magazine*:

It is well known that our National Conventions have been conducted by the dealers and manufacturers, with a few photographers who have been brought into prominence by and for selfish motives and purposes—often to advertise some brand of plate or paper, or other merchandise. This has been forced upon our manufacturers as a matter of business necessity, simply because photographers have not shown the spirit and enterprise to conduct the Association themselves for their own interests.<sup>12</sup>





J. Ed. Rosch, *A Model Display*. Representative of how photographers submitted framed entries with multiple images, the Rosch display from the 1895 PAA exhibition includes the bronze statues won in Grand Prize competitions in 1889 and 1891. *WPM* (January 1896): following page 16.



F. W. Guerin, *Dead Broke*. The year that Guerin of St. Louis exhibited this humorous genre picture, he also won the "Grand prize, Diamond Badge" for portraiture. *PP* (June 2, 1888).



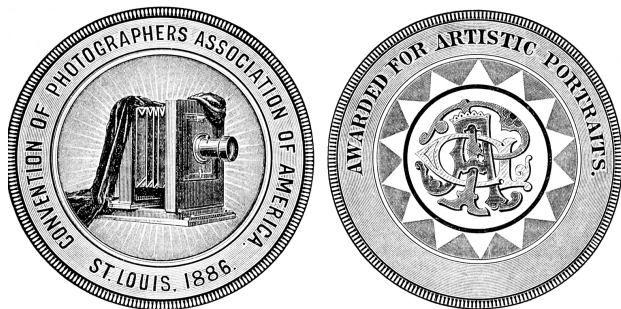
S. L. Stein, *The Harvesters*. Although he won more medals in genre classifications than any other PAA photographer, including for this image from the 1888 exhibition, Stein's work is virtually unknown today. Following his presidency in 1900, the PAA abandoned the awarding of prizes altogether. *PP* (September 15, 1888).



H. McMichel, *All Ready—Go!* This diptych of young girls in a game of "Ring Around the Rosie" was a popular favorite at the 1888 exhibition. H. McMichael of Buffalo became PAA president the following year. *PP* (December 1, 1888).

Despite the limitation on voting privileges, three different dry plate proprietors became PAA presidents.

With photographers showing more interest in the private exhibits, the PAA abandoned its idealism in 1885 and awarded a single prize for the “best collection” of the art exhibit. Decided by ballot of all in attendance, it was handily won by James F. Ryder. Comprised of large portraits, life-size heads as well as landscapes, reviews noted the absence of any genre or composition pictures. Different writers concurred it was Ryder’s ability to secure appropriate expression from his subjects that distinguished the work. *The St. Louis Photographer*, for example, commented, “By some secret process of his own he appears to be able to call up an expression of countenance in perfect harmony with the age and costume of the sitter.”<sup>13</sup> The following year awards were increased to two classes, portraiture and “other productions.” To mark the occasion, the PAA initiated its first medals, engraved with the phrase “For Artistic Portraits.” Ironically, their cost was covered primarily by contributions from manufacturers and stock dealers. Response to the expanded prize list was overwhelming as the display filled eight rooms at the St. Louis convention site. No doubt something of a hyperbole, *Anthony’s Photographic Bulletin* reported there were probably 10,000 photographs exhibited.



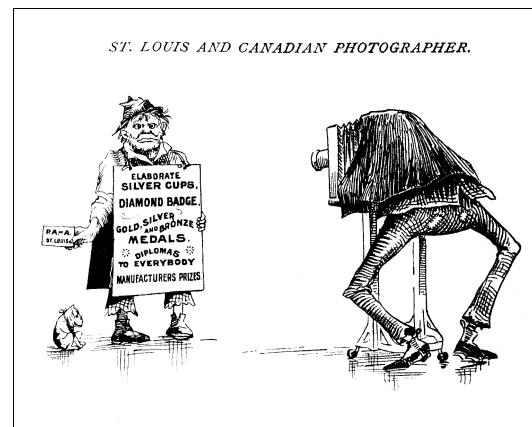
Medal for Artistic Portraits. Multiple exhibition prizes were first awarded by the PAA in 1886, with six gold and six silver medals for portraiture and one each for “other productions.” *PP* (May 15, 1888): 308.

The newfound enthusiasm by photographers to exhibit led to a dramatic inflation of awards the following year. Using \$1,000 from its own treasury, medals were now awarded in eleven classes including portraiture, genre, landscape, marine, architectural, instantaneous and scientific. Noteworthy were the additions of a “Grand Prize, Diamond Badge” for the best portrait collection and a cabinet card classification meant to give the humble photographers a fair chance at securing one of more than thirty association prizes. They nevertheless complained of still being at a disadvantage because they did not have access to as many comely subjects. With seven additional private competitions that same year, *Anthony’s Photographic Bulletin* encouraged photographers to exhibit, “There are substantial rewards for those who are ambitious. Never before in the history of the association has there been so much money in the form of prizes offered for competition. Many, very many, photographers of all grades of professional experience have the opportunity of taking home some material reward.”<sup>14</sup>



Prize medal for 1888 PAA exhibition. Beginning with a single award in 1885, three years later thirty gold, silver and bronze medals were awarded to American photographers. *PP* (May 19, 1888): 313.

Although the prospect of winning prizes enticed more photographers to exhibit, an award was even more valuable as an advertising tool when they returned to their galleries and could claim to be among the best in the nation. Preoccupation with awards forced a PAA president to comment, “I am well aware that the great attraction and the greatest benefit derived from our annual conventions, are the competitive exhibitions.”<sup>15</sup> The value of giving awards was questioned beginning the year they were instituted. Some worried that they crowded out anything else of importance. Following the 1894 convention, an editorial asked, “Are we truly degenerating? No business transacted, no instruction, no nothing—yes, there was awarding of prizes and—adjournment!”<sup>16</sup> The idealists also felt the awards only exacerbated the rampant competition that inflicted professional photography. With the 1887 expansion of medals *The Saint Louis Photographer* argued, “We have all along advocated that prizes given by the Association would prove unwise. They are, and always will be, breeders of discord, and should be abolished.”<sup>17</sup>



This 1894 cartoon satirized the value of the ever-expanding number of association and private prizes offered to encourage participation in the annual conventions and exhibitions. *St. Louis and Canadian Photographer/SLCP* (April 1894): 187.

The photographers themselves, however, thought differently. The import they gave the awards was reflected in the frequent

grievances about judging. With each new round of complaints the PAA countered with a change in exhibition rules. When many protested that awards were based on prior reputation rather than absolute quality, the display of names was banned until judging was complete. Others grumbled that prosperous photographers mounted elaborately matted and framed photographs that dazzled but lacked substance. The same photographers also were able to impress with sheer quantity. The elite displayed as many as 38 frames with over 250 photographs. In response, exhibit space was first reduced and then limited further to a maximum of six entries per classification. Photographers often felt they were subjected to arbitrary opinions and eventually succeeded in having judges' marks and written criticism posted with each entry. Disagreements at times were so contentious that the judges burned their marking sheets and could not be held accountable for any particular decision. Many were especially offended when an amateur was included on the 1887 judging panel. A *St. Louis Photographer* editorial raged, "The indignation aroused among the members by having amateurs placed upon the awarding committee is foreboding evil to our Association, and should, and no doubt will, receive the severest condemnation. This is essentially a professional photographers' association, and should be solely under their control."<sup>18</sup> All were unhappy with reports that some photographers falsely advertised they had won an award.

While the PAA may have considered there were two separate exhibits at each convention, the journals most often reviewed them together. In fact, photographers commonly submitted multiple copies of the same work to compete in both association and private competitions. Exhibition reviews were typically lists of selected photographers with brief, summary judgments of technical and artistic quality, perhaps including titles or simple descriptions of favored works. Commentary about any individual photographer was most often positive and similar to all others. Over time, however, there was a consensus of whose work was most often praised, received the most awards, and was selected for reproduction in the journals. More insightful about the evolution of professional art than individual photographers are the rules, judging criteria and ranking of classes in which photographs were submitted. Although these changed in some fashion every single year, they demonstrate that there were three distinct phases of professional art in the PAA exhibitions between 1880 and 1900. Each one reveals a conception of what constituted art in photography.

The first PAA exhibits represented a continuation of standards from the wet plate era and an emphasis on portraiture, the staple of virtually all professional businesses. Adopting the old NPA constitution was an obvious sign of this orientation. Photographers and editors used the terms "art" and "artistic" often and freely. The most lauded portraits integrated skillful lighting, graceful posing, and judicious arrangement of accessories and backdrop, all of which was then executed with superior technique, called "chemical effect." If all elements were evident photographs were judged to be artistic, a somewhat general term that simply equated to high quality. Just as often the concept was phrased as an absence of errors, or "incongruities" to use the critical term of the day. There was a "school of failures" at one convention and a *Philadelphia Photographer* review

once grouped such examples in a category of "errors and freaks." These included lighting that violated natural conditions, contradictions between accessories and backgrounds such as mixing indoor and outdoor elements, or positions that seemed awkward. The "harmony" of these component parts was tested against rules derived from the history of painting. The common plea for photographers to study, to become educated about art, was a call to learn the established rules of painting that if followed would automatically lead to producing photographic works of art. Other things being equal, the larger the print the more acclaim it received. Portrait classifications were ranked by size, the most prestigious category specified photographs that were at least 14 × 17 inches. Contact prints as large as 40 × 60 inches were exhibited and the Eastman Company's introduction of bromide enlarging paper in the mid-1880s accelerated a trend towards large prints. Certain novelties were also occasionally judged artistic. Noteworthy in the early 1880s were statuary portraits such as those made by F. W. Guerin of St. Louis and C. W. Motes of Atlanta.

Occasionally one other element was used to evaluate the art of portraiture. Various named "conception," "individuality," "feeling" or "taste," these nebulous terms attempted to explain how photographs could be more than simple "likenesses" and explicitly show the hand of the photographer. Wilson's PAA lecture "The Dignity of Photographic Art" included one of the more succinct statements of the relationship between the factual and the spiritual, "When we look at a picture we should become one with it. It will talk to us and we may talk to it. We first examine its lines, its light and shade, and decide whether or not the rules of art are complied with. And then we endeavor to discover the conception of the artist and study out to what extent he has secured what he attempted."<sup>19</sup> A similar idea was commonly phrased as the need for photography to rise above mere technical quality. A review of the 1889 Boston exhibition in *Anthony's Photographic Bulletin* summarized the perspective, "The time was when photographers only strove for technical excellence—for the quality of the negative and the brilliancy and tone of the print. More recently the best men have striven to give art values to their productions. The portraitist is learning that the handling of the subject is more important than the handling of the plate."<sup>20</sup> Landscape was always an exhibit classification and notable photographers like William Henry Jackson and George Barker routinely garnered inordinate praise, but it was never considered to be on the same order of art as studio productions. Perhaps it was because the subject matter was less disposed to being directly shaped by the photographer and surely it was because few PAA members pursued it as a business. The artistic requirement that the photograph transcend transcription of an existing subject was also implied by a new 1891 classification of "landscape with figures added" and was awarded a more notable prize than landscape itself. Exhibit classes such as architecture, interiors, marine or commercial views were similarly perceived.

An opportunity to accentuate self-expression arose in 1887 when the Blair Camera Company offered a solid silver cup for "the single finest photograph" exhibited at that year's convention. Made by The Tiffany Company and valued at \$250, its extravagance was construed as a symbol that



photography was indeed a fine art. Bending its own rules to separate association and private competitions, judges selected by the PAA awarded the Blair Cup to James Landy of Cincinnati for his allegorical picture "Man, Know Thy Destiny." The photographic press praised it as "a conception of beauty and grandeur that...has hardly ever been equaled or excelled in the world," and "a composition that breathed with artistic feeling."<sup>21</sup> A decade earlier Landy had produced the most acclaimed photographic art work of the 1876 Centennial, a suite of pictures illustrating the Seven Ages of Man based on Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. As PAA president in 1885 he encouraged others to follow suit, "Let us show our good taste in the selection of subjects. I would suggest that we illustrate a thought, a sentiment, or story. Genre pictures are always full of interest; let our aim be high art."<sup>22</sup> The Blair Cup donor required that a photographer win the award two times before taking possession of the trophy. With the PAA given the prerogative to set the terms of the competition, the Executive Committee specified that Blair Cup entries for 1888 must illustrate Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem, "Hiawatha." Landy once again claimed the prize in the realm of what was now called illustrative photography.



Imprint from reverse of James Landy photograph noting numerous awards including the prestigious Blair Cup conferred by the PAA in 1887. Exhibition prizes were important advertising tools in the extremely competitive business of photography. *PP* (February 18, 1888): 120.

With the Blair Cup competition over, the next year the PAA itself elevated the representation of poetry to its pre-eminent award, the Grand Prize. As a new poem for illustration was selected each year, the journals collaborated by printing the text and suggesting specific passages that held the most promise. *The Philadelphia Photographer* was the most enthusiastic supporter of this new direction for art and published graphic illustrations to guide aspiring artists. Also beginning in 1889 the PAA made genre pictures the next highest

classification, thus demoting portraiture to the third rank and signaling a new emphasis for the pursuit of art. Included in genre submissions were two distinct variants. The first adhered to the common meaning as depictions of everyday life. Although similar to illustrative art with props and costumed models in a constructed studio environment, the less lofty and sometimes humorous stories they told were transparent caricatures of simple virtues, romantic sentiments, or exotic peoples. A second, less ambitious version of genre simply attempted to represent an emotion. Little different in appearance than conventional portraiture, a simple prop, a poignant expression, or just a title naming the sentiment, were the only requirements for a picture to be classified as a genre photograph.

Together, illustrative and genre photographs were more broadly described as "composition pictures." The term signaled they were inventions of the photographer who created both its form and content. In some contexts the word "picture" by itself distinguished an image with artistic intent from a common likeness. A limited number of photographers including the Rösch brothers of St. Louis, S. L. Stein of Milwaukee, Herbert Randall of Ann Arbor, Baker's Art Gallery of Columbus, and George Sperry of Toledo, all successfully marketed composition pictures as independent works of art. Encouraging others at the 1895 convention to pursue this commercial opportunity, Sperry told of selling 15,000 copies of one picture. Nevertheless, he cautioned that photography had limits, "Photography is too realistic to succeed in the higher realm of ideas. But success can be had with less pretensions, and a fortune awaits the man of ability in this field. The time is coming when a picture will be sold by the quality of the picture, and not because of the manner of its production."<sup>23</sup>

Judging standards for both illustrative and genre photography were nearly identical. "Originality, composition, lighting and technical" were the criteria listed for the genre class while illustrative work for the Grand Prize added "historic" as another measure. This last element at times doomed Grand Prize entries when costumes or props were not historically accurate to the time period of the poem. Like portraiture, criticism of the Grand Prize entries often dwelt on "incongruities." Perhaps photographers did not choose the best passages, or the model was not sufficiently attractive or not the right age, or lighting did not correspond to natural conditions, or expressions were artificial. Art was based on a lack of errors as much as it was on the characteristics it possessed. This reflected the professionals' penchants for rules that had been accepted as gospel since the 1869 publication of Henry Peach Robinson's *Pictorial Effect in Photography*.

Despite the potential to advertise being judged the most artistic photographer in the nation, the Grand Prize attracted relatively few competitors. The challenges were conceptual, technical and economic. Contestants were required to submit three oversized photographs that at once told the story of the epic poem, encapsulated its sentiment, were true to the historical period, and were beyond reproach technically. Once conceived, custom backgrounds had to be painted, props and costumes constructed, and appropriate models located. In 1891 H. McMichael claimed it took him over six months to research, stage and execute his three pictures



James Landy, *Man, Know Thy Destiny*. The winner of the first Blair Cup competition, Landy's photograph ushered in a period when the PAA promoted composition pictures as the path to art status. *PP* (April 7, 1888).



L. Stein, *Celeron Prize Studies*. Over two decades of PAA exhibitions, those winning the highest awards for composition pictures also most often secured the highest honors in portraiture. Stein's 1896 entries reflect a return to portraiture as the highest ambition for professional art. *WPM* (August 1896): following p. 368.



GOLD MEDAL AWARDED  
CLASS C  
ST. LOUIS, 1894

Pirie MacDonal, *Portrait Studies*. With these first PAA gold medal entries in 1894, MacDonald of Albany, New York went on to dominate portrait competitions until the end of the century. His masterful lighting exemplified the new professional portrait standards. The following year MacDonald won the highest award in four different portrait classes and twice secured the Grand Portrait honor before prizes were abolished in 1901. *WPM* (October 1894).



G. M. Elton, *Isn't That Sweet*. Childhood innocence was one of the cloying themes typical of the genre photographs by Elton of Palmyra, New York. *PP* (June 2, 1888).

illustrating Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem "Elaine" from *Idylls of the King*. Some complained that the Grand Prize competition was beyond the means of the humble because a photographer needed two skylights, one where the elaborate scenes could be arranged and another where the business of portraiture could be continued. Many thought they were being taxed to support a select few when their dues were redistributed to Grand Prize winners. There were also the heretics who felt that photography was incapable of treading in the domain of high art.

The PAA increasingly relaxed the Grand Prize rules to encourage more participation. They choose a contemporary poem to illustrate, reduced the number of required images, allowed photographers to illustrate any Charles Dickens character, and eventually re-framed the category as "Grand Genre," accepting any composition picture. Still, there were never more than nine competitors. It is probably not a coincidence that during the period when literary illustration remained the highest honor, the association itself was struggling to survive. Attendance at conventions faltered and practical matters were ignored as members became embroiled in disagreements over elections, convention sites, constitutional revisions and the influence of the trade. Manufacturers had long complained of the expense of shipping and exhibiting their products to different cities and lobbied for less frequent meetings. Following a poorly attended 1891 convention in remote Minneapolis, the PAA capitulated to trade interests and adopted a biannual schedule. That decision only compounded flagging interest when the next convention was slated for Chicago during the 1893 World's Fair and photographers were diverted by more glamorous attractions. After the failed experiment the PAA returned to holding an annual convention and exhibition.

More than anything else, interest in illustrative work waned because it was irrelevant to everyday photographers. Evaluating the 1891 convention, this comment from one of the humble was typical, "Generally speaking, there were too many pictures and not enough portraits...The latter is what the country photographer comes to see and learn how to improve upon."<sup>24</sup> In 1894 the Cramer Dry Plate Company seized the initiative to again emphasize portraiture when it offered a silver cup and over 60 gold medals and special diplomas at the St. Louis convention. The rich bounty attracted 250 entrants. The PAA also tried to lure members back that year by making the cabinet card classification a "rating competition" that gave all entrants a diploma if they met minimal qualifications. Increasing the number of award opportunities yet again in 1896, competitions in ten picture classes were multiplied by four geographical divisions. The plentitude of awards succeeded in boosting participation but most recognized the awards meant little when so many were issued. The 1898 exhibit when 176 entrants were eligible for 164 awards was a striking example of the excess. That same year no entries were judged worthy of the highest genre prize.

After ten years of promoting composition pictures as the path to art and the salvation of business, the plan had failed. High art had no better chance to rescue photographers from low prices than did a secret brotherhood. The portrait regained its position as the highest ambition for professional art when the

uppermost PAA award became "Grand Portraiture" in 1897. Just as significant as the change in the grand prize was the selection of Celoron in upstate New York as the location for PAA conventions between 1896 and 1899. This was the site of the Chautauqua Institute that promoted adult learning in the arts, sciences and humanities. By integrating education with recreation for families, it originated a "Chautauqua Movement" with satellite locations and programs that prospered well into the 1920s. The PAA adopted its strategy of bringing in outside experts to lecture at art sessions and give practical instructions at a "School of Photography." A. H. Griffith, the Director of the Detroit Museum of Art, was a popular speaker during the Celoron years after first hosting the 1895 convention at the museum. He changed the art education model from lecturing about historical painting to offering constructive criticism about photographs on exhibit. With the move to Celoron the dry plate companies abandoned their private exhibits. The locus of corporate competition was now among those making factory-sensitized printing papers. Without a sufficient treasury to fully fund the school, it was sponsored by the American Aristotype Company, one of about a dozen firms vying to supply the profession as it gradually abandoned albumen paper. Complete with skylight, electric studio lighting, darkrooms and seating for 500, every day the School of Photography hosted experts giving practical demonstrations in posing, lighting, developing, printing and retouching.

Portraiture not only regained prominence at the Celoron conventions, it also underwent a pointed shift in style. As early as 1886 special notice had been given to portraits with plain backgrounds, no accessories, and bold lighting effects. Sometimes praised and sometimes condemned, they nevertheless signaled a transition was underway. The fashion was widely adopted by the mid-1890s as photographers rejected paper mâché props and trompe l'oeil backgrounds just as they had rejected the contrivances of illustrative photography. Its artistic aims were instead redirected to the portrait. The invented drama and expressions of actors became the territory of theatrical lighting and serious, introspective expressions of subjects. Some ventured further with soft focus and a complete absence of highlights, a direction identified as "the new school." Evolving portrait standards were revealed in the call to the 1898 exhibition:

The three divisions, viz.: posing, lighting, and chemical effect, are a relic of wet-plate days, when the operator's skill was mechanical rather than artistic. That this system should have prevailed for so many years proves that creative ability is a comparatively new field for the photographer... At the coming convention the judges will not be hampered by these restrictions. This does not mean that the impressionistic picture, whose merit depends upon the imagination of the spectator, will be the standard. It means that any honest effort to obtain 'breadth,' 'tone,' and other artistic qualities will receive due consideration; but we will not ignore the artisan for the artist. Our profession demands, first of all, good workmanship.<sup>25</sup>

The PAA attempted to stake out a middle ground between the professionals' need to provide likenesses for clients and their own longstanding desire to have photography recognized as a fine art.



Following its twentieth anniversary in 1900 the PAA made a dramatic announcement—all exhibit classifications and restrictions were to be abandoned and no medals of any kind would be awarded at future conventions. The 1901 meeting was to be titled “The Educational Convention” and in place of awards each exhibitor would be entitled to a private critique by a committee of “one photographer and one artist.” An officer explained, “By eliminating awards ... we hope to reach a higher, nobler, and more advanced state of conditions.”<sup>26</sup> Edward L. Wilson called it a “radical

experiment” but one that “showed a new spirit worthy of the new century.”<sup>27</sup> Photography would indeed be recognized as an independent art in the new century, but it would not be accomplished by the PAA. Beginning with the daguerreotype, photographers had practiced all facets of the medium—its science, business and art—as a single, integrated pursuit. When professionals jettisoned art, that model collapsed and the modern era began.

## Notes

Official PAA announcements and reports were routinely published in multiple journals. When identical, for consistency all citations are credited to *The Philadelphia Photographer* or its successor, *Wilson's Photographic Magazine*. The following abbreviations are used to cite sources:

- PP, *The Philadelphia Photographer*, Philadelphia, 1864-1886; New York, 1887-1888; re-titled as:  
WPM, *Wilson's Photographic Magazine*, New York, 1889-1914  
PM, *Photographic Mosaics: An Annual Record of Photographic Progress*, Philadelphia, 1866-1886; New York, 1887-1903  
APB, *Anthony's Photographic Bulletin*, New York, 1870-1902  
PT, *The Photographic Times*, New York, 1871-1915  
SLPP, *The St. Louis Practical Photographer*, St. Louis, 1878-1882; re-titled as:  
SLP, *The St. Louis Photographer*, 1883-1887; re-titled as:  
SLCP, *The St. Louis and Canadian Photographer*, 1888-1907
1. PP (December 1881): 384.
  2. PP (December 1881): 351.
  3. PT (September 1881): 351.
  4. APB, September 1883, p. 307.
  5. APB (October 1883): 324.
  6. PP (August 20, 1887): 573.
  7. PP (September 1882): 260.
  8. SLCP (March 1897): 87.
  9. SLP (September 1884): 306.
  10. PT (August 1884): 445.
  11. PP (August 1885): 230.
  12. WPM (November 1895): 520 - 521.
  13. SLP (October 1885): 274.
  14. APB (July 9, 1887): 385.
  15. WPM (September 1897): 415.
  16. SLCP (July 1894): 398.
  17. SLP (September 1887): 257.
  18. SLP (September 1887): 257-58.
  19. PP (August 1885): 230.
  20. APB (September 14, 1889): 517.
  21. PP (September 1887): 556-57; APB (September 10, 1887): 513.
  22. PP (February 1885): 53.
  23. WPM (November 1895): 485.
  24. SLCP (October 1891): 399.
  25. WPM (June 1898): 254-55.
  26. WPM (June 1901): 193.
  27. WPM (February 1901): 71-72.

JAMES S. JENSEN is a professor in the Department of Fine Arts at Loyola University, Chicago where he teaches the practice and 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's article on the “History of the National Photographic Association,” was published in *The Photogram* (November-December 2004). His most recent article in *The Photogram* (April-May 2007) was: “‘Suicidal Competition’: the Rise of Art Photography.” He also presented a lecture for the members of MiPHS in 2005: “Of One Cloth: The Business, Science and Art of Nineteenth-Century Photography.” Jim lives in Evanston, IL.

Between 1880 and 1900 thousands of photographers were included in PAA exhibitions. Those reproduced in this article were consistently the most honored in both composition pictures and portraiture. All photographs were displayed at the annual exhibitions. Except where noted, illustrations are in the collection of the author.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Well, it seems as though the seasons have changed again before anyone even realized. I did manage to get to the big Flat Rock flea market around 7:15am on October 5th as a last hurrah of the season. I had this urge to go. It's twice a year, on the first Sunday in May and in October at the Flat Rock Raceway. I even had folks stop me and ask when the MiPHS show was. That was cool! I regretted missing the first Civil War show in Centreville though. But maybe I can make it next year. I'm retiring in February, and “Honey,” I WILL be in the streets searching for that five dollar Gold Rush daguerreotype. I also regretted missing the Canadian Photographic Historical Society show. It's always interesting and refreshing to go to Toronto to see what they have going. I understand that they are allowing students free entry if they show their school ID. They had quite

a large response from that. That's something for the MiPHS Board to ponder. Myself, I have picked up a wonderful oversized outdoor tintype taken in the deep snow at the Lansing Book & Paper Show. I was waiting for a dealer to total up a bill and found it when wandering off to fill time. Yikes! I need to pay more attention! I almost missed it buried behind a bunch of those hand painted portraits that are usually so ugly. Jan, our ACE *Photogram* editor, knows a place that computer cuts their mats with spiffy quarter-circle corners. I found an interesting “log” simulated plaster frame at an estate sale a month or so ago, and they look great together.

Stay safe and out of trouble.

— Cindy Motzenbecker

## A FINITE REVIEW OF UMMA'S "THE INFINITE LANDSCAPE" EXHIBITION

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Mark O'Brien

The University of Michigan's Museum of Art has been operating an off-site gallery (1301 South University, Ann Arbor) dedicated to photography while the construction of the UMMA addition has closed down the museum. For photography lovers, that has been a wonderful opportunity to see photography-only exhibits that have, for the most part, been well-executed.

The latest exhibit, "The Infinite Landscape: Master Photographers from the UMMA Collection" runs until January 4, 2009, but I would see it as soon as possible, and as many times as possible. Landscape photography is a broad genre, and this exhibit definitely showcases some of its ardent practitioners: Ansel Adams, Paul Caponigro, Brett Weston, William Henry Jackson, Eliot Porter and Michael Kenna, to name just a few. If one is an Ansel Adams fan, you'll be pleased with the six images of his that are shown (the *Aspens* is my favorite). However, landscape photography IS infinite. Whether one photographs an intimate view of a pond (*Nenuphars* by Atget) or the enormity of the larger Yosemite Valley (Adams, William Henry Jackson, Carleton Watkins), the "landscape" can be almost anything. I was pleased to see a Calotype from William Henry Fox Talbot, *Loch Katrine*, as well as an Orotone print from Edward S. Curtis of *Canyon de Chelley* (an Orotone is a print made on glass with gold pigment painted over the emulsion which creates an interesting effect). I don't know how big the UMMA photographic holdings are, but this show certainly has some breadth to it. Although I wasn't especially impressed with the Eliot Porter Cibachrome prints, or the *Yellow Umbrella* by

John Butho, there are plenty of other photographers' works there I did enjoy. I really liked the *Two Barns* by Minor White, which has a fantastic use of raking light from a setting sun against, well, two barns. Brett Weston's images engaged me, especially the untitled image of succulent plants. Only one image from his father, *China Cove*, was in the exhibit, and perhaps it's only because the UMMA lacks other Edward Weston landscapes that they did not include more (yes, I'm an unabashed Edward Weston fan). It's hard to say anything negative about Michael Kenna's work—his sublime landscape imagery is a wonderful counterpoint to the stark sharpness of Adams's *Monolith in Yosemite*. I was also pleased to see some works by Kertész, Josef Sudek, Karl Struss, Walker Evans, and Peter Henry Emerson. Steichen's *Balzac* photogravure is perhaps one of the more famous images on display, though perhaps the weakest landscape. There are, it seems, an infinite number of ways to portray a landscape, and although this exhibit runs for several months . . . it is not infinite, so I suggest that you go and pay a visit.

## PHOTOHISTORY XIV: CALL FOR PAPERS 2009

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The 14th Triennial Symposium on the History of Photography will take place on Friday-Sunday, October 16-18, 2009, in Rochester, New York, presented by the Photographic Historical Society in cooperation with George Eastman House. Since its inception in 1970, this triennial event is the world's only ongoing symposium on the history of photography. It is recognized as the principal forum for original, scholarly presentations in this field. Several hundred historians, collectors, and enthusiasts from around the world are expected to gather for a weekend of lectures, exhibits, and a major sale of antique photographica.

The major feature of PhotoHistory is its full day lecture program. More leading authors have presented here than at any other venue. We strive for a program offering a wide range of photo-historical topics, including the social/commercial impact, aesthetics, and technology of photography. The lives of those who shaped this field are also of interest. Our program features 45-50 minute presentations, but also welcomes proposals for brief presentations (e.g., 15-30 minutes). We prefer that the lectures not have been presented or published previously. We waive registration, hotel, and meal fees for speakers.

We are entertaining contributions for PhotoHistory XIV. If you have a presentation you would like to have considered for the Symposium program, please send a description (including the time required) and a one-page abstract. We need the description and abstract no later than December 31, 2008, to enable proper committee review and subsequent correspondence. Electronic submission of proposals should be sent to: Professor Andrew Davidhazy, at [andpph@rit.edu](mailto:andpph@rit.edu) making sure the subject line states that the message is related to submitting an abstract for the XIVth Symposium. Communications in writing using the postal service should be sent to: Martin L. Scott, 49 Ramsey Park, Rochester, NY 14610.

We anticipate another successful and stimulating PhotoHistory Symposium, and hope you will participate. Please pass the word to colleagues who share an interest in the history of photography. Write or call Martin Scott at (585) 244-7175, if additional information is needed, or if you wish to suggest others whom we can contact as possible speakers.

Visit the Photographic Historical Society website at [www.tphs.org](http://www.tphs.org).

## MIPHS STUDENT INTERNSHIP IN HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHY

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Early last fall the MiPHS Board of Directors decided to co-fund a summer student internship with the money from the two estate sales that we organized for the Pieronek and Naslanic families. This internship was at the William L. Clements Library under the supervision of the Curator of Graphic Materials and MiPHS member Clayton Lewis. We were pleased with the outcome and plan to continue funding such internships with other institutions in accordance with our mission statement. We've received the following "thank you" from our first intern, Marjorie O'Brien, chosen by the Clements Library from a number of applicants:

### TO THE MEMBERS OF THE MICHIGAN PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY:

Thank you so much for financing this summer's project at the University of Michigan Clements Library. As many of you know, I was chosen for the position and worked in the Graphics Division at the library from the middle of May until the middle of August. I've had many different and fun jobs, but this was, by far, the most fascinating and the most relevant to my interests and education.

When I arrived at the Clements Library in May, I had only a very vague idea of what I was getting myself into. Clayton Lewis introduced me to the rest of the library staff—all of whom are very nice people—and took me on a tour of the building and its various collections. I soon found that the photograph collection needed a whole lot of organization—and that is where I came in.

The photograph collection at the Clements Library has grown a lot over the years, and with the exception of material sorted by size and format, in many cases, there was little to no organization, particularly with miscellaneous images and especially concerning the albums. I began my work on the cartes de visite and moved forward from there—carded albumen prints, matted silver-gelatin prints, and all sorts of formats in between (some of which were quite hard to categorize). Identifying the miscellaneous (and often random) photographs, I alphabetized, relabeled, and reorganized the collection.

One of the last tasks I handled was the complete overhaul of the photograph albums collection. There were around five-hundred albums in the stacks (and many more in storage, which I did not handle), and, for the most part,

they were organized by album size alone. I took on the job of re-categorizing the albums first by collection title and/or name, and then organized those that remained in a chronological order. It was an exhausting task, but it was very rewarding in the end, as it allowed me to get a glimpse of everyday life from a different era.

When all was said and done, I had not only reorganized a large portion of the photographic collection, but I had also added a considerable number of entries to the library's Filemaker Pro database—forget the exact amount, but it was in the thousands.

What I liked most about this job was having the opportunity to see and handle images normally found in textbooks or museums. Very little of the material is what one would classify as "fine art" photography—rather, it was vernacular photography, and that's what made the job so incredibly cool. Getting an intimate glimpse of a family's road trip—seeing street-level views of now very-different-looking cities—having the opportunity to look at more Civil War portraits than I'd ever have imagined—it was an amazing experience. I'm still trying to process all that I've learned this summer.

In closing, I'd like to mention that this job matched up perfectly with my current thread of education, as I am a photography major at Northern Michigan University. Last semester, I took a history of photography course and working at the Clements really did reinforce all that I had learned, and taught me so much more.

Thanks again for making this project possible.

— Marjorie O'Brien

## Photo-History Calendar

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November 6-9: Daguerreian Society Annual Symposium (Trade Fair–November 8), Washington, DC, [www.daguerre.org](http://www.daguerre.org)  
November 9: London Photographic Fair, Bonnington Hotel, London, [www.photofair.co.uk](http://www.photofair.co.uk)  
November 9: Chicago Camera Show & Sale, Radisson Hotel, Schaumburg, IL, [www.photorama.com](http://www.photorama.com)  
November 13-16: Paris Photo, Carrousel du Louvre, Paris, France, [www.parisphoto.fr](http://www.parisphoto.fr)  
November 22: Detroit Camera Show & Sale, Clawson-Troy Elks Lodge, Troy, MI, [www.photorama.com](http://www.photorama.com)  
November 23: Detroit Camera Show & sale, Sheraton Hotel, Novi, MI, [www.photorama.com](http://www.photorama.com)  
March 26-29: AIPAD Photography Show, New York, Park Avenue Armory, NY, [www.aipad.com](http://www.aipad.com)  
April 18: **MiPHS**—Annual Dinner & Presentation, Birmingham Athletic Club, Birmingham, MI