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OF ONE CLOTH: THE BUSINESS, SCIENCE AND ART OF 19TH-CENTURY PHOTOGRAPHY—LECTURE BY JAMES S. JENSEN

Until the widespread adoption of the dry plate in the 1880's, photography was practiced almost exclusively by professionals. They simultaneously had to operate a commercial business, master uncertain new technologies, and advance the artistic ambitions of a new medium.

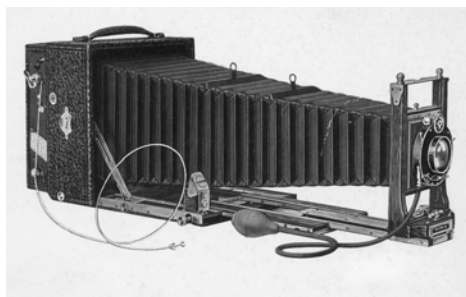
On Saturday, September 24, in the Meadow Brook Art Gallery, Oakland University, Jim Jensen will examine how nineteenth-century photographers responded to the above challenges. Drawn from extensive research of primary documents and supported by numerous illustrations, his talk will offer a comprehensive look at how early photographers dealt with the many problems of their profession.

Jim is an Associate Professor in the Department of Fine Arts at Loyola University Chicago, where he teaches both the practice and the history of photography; and where he has twice been honored as a "Master Teacher." He has published a monograph on Illinois photographer W. E. Bowman and articles on vernacular photography and on the career of Edward L. Wilson in journals such as *The Collodion Journal*, *Afterimage* and *By Daylight*. His comprehensive article on the "History of the National Photographic Association," appeared in the November-December 2004 issue of *The Photogram*. A highly regarded speaker, Jim has been selected on two occasions to give a presentation at PhotoHistory, a conference sponsored by The Photographic Historical Society, at George Eastman House, Rochester, NY.



"Over the Hill to the Poor House," by Edward L. Wilson, frontispiece to *The Philadelphia Photographer* 15, no. 180 (December 1878). By contemporary standards this photograph was considered art because of its literary source (Will Carleton's poem of the same title), but Wilson also meant it to illustrate the dire economic straits photography was enduring. Jensen Collection.

SEPTEMBER 24 (SATURDAY). JAMES S. JENSEN LECTURE — "Of One Cloth: The Business, Science and Art of Nineteenth-Century Photography," Meadow Brook Art Gallery, Wilson Hall, Oakland University, Rochester, MI, 11:00AM. The lecture is co-sponsored by OU's Department of Art and Art History.



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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), \$10 for students with valid ID. For information and application forms, call 248.549.6026, visit us online at www.miphs.org or write to:

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MIPHS PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 24, SATURDAY—JAMES S. JENSEN. "Of One Cloth: The Business, Science and Art of Nineteenth-Century Photography," Meadow Brook Art Gallery, Wilson Hall, Oakland University, Rochester, MI, 11:00AM, followed by an optional lunch for MiPHS members. The lecture is co-sponsored by OU's Department of Art and Art History.

34th Annual MiPHS Photographica

Trade Show

**Sunday, October 23, 2005
 10:00AM- 4:00PM**



**Novi Community Center – 45175 W. Ten Mile Rd.
 Novi, Michigan (½ mile west of Novi Road)**

ADMISSION: \$5 (\$4 with the yellow advertising postcard)

PHOTO NOTES

MiPHS would like to invite you to put together an educational image, camera or photo ephemera display at the October 2005 Trade Show. Those members whose proposals are accepted will receive two complimentary tickets to the annual dinner and lecture in 2006 for yourself and a guest. You would be responsible for bringing showcases and all materials related to the displays. Although some security is provided at the Trade Show for displays, MiPHS is not responsible for any losses. For more information, call Cindy Motzenbecker at 248.549.6026.

Larry Gottheim began his essay "Owning: Curating vs. Collecting. What Makes One Collect Things?" published in *The Daguerreian Society Newsletter* (March-April 2005), with a discussion of MiPHS member Jim Rutkowski's photo collection as seen in the pages of his catalog *Family Album*, from an exhibition at the Columbus Museum of Art.

MiPHS members Shirley Macdonald, Cindy Motzenbecker, Len Walle, Lloyd Wright and Gregory Zemenick had a daguerreotype or two from their collections included in the "Portfolio of Members' Favorite Daguerreotypes," published in *The Daguerreian Annual 2004*.

MiPHS welcomes our new Board members! Nancy Barr (Member-at-Large) is the Associate Curator of Graphic Arts (prints, drawings and photographs) at the Detroit Institute of Arts. She is a specialist in modern and contemporary photography and is currently working on an article on Charles Sheeler and the modernist aesthetic. Elayne Gross (Vice President/Special Events) is a photographer who specializes in black-and-white fine art photography, personal events (including weddings) and portraiture. An interview with Elayne appeared in the February-March 2005 issue of *The Photogram*. Doug Price (Member-at-Large) operates the West Side Book Shop in Ann Arbor, where he has a back room filled with photographs. He collects books and albums of photographs, as well as Arts and Crafts furniture and decorative arts.

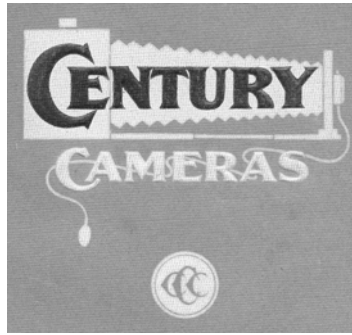


FIGURE 1. 1902 catalog cover with Century logo. London Collection.

EXPLORING CENTURY CAMERAS AND CATALOGS

Ralph London

The Century Camera Company, founded in Rochester, New York, in 1900 (hence the name), made some of Rochester's finest plate cameras until about 1910. Their 4 x 5 and 5 x 7 inch models, among others, were leather covered and beautifully finished with extensive brass and fine polished mahogany. They achieved a national reputation for quality.

In describing self-casing cameras on his superb web site, Rob Niederman praises the Century Grand:

If I were to choose one camera as a classic representation of the self-casing style, it would be the Century Grand. No other camera was built with the fit, finish and overall care as these cameras. Made of carefully selected mahogany woods, impeccable finish, red triple extension bellows, and polished brass fittings, the Century Grand was stately and elegant when compared to its peers. Even the smallest details weren't over-looked, such as the ivory aperture scale and maker's label on the brass lens.¹

Catalogs are a rich source of information for the products of a company. Significant space in the Century catalogs is devoted to features such as lenses and shutters, construction and quality of the cameras, reversing or revolving back, swing back and swing bed, rising and falling front, front automatic clamp, focusing screen, triple section bed, plate holders and finders. Their catalogs show the company logo of three interconnected C's on the 1901 and 1902 covers (FIGURE 1). Interesting pictures are displayed from 1903 through 1909, and the 1910 cover features a Century camera (FIGURE 2). I do not know if there is a catalog dated 1900 or if there are any Century catalogs after 1910. Some Century cameras do appear in Kodak Professional catalogs starting about 1910.

Century was initiated by three former employees of the Rochester Optical and Camera Company, according to Rudolf Kingslake.² J. Milnor Walmsley served as president, Gilbert E. Mosher as secretary and George J. MacLaughlin as treasurer. Reese Jenkins writes that five employees left Rochester Optical and Camera Company, because of internal management prob-

lems, to form Century. He also observes, "The small company quickly developed an impressive line of folding plate cameras."³

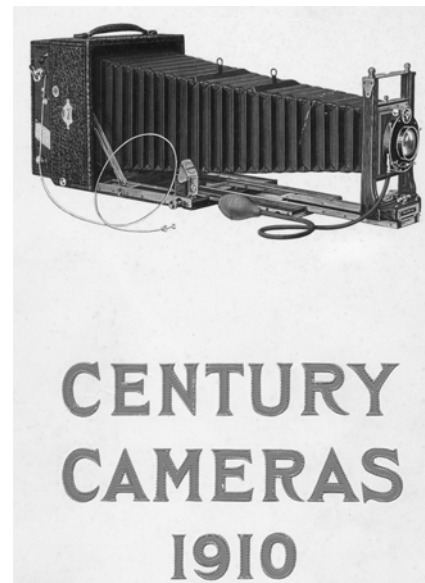


FIGURE 2. 1910 catalog cover showing full color Century Grand Senior Special camera with Zeiss Kodak lens and Graflex focal plane shutter. London Collection.

The three officers, Walmsley, Mosher and MacLaughlin, are listed in the 1901 through 1905 Century catalogs; no officers are listed in the 1906 through 1910 catalogs. Century acquired two companies, the Imperial Camera and Manufacturing Company of La Crosse, Wisconsin, in the spring of 1903, and then in 1905, for \$5,000, the Rochester Panoramic Camera Com-

pany, maker of the Cirkut panoramic cameras. Between the two acquisitions, George Eastman had bought the Century Camera Company in the summer of 1903 and continued to operate it using the original Century name. In 1907 the designation became Century Camera Division of Eastman Kodak Company. This change is first shown in the 1908 catalog. Later Century was in the Folmer-Century Division of Eastman Kodak Company. The Century name was dropped in 1917.

The catalogs give no address for Century beyond Rochester, N.Y. Kingslake reports that Century started at 61 Atlantic Avenue, sharing space with Vogt Optical Company (whose address is given as 59 Atlantic) and Rochester Lens Company (address given as 65 Atlantic). After Eastman bought Century in 1903, the factory moved to a large, solid building at 12 Caledonia Avenue (renamed 154 Clarissa Avenue in 1928).

Century started with experienced camera people. Their 1901 catalog boasts:

The Century Camera Company is new in name only, as its officers and directors are all men who for many years have been identified with the manufacture of the finest and most popular lines of Cameras in the market.

Our designing room is in charge of an expert of exceptional ability, a man who has originated more new features in connection with plate hand cameras than anyone in the trade. For over fifteen years he was associated with one of the largest and most successful houses, and his many new ideas will now be embodied in Century Cameras.⁴

The 1902 catalog proudly notes on the title page, just after listing the officers, “The officers and heads of all departments of the Century Camera Co. have been actively identified from nine to nineteen years with the manufacture of the finest cameras.”⁵ This theme continues a few pages later:

The man whose inventions for *eighteen years* were embodied in the most popular and widely known Camera of the day—undoubtedly the best photographic expert in the country—has been, since the organization of the Century Camera Company, in charge of our perfectly equipped designing and modeling department, so that his valuable experience and knowledge is *devoted exclusively* to Century Cameras.⁶

Similar wording about the officers and heads of departments appears on the title pages of the 1903 and 1904 catalogs. The 1905 catalog notes, “Century Cameras embody the good points which twenty-one years of experience have developed and suggested.”⁷ In the 1907 catalog that thought becomes, “Century Cameras embody the good points which over a decade of

camera building have developed and suggested.”⁸ In the 1909 catalog the phrase “over a decade” becomes “many years.”⁹

It is usually easy to identify a camera as being a Century. The Century logo (as noted earlier, three interconnected C’s) adorns the shutter speed dial. The cuts in the catalogs show that after 1901, the Century name almost always occurs at the base of the lens standard and, with a few exceptions through 1906, below the lens, too.

My collection currently has four Century cameras, several fewer than previously. These four, Model 20, Grand, Model 46 and Grand Senior, will be explored in various levels of detail (**FIGURES 3 & 4**). The text and cuts in the catalogs provided the data to identify the Model 20 and the Grand cameras and to date all four. (The names “Model 46” and “Grand Sr.” appear below “Century” at the base of the lens standard.)



FIGURE 3. Model 20 (left) and Grand (right), both with white “Century” labels. London Collection.



FIGURE 4. Model 46 (left) and Grand Senior (right), both with black “Century” labels. London Collection.

An entry-level amateur camera, the simple Model 20 was listed only in the 1903 catalog. The 4 x 5 inch size with single extension bed, reversible back and vertically adjustable front sold for \$12.50. The lens is a Century Rapid Rectilinear. The No. 3 automatic shutter has one valve and settings for instan-

taneous, time and bulb exposures. The Model 20 was also available in $3\frac{1}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{4}$ for the same \$12.50 and in 5×7 with mahogany front for \$18.00. The similar appearing Petite Century, also 1903 catalog only, was \$12.50 for $3\frac{1}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{4}$ and \$15.00 for 4×5 . The Petite has rack and pinion focusing, a different front clamp,¹⁰ its finder on the other side of the bed, a handle attached on the camera's two sides, and a No. 2 automatic shutter with speeds of 1/100, 1/50, 1/25, T and B. The catalog does not mention a reversible back. Both the Model 20 and Petite Century could be fitted with a daylight loading film holder having a dark slide, and each could use ground glass focusing for either plates or film.

There are other models listed only in the 1903 catalog: Models 21, 22, 24, 26, 27 and 28. Starting with the important features of the Petite, the 21 has a different shutter and reversible back; the 22 adds swing back, swing bed, a better lens and better shutter; the 24 provides more plate sizes and more elaborate adjustments, shutter and lens; the 26, in sizes 4×5 and 5×7 only, features a patent pinion lock; and the 27 and 28, also in sizes 4×5 and 5×7 only, provide long focus and slightly different rack and pinion and pinion lock.

The Grand, described in the 1903 catalog as "a worthy leader of the Century Series,"¹¹ differs mainly from the Models 27 and 28 by having a brass bound bed attached with a brass piano hinge and operated on a new principle of a single pinion. The Grand also came in the $6\frac{1}{2} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$ size.

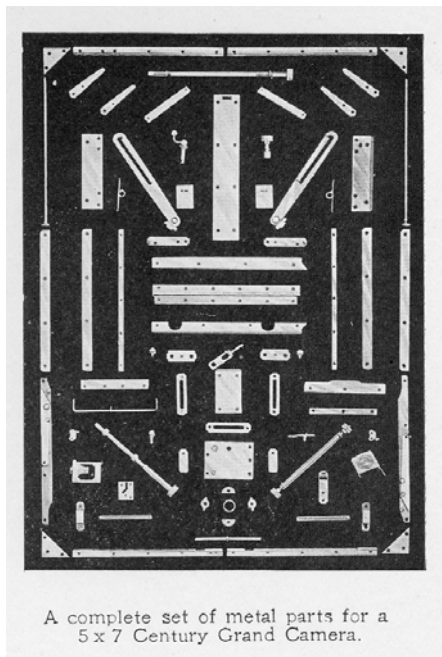


FIGURE 5. Illustration from the 1902 catalog of "a complete set of metal parts for a 5 x 7 Century Grand Camera." London Collection.

The 5×7 inch Grand with triple convertible lens appeared in the 1901 and 1902 catalogs selling for \$45. It has triple exten-

sion bed, reversible back, vertically and horizontally adjustable front, and swing back and swing bed. Its metal parts are numerous (**FIGURE 5**). The automatic bed clamp was added in 1902, dating my camera with its triple convertible lens to about 1902. The back became revolving in the 1904 through 1908 catalogs. With various lenses the Grand then cost from \$50 to \$122.

The Model 46 was first offered in the 1904 catalog. The Centar lens, Series II, appeared in the 1905 through 1910 catalogs. Sporting this lens, the 4×5 inch size always sold for \$32. Throughout, the Model 46 had double extension bed, revolving back, vertically and horizontally adjustable front, and swing back and swing bed. My 4×5 inch camera probably dates to 1905-07.



FIGURE 6. Two supplementary beds for the Grand Senior, top view (left) and bottom view (right). London Collection.

The fully featured Grand Senior debuted in the 1903 catalog and continued through 1910. It has the construction features of the Grand plus detachable side arms for dropping the bed, supplementary bed (**FIGURE 6**), vertical central swing back and horizontal side swing. With the Centar lens, Series II, my 4×5 inch camera dates to 1907-09 and sold for \$53 (1905-10).

Two patent dates, September 9, 1902 and March 1, 1904, appear on the beds of the Grand Senior and Model 46 cameras. The 1905 and 1906 catalogs say the Grand Senior was patented March 29, 1904. Checking all the patents issued on these three dates, I uncovered two patents issued to Harvey W. Locke of Rochester, New York: Number 708,721, titled "Camera," issued September 9, 1902, and Number 755,680, titled "Swing Back for Photographic Cameras," issued March 29, 1904 and assigned to Century Camera Company of Rochester, New York. A subsequent search for all of Locke's patents revealed the previously missed patent issued March 1, 1904, Number 753,800, titled "Camera Bed," and also assigned to Century (**FIGURE 7**).

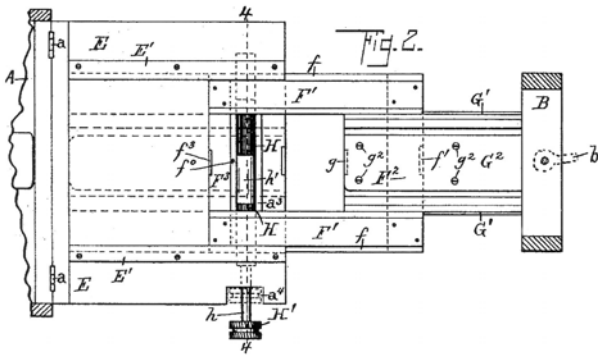


FIGURE 7. Patent drawing of a camera bed, March 1, 1904, No. 753,800.

Locke was a prolific inventor as shown by his list of twelve individual patents and two patents co-invented with William F. Carlton (**FIGURE 8**). Carlton was associated with the Rochester Optical Company where he produced many camera models including the very successful Premo. Kingslake lists William F. Carlton as a founder in 1882. Is the quotation from the 1902 catalog, “the man whose inventions for *eighteen years*,” a reference to William F. Carlton? Perhaps, because Jenkins says W. F. Carlton was replaced at Rochester Optical and Camera Company, the merged company, in late 1900.¹² Or perhaps not, because Kingslake says both W. F. and H. B. Carlton (they are relatives) were officers at Rochester Optical and Camera Company in 1903 when Eastman acquired the company.¹³ To consider another person, maybe Harvey Locke is one of the people cited without name.

Number	Title	Date Issued	Co-inventor & assignment
558,039	Photographic Camera	April 14, 1896	Invented with and assigned to W. F. Carlton
589,475	Magazine Camera	September 7, 1897	Assigned to Carlton
609,033	Photographic Shutter	August 16, 1898	Assigned to Carlton
624,057	Reversible Back for Cameras	May 2, 1899	Assigned to Carlton
643,711	Swing Back for Photographic Cameras	February 20, 1900	Invented with and assigned to Carlton
643,720	Swing Back for Photographic Cameras	February 20, 1900	Assigned to Carlton
704,845	Camera	July 15, 1902	Assigned to Century
708,721	Camera	September 9, 1902	Retained by Locke
720,040	Camera	February 10, 1903	Assigned to Century
753,800	Camera Bed	March 1, 1904	Assigned to Century
755,680	Swing Back for Photographic Cameras	March 29, 1904	Assigned to Century
762,424	Curtain Shutter	June 14, 1904	Assigned to Century
833,885	Camera	October 23, 1906	Assigned to Century
833,886	Plate Holder Attachment for Cameras	October 23, 1906	Assigned to Century

FIGURE 8. Harvey Locke's Patents.

For some of these patents, the title is very general and conceals the actual invention. Number 558,039, Photographic Camera, appears to concern a “Long Focus” with various adjusting clamps. Number 704,845, Camera, seems to involve multiple slots or grooves on the side edges of the bed. Number 708,721, Camera, whose patent date is one of those stamped on the beds, is for “simple and efficient means for operating camera parts” which employ rack and pinion gears, notably for tilts. Number 720,040, Camera, covers clamping (“locking clamps”) of the lens-frame in different positions on its guide ways. Number 753,800, Camera Bed, whose date is the other one stamped on the bed, is a single mechanism that allows several extensions of the bed with two or more movable sections. It also mentions

locks. Number 833,885, Camera, seems to concern a revolving back.

The first patent by Locke was filed on October 5, 1895, the second and last patent with Carlton was filed on February 11, 1899, and the latest patent assigned to Carlton was filed on August 22, 1899. Subsequent patents were filed May 24, 1902 or later, with the last patent being filed on February 23, 1905. Thus Locke was an active inventor for about ten years, measured either by filing dates (1895-1905) or by patent dates (1896-1906). Also, the change in assignments of patents from Carlton to Century and the gap in patents from 1900 to 1902 are each consistent with Century's starting date of 1900.

I have seen few ads for Century cameras. A 1904 ad shows what is almost certainly a Grand Senior (the only camera in the 1904 catalog whose features match the cut) and asserts, “‘Centurys’ are the *only* Cameras with Revolving Backs.”¹⁴ (FIGURE 9) Most of the ads, such as one from May, 1909, feature the Grand Senior with its main bed dropped and the supplementary bed in use (FIGURE 10).

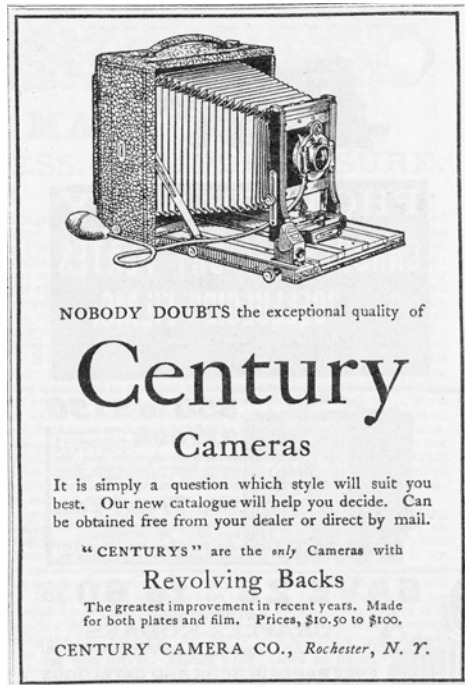


FIGURE 9. Advertisement (1904) for almost certainly the Century Grand Senior.

The number of Century models listed in the catalogs from 1901 to 1910 is impressive (FIGURE 11). The table lists the cameras, arranged by year of introduction, and indicates the yearly catalogs in which they appeared. Presumably there is some correlation between the models more commonly found and those with longer years of production, such as the Grand, Grand Senior and the numerous models introduced in 1904. Cameras with the word “Special” in their names, although not included in the table, are the regular models equipped with upgraded lenses and shutters. Stereoscopic models are generally regular models with an expanded lensboard for two lenses.

Some cameras were named by letters (A to F in 1901) and by nonconsecutive numbers (tens in 1902, twenties in 1903, 39 in 1905 and forties in 1904 to 1910). Other camera names included more descriptive words, such as “View,” “Grand” and “Petite.” Overall, seven sizes of cameras are listed in the catalogs: $3\frac{1}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{4}$, $3\frac{1}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$, 4×5 , 5×7 , $6\frac{1}{2} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$, 8×10 and 11×14 .

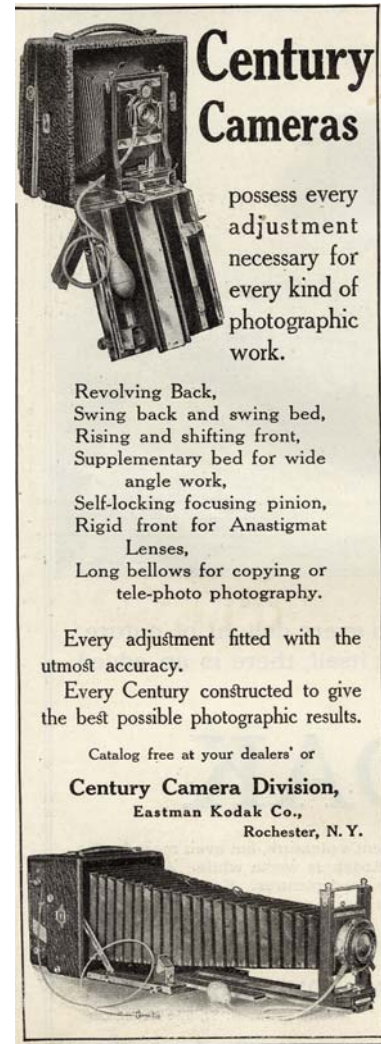


FIGURE 10. Advertisement (1909) for Century Cameras: Grand Senior with its bed dropped and its supplementary bed for wide angle work in use (upper cut). The camera, fully extended, shown with a focal plane shutter (lower cut). London Collection.

In addition, Cirkut material appears in the 1906 through 1910 catalogs, specifically, the Cirkut Panoramic Attachment in 1906, the offer of a separate Cirkut catalog in 1906 and the Cirkut Panoramic Outfit in 1907 through 1910. The Graflex Focal plane shutter is shown in 1907 through 1910, and a section on Graflex Photography appears in 1908 through 1910. Large Century studio cameras with stands are not shown in these catalogs; that is why such cameras are not discussed.

This brief exploration confirms that the Century Camera Company produced an interesting array of fine cameras. There is additional information in the catalogs that makes for fascinating reading.

Camera	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10
Models A, B, C, D, E, F	X									
View Camera	X	X	X							
Grand	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Compact Model 10; Models 11, 11A, 12, 14, 15, 16; Grand Junior		X								
Long Focus Century Grand		X	X	X	X					
Petite Century; Models 20, 21, 22, 24, 26, 27, 28			X							
Grand Senior			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Models 42, 44				X	X					
Petite Century No. 1, No. 2; Model 40				X	X	X	X	X		
Petite Century Grand				X	X				X	X
Model 41				X	X	X	X	X	X	
Petite Century No. 3; View Camera No. 1, No. 2; Model 46				X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Models 39, 41A					X					
Home Portrait Outfit					X	X				
Victor View Camera						X				
Model 43						X	X	X	X	X
Model 47							X	X		

FIGURE 11. An "X" denotes a catalog year (1901-10) in which a camera appears. The Petite Century Grand, listed in 1904-05 and 1909-10, is the only camera with nonconsecutive years.

Notes

1. Rob Niederman, www.antiquewoodcameras.com/century1.htm
2. Rudolf Kingslake, *The Photographic Manufacturing Companies of Rochester, New York* ([Rochester, NY]: George Eastman House, 1997), 9.
3. Reese V. Jenkins. *Images and Enterprise: Technology and the American Photographic Industry, 1839 to 1925* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 212.
4. *Century Catalog* (1901), 10.
5. *Century Catalog* (1902), 1.
6. *Ibid.*, 6.
7. *Century Catalog* (1905), 5.
8. *Century Catalog* (1907), 4.
9. *Century Catalog* (1909), 4.
10. James M. McKeown and Joan C. McKeown (eds.), *McKeown's Price Guide to Antique and Classic Cameras*, 12th edition (Grantsburg, WI: Centennial Photo Service, 2004), 190.
11. *Century Catalog* (1903), 37.
12. Jenkins, 212.
13. Kingslake, 40.
14. George Gilbert, *Photographic Advertising from A-to-Z* (Riverdale, NY: Yesterday's Cameras, 1970), 29.

MiPHS member Ralph London collects mainly early wood and brass cameras from the 1840s to the early 1900s plus the catalogs and ads in which they appear. A retired computer scientist living in Portland, Oregon, he contributes frequently to photohistory publications. For many years he edited the Cascade Panorama for the Cascade Photographic Historical Society. He also maintains an extensive topical collection of postage stamps on cameras and photography.



Opera House, Crosswell, Mich. #12403. The postcards which illustrate this article are silver gelatin prints produced by Louis Pesha; they are approximately 3½ x 5½ inches. All photographs are from the Aikenhead Collection.

MAIN STREET LOOKING EAST: LOUIS PESHA AND THE “REAL PHOTO” POSTCARD

Doug Aikenhead

Between 1906 and 1912, Louis Pesha was likely Michigan’s most prolific postcard photographer, producing and distributing over 8,000 different postcards of subjects ranging from small town main streets to large city events to Great Lakes steamers. He photographed in many cities and towns in the southeast third of Michigan, as well as southwest Ontario, northern Ohio, the Buffalo-Niagara Falls area, and Oklahoma City. At peak times, he and his staff printed 1,000 real photo postcards per day. Yet much about Louis Pesha remains enigmatic.

Pesha grew up in Lambton County, Ontario, east of Sarnia. He was born on August 11, 1868 and raised on his father’s farm near Inwood, in Euphemia Township. Census records indicate that Pesha worked on his father’s farm as a young man, and at age 21, he received a deed from his father for a portion of that farm. In 1892, Pesha married Lena E. Faucher, from Illinois.¹ By 1897, Pesha had taken up photography and was operating as a portraitist in Oil Springs, Ontario in early 1899.² No information or records exist to indicate how he learned the medium, or from whom. By April of that year, Pesha had begun construction of a branch studio in Alvinston, 14 miles east, and opened for business there in May, 1899.³ Newspaper accounts suggest that he was already talking about a third location in Brigden, about 10 miles west of Oil Springs.⁴

Pesha and his contemporaries advertised “cabinets,” but surviving examples of Pesha’s early portrait work are generally smaller photographs mounted on embossed boards (FIGURE 1). As early as 1899, photographs produced at his Oil Springs location were stamped, “Louis Pesha’s Art Studio.” His clients were local people, and his portraits were average at best. A survey of his early photographs indicates that Pesha worked with natural light in a simple studio, generally using wicker furniture and few props in posing his subjects.

Competition between photographers in these small Ontario towns was surprisingly intense, with price wars leading to vandalized studios and published threats of “greater damage.”⁵ By

January, 1901, rival photographer G. A. Hadden in Alvinston was advertising that he had acquired all of Pesha’s negatives, as well as those made by photographers McCormick and Quatermass.⁶



FIGURE 1. Oil Springs boys, silver gelatin, 1½ x 2½ inches, mounted on embossed board.

A major fire in downtown Brigden on January 10, 1901 destroyed an entire business block on the west side of Main Street, including Pesha’s studio.⁷ With a partner, George Tiderington of Oil Springs, Pesha announced construction of “one of the finest galleries in Western Ontario,” to open about April 1, 1901 in Brigden,⁸ but subsequent press coverage mentioned only Tiderington’s name in connection with that studio.⁹

Later that month, newspapers announced that Tiderington had taken over Pesha's Oil Springs business as well.¹⁰

Whether it was the combative business climate in southwest Ontario, the setback from the 1901 fire in Brigden, the lure of opportunity, or a combination of these factors is unclear, but Pesha had begun looking at Michigan as a potential relocation site. By May, the *Petrolia* [Ontario] *Advertiser* reported that Louis Pesha planned to open a photo gallery at Three Rivers, 25 miles southwest of Kalamazoo.¹¹



FIGURE 2. Marine City boy, silver gelatin, 3 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches, mounted on embossed board with blind stamp:
L. Pesha. MARINE CITY, MICH.

Pesha moved across the St. Clair River to Marine City, Michigan with his wife and infant daughter instead, and in 1902 was listed in the St. Clair County, Michigan directory as being located on Water Street in Marine City. In 1903, *R. L. Polk & Co.'s Michigan Gazetteer* listed Louis Pesha as a photographer in Marine City. The full scope of his business activity at this point is not known. Surviving examples of his early work from Marine City suggest that he continued to make portraits in the style he practiced in Ontario (FIGURE 2).

By 1900, picture postcards were well established in Europe and were beginning to attract the attention of the American public. Earlier trends had nurtured a popular fascination with photographic imagery. Americans amassed collections of cartes de visite and tintypes in photograph albums and baskets. Stereographs enabled middle income families to experience the world through pictures in the comfort of their parlors, and major publishers like the Keystone View Company produced entire libraries of stereo cards. Congress authorized government-printed "postal cards" in 1872, but these were used chiefly to send advertising messages until 1893 when souvenir cards

were produced with printed color images for the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Such "souvenir card" uses of government-issued postal cards continued sporadically until 1898 when Congress approved the production of Private Mailing Cards, allowing private publishers to print "post cards" that could be mailed for the same one-cent rate as government postal cards. In the same year, Congress established the Rural Free Delivery system, creating routes that would allow for mail to be delivered to almost every United States address by 1906. Previously, mail was delivered free of charge to individual homes and businesses only in towns with populations of 10,000 or more.

This combination of inexpensive postal card mailing rates and efficient widespread distribution encouraged publishers to print more and more illustrated postal cards. On December 24, 1902, regulations were further relaxed and the term "Post Card" was permitted, and beginning on March 1, 1907 the public was allowed to include correspondence on the back of picture postcards (i.e., "divided back") where only the recipient's address was permitted previously ("undivided back"). The modern postcard had come of age, and the American public was ready for it. Millions of postcards were published every year between 1898 and 1914. Many were used for communication, and even more were collected in postcard albums and shoe boxes during this "golden era" of postcard popularity.

The vast majority of picture postcards were printed in ink and published in large numbers. Typically, if a publisher anticipated immediate sales of 500 or more copies of a postcard, a photograph would be mailed to a printing company for conversion to a lithographed postcard. When the anticipated market for a postcard image was smaller, or the demand more immediate, the postcard could be published as a "real photo" postcard, an actual photograph printed on postcard-sized heavyweight photographic paper with a pre-printed "Post Card" back. The Eastman Kodak Company introduced its "Velox" brand of photographic postcard stock in 1902, followed by "AZO" in 1904. The Ansco Company introduced their competing "CyKo" brand in 1905,¹² and dozens of smaller companies added their brands to the market. The earliest photographic postcard stock was printing-out paper, at first requiring sunlight exposure, and later sensitized to allow for "lamplight" printing. Later postcard stock was manufactured as developing-out paper. Kodak and other companies encouraged amateur photographers to make their own real photo postcards, but most were produced by commercial photographers and local druggists, opticians, and others with professional cameras and darkrooms. Real photo postcards were vastly outnumbered by lithographed postcards and never exceeded a small percentage of total postcard production.

Details of Pesha's transition from portraitist to postcard photographer remain unclear. Given the unremarkable quality of his portrait work, it seems plausible that he would have welcomed the possibilities that the emerging postcard market offered. He

had begun making real photo postcards by 1905. The earliest example in the author's collection is a view of the Marine City High School, dated May 13, 1905 in the sender's handwriting on the face of the postcard (**FIGURE 3**). The caption at the bottom of the photograph was printed in simple capital letters in opaque ink on the negative so that it appeared white on the print, and the name PESHA is lettered along the left edge, near the lower corner of the image. While the captioning is crude, it is a prelude to the careful, consistently lettered captions that would characterize Pesha's later work.



FIGURE 3. *Marine City [Mich.] High School.*

Unless it was a photograph of a specific event like a reunion, shipwreck or fire, or an athletic team in a given year, Pesha did not routinely date his postcard images. Consequently, the best estimate of the approximate date of a postcard photograph generally comes from the date of its use, determined by a postmark or sender's message. A secondary approach relies on the brand of photographic postcard paper on which the image was printed. This is particularly useful with real photo postcards that were not mailed, since the stamp box remains uncovered by a stamp. Most real photo postcards were printed on manufactured papers like Kodak's AZO or Velox, Ansco's CyKo, or brands like ARISTO, ARTURA, KARBO, KRUXO, NOKO, and others. Various books about real photo postcards include date ranges for the manufacture of these papers. A comprehensive list can be accessed at www.playle.com/realphoto/index as well. Both the postmark/sender's message approach and the stamp box approach are helpful for establishing a "no earlier than" date for the postcard photograph. Postcard paper with undivided backs was not manufactured after March 1, 1907.

The small number of Pesha real photo postcards in the author's collection that can be dated to ca. 1906 were all made in Marine City or nearby St. Clair and Algonac, Michigan, or across the St. Clair River and several miles south in Port Lambton, Ontario. They include Water Street, Broadway, and a residential street with a light dusting of snow in Marine City, the Somerville Hotel in St. Clair, a stretch of Water Street in downtown Algonac, and a shoreline road in Port Lambton with a retail building and several houses. Pesha also issued an early

view of an unidentified two-masted schooner on the St. Clair River at Marine City. A lithographed postcard mailed in 1906 features a Pesha photograph of the City Hall in Marine City.



FIGURE 4. *Marine City, Mich., with Interurban car at left.*

By 1907, Pesha postcards showing Front Street, the High School, and the Oakland Hotel in St. Clair, Michigan were circulating through the mail, as well as a more active view of Broadway in Marine City, with an interurban car visible at left (**FIGURE 4**). Pesha had also added another view of Water Street in Algonac to his postcard inventory. Anecdotal information about Pesha, circulated between postcard collectors and Marine City area historians, maintains that he traveled by interurban from his studio to nearby Michigan towns to make postcard photographs, or crossed the St. Clair River by ferry to photograph on the Canadian side.



FIGURE 5. *The Old. The New. St. Clair Tunnel, Sarnia-Pt. Huron, Mich.*

Pesha must have been encouraged by his early venture into postcard photography. During 1908, he extended his range to Port Huron, where he made fine views of Military Street and Huron Avenue, and photographed locomotives at the St. Clair Railroad Tunnel connecting Port Huron and Sarnia (**FIGURE 5**). He returned to Ontario to photograph in Sarnia (**FIGURE 6**), Courtright, and Sombra. Back in St. Clair, Michigan, it

seems probable that Pesha negotiated an arrangement with the prominent Oakland Hotel to sell his real photo views made at that location (**FIGURE 7**). From all indications, Pesha was still traveling by public transportation to photograph at locations that were generally within 25 miles of Marine City. He continued to add to his selection of Marine City views as well, including a church interior, local hotels and a mineral bath house, and recreational boating on the river.



FIGURE 6. *Front Street, Sarnia.*



FIGURE 7. *Balcony, Oakland Hotel, St. Clair [Mich].*

His increased postcard production in 1909 leaves little doubt that Pesha had finalized his transition from portraits to postcards. At some point he had recognized that from the back porch of his studio at 201 S. Water Street, he could photograph Great Lakes shipping traffic on the St. Clair River. A reproduced photograph has circulated through the Pesha collectors' community that shows Pesha aiming a large, tripod-mounted 8 x 10 inch view camera toward a Great Lakes steamer heading downstream on the St. Clair River. There appears to be a 5 x 7 inch reducing back on the camera, which would have been standard for postcard work. He quickly perfected his technique to frame the steamers and schooners as they traveled up and down the river, building a large inventory of vessel photographs. He now had two listings in *Polk's Michigan Gazetteer*, one billing himself as "Marine Photographer Established 1900, Largest Collection of Vessel Photographs in America," and the

other for "PESHA'S MARINE STUDIO, Only Photographer with Studio so Placed as to Photograph Vessels at Full Speed. 500 Postal Subjects of the Largest Lake Steamers." He also ran a half-page display advertisement in the 1909 *Gazetteer* repeating the above information and heralding "Pesha's Photo Post Cards 5,000 Subjects. Samples to Dealers – Free."



FIGURE 8. *Steamer Eastern States,*
advertisement for National Lead Company.

About this time, Pesha struck a deal with the National Lead Company of New York and St. Louis, allowing them to use several of his Great Lakes vessel postcards to advertise their Phoenix Metal, used in fitting out various Great Lakes steamers. The National Lead Co. printed its advertising copy in red ink at the bottom of selected Pesha real photo postcards (**FIGURE 8**).



FIGURE 9. *Broadway South from Main,*
Oklahoma [City]. #6152.

By 1909, Pesha had also traveled to Oklahoma City. The reason for that visit remains unknown, but Pesha made time to make about fifty photographic postcard views and establish business arrangements to sell the postcards there. Those postcards were apparently popular with Oklahoma City purchasers. They are scarce today, and very much in demand among Pesha

and Oklahoma City collectors (**FIGURE 9**). He had also made the first of several trips to Niagara Falls and Buffalo and had added a selection of postcards from both cities to his inventory (**FIGURE 10**).



FIGURE 10. At Niagara Falls. #5096.

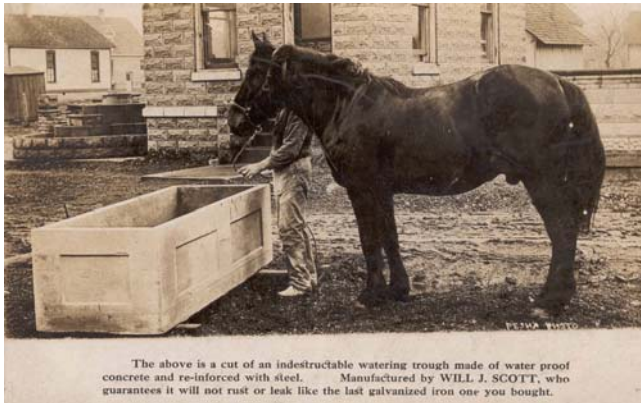


FIGURE 11. Watering trough manufactured by Will J. Scott.

Embarking in yet another direction, Pesha made a set of approximately ten advertising postcards for Will J. Scott, a Marine City businessman who manufactured concrete blocks and other cast concrete products (**FIGURE 11**).

Pesha's wife, Lena, probably assisted in studio and marketing responsibilities. By 1909, Pesha was also employing others to help with printing and processing the postcards in the dark-room. On the back of a view of BEDFORD ST LOOKING SOUTH ~ SANDWICH [ONTARIO], Mollie Burns wrote to her mother in Chicago on June 16, 1909:

"What do you think of my 1st. I am at Pesha's making these . . . Started there Monday – don't know if I will stay. Tell you more when I write. As ever, Mollie."

By 1909, Pesha had also settled on a clear, uniform style for numbering and captioning his real photo postcards: neat printing in block capital letters across the bottom of the image, with a negative or image number at left, generally four or five

digits, followed by a centered title, like HURON STREET, NORTH BRANCH, MICH., and PESHA PHOTO at far right. (Infrequently, he used P. P. instead of PESHA PHOTO.) This methodology likely accomplished several important objectives: it established an immediately recognizable, distinct identity for his products; it solidified the postcard's usefulness in describing specific locales; it launched a sensible system for tying the positive image to a negative which would be filed numerically; it allowed for easier inventory tracking and sales order management; and it linked Pesha's name with a quality product. It appears that Pesha applied his numbering and captioning system retroactively to many, but not all, earlier negatives. He also seems to have allocated blocks of numbers to specific locations: 2600 through 2900 for Algonac, Michigan, for example, and 3500 through 4100 for Detroit. He did not adhere uniformly to this numbering system though, sometimes assigning sets of numbers within a sequence to an entirely different town. If he exhausted a set of numbers for a town, he would occasionally continue with a new, discontinuous sequence. Some numbers are unassigned. Collectors puzzle over the logic of Pesha's numbering system, but it must have functioned adequately for him and his staff. Careful examination of Pesha's captions reveals that they were not all printed by the same person, but they are surprisingly consistent.

Like most postcard photographers of his time, Pesha appears to have lettered the numbers and captions on the glass plate negatives with an opaque ink so that they would appear as white in the resulting print. This necessitated that the caption be lettered in a portion of the negative that would be dark when printed, so that the white caption would be readable. If the lower portion of the photograph was white or very light, the caption might be positioned elsewhere in the image, or scratched through the negative's emulsion with a pointed stylus so that it would print black against white subject matter.



FIGURE 12. Woodward Ave. Detroit, Mich. #3827.
Arch and streetcars during B.P.O.E. Convention, 1910.

By 1910, Pesha was making more densely urban views than he had previously. The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks

(B.P.O.E.) held their huge annual convention in Detroit that July, and Pesha must have spent considerable time photographing convention hotels, parades, and enormous decorative arches and monuments that were constructed for the occasion. Pesha was not the official photographer for the B.P.O.E. event—the Marcell Photo Company had that distinction—but he made many exceptional postcards of the event that probably generated strong sales (**FIGURE 12**).

Pesha had also purchased an automobile by 1910, a White steam touring car, manufactured in Cleveland. Traveling by car and likely carrying more glass plates than previously, Pesha further expanded his range and his photographic productivity. From 1910 to 1912, Pesha traveled and photographed extensively in lower Michigan, northern Ohio and southwest Ontario. He visited East Jordan, Charlevoix, and Harbor Springs on his way to Michigan's Upper Peninsula, adding dozens of new images. These were probably his most industrious years as a postcard photographer, and it was during this period that he made his most mature, sophisticated photographs.

By autumn of 1912, Pesha had made over 8,000 postcard photographs, an astonishing output for a one-man studio. They included a variety of "novelty" cards and exaggerations, in addition to hundreds of Great Lakes vessels. Many people have questioned if Pesha might have hired and trained other photographers to make some of his photographs. If he did, there are no records to support it, and his work shows such stylistic uniformity that it seems improbable that multiple photographers could have produced it. Undoubtedly, Pesha occasionally acquired the work of other photographers and issued it as his own, either through purchase, trade, copying or appropriation. Many postcard photographers engaged in these practices. Some twenty photographs of Plymouth, Michigan were clearly made by another photographer and reissued as Pesha postcards with Pesha numbers, and an occasional postcard carries the name of another maker along with Pesha's name or number. These are infrequent though, and comprise less than two percent of Pesha's total production.

On October 1, 1912 Pesha's career ended abruptly. With his wife Lena and eleven year-old daughter Lorrain, he had driven to Inwood, Ontario to visit his parents at their farm. Upon returning from a short automobile ride with his brother-in-law and nephew, Pesha apparently confused levers on his White steamer, and the car raced backwards up an embankment and flipped over, pinning Pesha under the vehicle and killing him instantly. His nephew was thrown from the car and survived with minor injuries. His brother-in-law had exited the vehicle moments earlier to open a gate. Pesha was buried in the cemetery at Shetland, a few miles from where he was born and raised.¹³

Lena Pesha continued to operate the studio and postcard enterprise for about ten years following Louis Pesha's death. She is listed as proprietor of the Pesha Art Company at 201 S. Water

Street, Marine City in *Polk's Michigan Business Gazetteer* from 1913 through 1918. In 1919, Mr. and Mrs. D. C. Miller are listed in that capacity. In 1922, Durrell J. Butterfield was in place as Manager at the Pesha Photo Post Card Company, 555 S. Water Street, Marine City.

The Pesha studio continued to produce and market real photo postcards in large numbers until it ceased business. Many of its postcards with Pesha numbers from 14,000 through 19,000 appear to have been made by Pesha but are postmarked in 1914 and later years. Pesha researcher Don Wilson of Flushing, Michigan speculates that almost all Pesha postcards with numbers higher than 15,000 were printed after his death. It is conceivable that Pesha left a backlog of undeveloped or unprinted negatives when he died, and that Lena Pesha and her staff produced those postcards and marketed them as long as possible.

By the 1920s, the Pesha Photo Post Card Company was also operating at 6930 Gratiot Avenue in Detroit, according to rubber-stamped information on the backs of some postcards produced at that time. These later postcards were distinctly the work of other photographers. They include automobiles and businesses that clearly date from the early 1920s. They also employ different styles of captioning and numbering, with sequences in the 22,000 and 94,000 ranges, or a new system using letters and numerals, as in P-5 for a 1920s view in downtown Plymouth, Michigan. Most of these late postcards show little regard for the photographic and descriptive qualities that characterized images made by Pesha himself.



FIGURE 13. Woodward Ave., Detroit in Winter. #3714.

Pesha's success as a postcard photographer required more than prolific output and good business sense. It also demanded photographic skill and a quality of perception and comprehension of place that would distinguish his work from that of his competitors. Pesha understood photography, and he refined his technique over the years so that he could work quickly, persuade and cajole human subjects when necessary, and manage exposure and development to achieve consistently good results. He had an eye for good light and employed it whenever

possible to add texture and drama to his pictures. Increasingly, he challenged himself to include greater complexity of subject matter so that, metaphorically, his photographs addressed an evolving, complex world (**FIGURES 13 & 14**).

Any well-made photograph can describe a building or location. Establishing a sense of place within a photograph asks more of the photographer. It requires seeing that piece of the world as others might experience it on day-to-day terms: how Main Street looks as one enters it on the way to work; the way the morning or afternoon sun defines the details of buildings and engraves a lasting impression on the beholder; how signs and graphics inventory the enterprise and progress of a town; the way the mill stands as an intersection of local agriculture and commerce; how the railroad depot and the streetcar tracks speak to the comings and goings of friends and strangers; how the town impresses itself on our very being. Pesha had that gift.



FIGURE 14. *What Are They Doing With Flint*, #9673.

Notes

1. Much of the research on Pesha's early years was done by Ontario historian Glen Phillips during his graduate studies at the University of Western Ontario in London. He has generously shared his research notes.
2. Dun & Bradstreet Records, March 1899 and later.
3. *Alvinston [Ontario] Free Press*, April 13, 1899 through May 11, 1899: several mentions.
4. *Alvinston Free Press*, August 3, 1899.
5. *Alvinston Free Press*, August 16, 1899; *Petrolia [Ontario] Advertiser*, August 23, 1899.
6. *Alvinston Free Press*, January 2, 1901.
7. *Sarnia [Ontario] Daily Observer*, January 10, 1901; *Petrolia Advertiser*, January 16, 1901.
8. *Alvinston Free Press*, January 30, 1901.
9. *Advertiser*, March 20, 1901.
10. *Alvinston Free Press*, April 10, 1901.
11. *Petrolia Advertiser*, May 29, 1901.
12. Hal Morgan and Andreas Brown, *Prairie Fires and Paper Moons: The American Photographic Postcard: 1900-1920* (Boston, 1981), 187.
13. *Sarnia Weekly Observer*, October 4, 1912, p. 1.

Doug Aikenhead is a photographer. He teaches the history of photography and other classes at Washtenaw Community College in Ann Arbor and occasionally at the University of Michigan School of Art and Design. Doug is the co-author of Detroit Images: Photographs of the Renaissance City (Wayne State University Press, 1989). He collects and sells early 20th-century real photo postcards. He also serves on the Board of MiPHS. Doug and his wife Tracy live in Ann Arbor, Michigan.



Imlay City, Mich. #10877. Roller Mills.



Sans Souci, #5539. Harsen's Island, Mich.

OUR PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello members! I hope the summer has brought you some new finds or interesting information about your photo or camera collection. Speaking of adding to your collection, we're beginning to ramp up for the annual trade show and applications have been coming in. If you're interested in volunteering, give me a call at 248.549.6026, or email me at motz48073@yahoo.com.

I also want to thank everyone who sent in their ballots, especially with all your compliments! How we love to read those. We have a really great board and we do have fun at the working meetings. It's amazing how much we can accomplish as a group. We're also shifting gears on getting out the directory. It should be out this fall. So many details to get correct!



Our June visit to the Argus Museum in Ann Arbor was quite the treat. We had a crowd of over 20 folks poring over the display cases. Mark O'Brien, our Argus Camera aficionado (on the left with Andee Seeger, John Cameron and Gil Clark), and Jennifer Wendler, the Argus Museum curator, gave us a lively and informative tour. You may remember that MiPHS members Gene and George O'Neal were the first curators of the Argus Museum. More than a few of us had lunch together afterward and had an enjoyable time. Thanks to all for attending. Our next event (Saturday, September 24th at 11:00AM) will be at the Meadow Brook Art Gallery on the campus of Oakland University, where Jim Jensen will give us a "chat" titled: "Of One Cloth: The Business, Science and Art of Nineteenth-Century Photography." This promises to be an interesting lecture on the cutthroat photography business in the later 1800s. Hope to see you there! — *Cindy MotZ!*

PAUSING TO REMEMBER: JOHN DARROW SR.

John (Jack) Darrow Sr. passed away on July 3, 2005 at the age of 87. He retired from the U. S. Naval Reserve after 34 years of service. During WWII he commanded a minesweeper and the LST 903; in Korea he commanded a repair ship. John was an avid camera collector and photography enthusiast. In 1947 he started the Akron Camera Company in Akron, Ohio, which he ran until 1969. After leaving the camera store, John began collecting and restoring vintage photo equipment. He also sold antique cameras at photo shows where he enjoyed meeting and talking to customers and fellow dealers. He went to most of the camera shows in the east and midwest for thirty years. Many of these he attended with his son John Jr. He was also a long time member of MiPHS, the Western Reserve and New England camera and photo societies. John will be greatly missed by his loved ones and fellow camera collectors. — *John Darrow Jr.*



PHOTO-HISTORY CALENDAR

September 11: Chicago Photographic Collectors Society, Camera & Image Show, Marriott, Oak Brook, IL, www.chicagophotographic.org

September 11: Wally Jung Postcard & Paper Show, Holiday Inn, Midland, MI, postcardwally@msn.com

September 11: London Photograph Fair, Bonnington Hotel, London, England, www.photofair.co.uk

September 24 (Saturday): **MiPHS**—James S. Jensen, "Of One Cloth: The Business, Science and Art of Nineteenth-Century Photography,"

Lecture, Meadow Brook Art Gallery, Oakland University, Rochester, MI, 11:00AM

September 25: Ohio Paper, Postcard & Book Show, Veteran's Memorial Hall, Columbus, OH, www.columbusproductions.com

September 25: Cologne Photo Fair, Stadthalle, Cologne, Germany, www.koelnfoto.com

October 1-January 8: *Young America: The Daguerreotypes of Southworth & Hawes*, George Eastman House, Rochester, NY. Exhibition.

October 2: Photographic Historical Society of Canada, Photographica Fair, Ontario Soccer Centre, Woodbridge, ON, www.phsc.ca

October 2: Michigan Antiquarian Book & Paper Show, Lansing Center, Lansing, MI, www.curiousbooks.com

October 15-16: Detroit Camera Show, Holiday Inn, Southfield, MI, www.photorama.com

October 16: MPM All Image Show, Holiday Inn, Emeryville, CA, www.mpmmpresents.com

October 23 (Sunday): **MiPHS**—34th Annual Photographica Trade Show, Novi Community Center, Novi, MI, 10:00-4:00PM

October 27-30: The Daguerreian Society Symposium, Rochester, NY, www.daguerre.org

November 19: Wally Jung Postcard & Paper Show, Cobblestone Events Center, Mason, MI, postcardwally@msn.com