



The Photogram

Michigan Photographic Historical Society

Winter 2025



IN THIS ISSUE:



Argus Homage



1898 Massachusetts Blizzard



An Ugly Duckling



Bar Photos from Backroom Darkrooms

The Michigan Photographic Historical Society (MiPHS)

Board of Directors



President and Treasurer: Chuck Fehl.....ckfehl@gmail.com
Vice President - Programs: Dietmar Haenchen.....haendit@gmail.com
Vice President - Special Events: *Open Position*
Vice President - Communication: Nick Valenti.....nickvalenti@mac.com
Secretary: Jeff Rowe.....719jrowe@gmail.com
Members-at-large: Doug Aikenhead, Heather Gardner, Clint Hryhorijw, Yuki Kawai, Bruce Powelson, Cynthia Motzenbecker (President Emeritus)
Photogram Editor and Webmaster: Karen Fehl.....michiganphotohistory.org

CONTENTS:

Volume 53 No.4 Winter 2025

Membership Dues Information	4
Bar Photos by Cynthia Motzenbecker.....	5
2025 Photographica Show, Sale & Auction	6
My Homage to Argus by Chuck Fehl.....	10
The Blizzard of 1898 in Fall River, MA by Steve Hanley.....	16
My Collection Has an Ugly Duckling by Rob Niederman.....	20
Some Snowy Scenes by Cindy Motzenbecker.....	25
Grab & Brag by Chuck Fehl.....	26

Time to Renew! 2026 Membership Dues

See information on Page 4.

2026 MiPHS Events

We will present our lineup of 2026 activities in the Spring Edition of *The Photogram* and on our website as soon as available.

Send in Your Stories! *Photogram* Submission Deadlines

Spring 2026: **February 1** Summer 2026: **May 1**
Fall 2026: **August 1** Winter 2026: **November 1**



Scan the QR code with your device's camera app to be taken directly to the MiPHS website.

The Michigan Photographic Historical Society — (MiPHS) is dedicated to advancing an understanding and appreciation of the history of photography through membership meetings, special events, publications, and shared endeavors with other organizations and the general public. The MiPHS is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit corporation chartered in the State of Michigan. ISSN 1082-6874

The **MiPHS** welcomes new members. Dues are \$40 or \$50 per year (January 1 to December 31) depending on whether you receive a digital or printed, mailed copy of *The Photogram* and \$20 for students with a valid ID. The **MiPHS** has a PayPal link for paying dues at our website "MiPHS.org." The **MiPHS** is on Facebook at "MiPHS Public Group." **MiPHS** mailing address: 36014 Smithfield Rd., Farmington MI 48335-3149.

The Photogram is the official newsletter of the Michigan Photographic Historical Society. The contents are copyrighted for the year of publication. Copyright © 2025.

Contributions from **MiPHS** members and non-members are welcomed. To submit an article, review, occasional photo ad (free to **MiPHS** members annually), an informational item for publication, or questions about submissions formats, contact **Karen Fehl**, Editor, at: michiganphotohistory@gmail.com. **Submission Deadlines**

November 1: Winter Issue February 1: Spring Issue May 1: Summer Issue August 1: Fall Issue

Authors and advertisers are responsible for the accuracy of their contributions to **The Photogram**. The views of the authors do not necessarily reflect the views of the Society.

Message from the President

Dear MiPHS Members,

Michigan Photographic Historical Society held its annual Photographica trade show, sale and auction on October 5 at our usual haunt at the Royal Oak Elks Lodge. It was fairly well attended despite it being another great Fall weather day. Let's hope for a cold, rainy day for our Sale next year!

A large number of folks stayed through the Show's end to participate in the much-anticipated auction of vintage American-made cameras donated by MiPHS member Don Balmer. There were almost 200 lots including Kodak, Graflex, Premo, Conley, military, and numerous common names like Argus, Universal and Bolex. There were also a few European brands like Leica and Robot. Our total sales exceeded \$12,000—most of which the Society will retain as a generous donation from Don Balmer of Marquette, MI.



Chuck's selfie outside the Argus Museum.

We also were able to sell out our vendor tables after we picked up a last-minute rush of new vendors at the Cleveland show in September. This year, right before the auction bidding began, we provided pizza for our vendors and guests that was much appreciated. We learned this crowd-pleasing tactic at the New England (PHSNE) show in Boston, which is a similar Photographica event.

These monies will reimburse us for the recent investments we have made on our website, Zoom hostings and other system upgrades, and allows us to resume our charitable gifting and grant contributions which have slowed in recent years. In 2026 we also hope to reestablish interest in member field trips and photo outings.

We are always looking for creative and informative contributions to our gem, *The Photogram*. Please take a look around your collection(s) and consider submitting an article telling us something about them, their features, and why they interest you. This can be a one or two page "Grab and Brag" or a more in-depth article. Submit these to: karenfehl@gmail.com with photos. Believe it or not, phone camera pictures work great these days. (I never thought those words would ever come out of my mouth!)

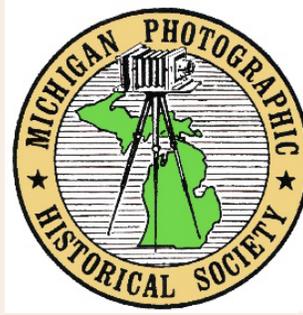
Please remember to renew your MiPHS membership for 2026 (details on page 4).

Chuck Fehl, President and Treasurer



Happy Holidays!

Time To Renew Your MiPHS Membership



The Board of Directors of the Michigan Photographic Historical Society remind you that it is time to renew your membership for 2026.

Annual membership dues: \$40 for a regular membership (for those receiving a digital copy of *The Photogram*) and \$50 (for those receiving a first class mailed printed copy of *The Photogram*); \$20 for students.

ALL renewing members, even those who have already paid for 2026, are asked to fill out the online membership renewal form on our website <http://miphs.org>. This will ensure the accuracy of our membership records. A member directory is planned for 2026.

Renewal is **via the ONLINE FORM ONLY** with three payment options after the renewal form is submitted:

- PayPal from the MiPHS website link at the end of the form
- Using your PayPal account to: "payments@miphs.org"
- Check payable to "MiPHS" mailed to: Chuck Fehl, 36014 Smithfield Rd, Farmington, MI 48335

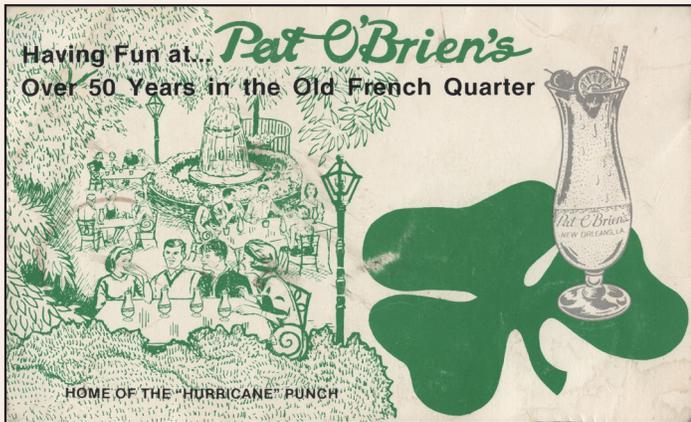
2026 Membership benefits:

- Membership includes associate memberships in the Photographic Historical Society of New England and the Photographic Historical Society of Canada (free pdf newsletters and Zoom presentations)
- An in-person or a Zoom annual meeting presentation.
- An online Board of Directors Election (Early June).
- Free admission to our Photographica Show & Sale in October or November.
- We hope to organize at least one field trip and/or photo outing..
- *The Photogram* will continue to be published four times a year. The Board hopes that you will consider the "PDF only" option (which you can print at home) which reduces our cost.

We encourage members to contribute articles to *The Photogram*. Send your submissions to the editor, Karen Fehl, at karenfehl@gmail.com. The Board members are looking for your contributions to further the Society's growth and success in 2026. Are you interested in serving on a committee, running for the Board, or contributing your talents to future projects? Please let us know. Contact any Board Member.

MiPHS Membership Committee (Chuck Fehl, Nick Valenti, Yuki Kawai)

From the Collection of Cindy Motzenbecker Bar Photos



"Bar Photos" are often overlooked in the image collecting world. They're not always the *B*E*S*T* quality as sometimes the photographer didn't rinse out all the fixer in their "backroom darkroom" that was on the premises. They're quite a reflection of their times. All that cigarette smoking going on. Yikes... Back in the day, some entrepreneurial photographer discovered that they had a captive audience, kind of like when you go on a cruise nowadays. There's always an "opportunity" for you to purchase photos of yourself "out and about" and for the photographer to make some money. That's true especially if there was alcohol involved as you were more likely to make a purchase. They're sometimes dated and sometime the people in them are listed or actually signed them.



2025 Photographica Show, Sale & Auction

The 2025 Photographica Show, Sale and Auction held at Royal Oak's Elks Hall on Sunday, October 5 brought nearly 60 attendees. This year's Show featured 18 dealers, including several new vendors—plus the return of Argus Museum and Detroit Stereographic Society representatives (both longtime participants). In addition, we had one of our largest live camera auctions featuring hundreds of antique American made cameras dating back as far as 1890. Over 40 patrons actively participated in the two and a half hour extravaganza led by our own MiPHS board member and auctioneer Clint Hryhorijiw, who is also President of the Photographic Historical Society of Canada. This was made possible by a generous gift from longtime MiPHS member Don Balmer of Marquette, Michigan—a retired camera repair technician (and collector). To see a full catalog of auctioned items look under *Upcoming Events* on our website. We'll leave that up for a while.

There are too many people to thank individually, so let's just leave it that almost every MiPHS Board member (and some spouses) played a pivotal roll in transporting, cleaning and organizing the cameras for this auction. There were also some interesting walk-in donation lots, compliments of David Doss.

We are glad we can provide the conduits to give these treasured relics new ownership and in some cases renewed life as photographic instruments. The financial resources provided by the net proceeds will again allow MiPHS to consider gifts and grants to worthy artistic and photographic endeavors.

Thanks to all our patrons for making our 2025 Show a great success! Kudos to all who helped and participated.

Photos courtesy of Dietmar Haenchen.



Dealer tables: (l to r): MiPHS Board member Bruce Powelson. New MiPHS member Chuck Rubin (green shirt) from Louisville, KY. Longtime dealer and member Igor Resnik (blue shirt).
Below right: Dealer/member Stephen Straub (black shirt)





Argus Museum Executive Director Ashley Wimbrough explains membership benefits.



Dealer Mike Vilensky.



Jack Darrow, dealer.



Dealer Mark McDowell speaks with MiPHS Board Member Yuki Kawai.



MiPHS Board Member Cindy Motzenbecker with her display of historic images.



**Right (top): Dealer Tony Ventimiglia.
Right (bottom): MiPHS President Chuck Fehl and MiPHS member Kate Norcross.**



Photographic Show, Sale & Auction



This year's auction table was filled with hundreds of donations of antique and classic American cameras from MiPHS member Don Balmer. Auctioneer and Board Member Clint Hryhorijiw is assisted by MiPHS Board Members Nick Valenti and Chuck Fehl.





MiPHS Vice President Communications Nick Valenti assists Clint at the auction.



Attendees checking out auction items prior to bidding.



Big job well done! MiPHS board members (l to r): Dietmar Haenchen, Nick Valenti, Cindy Motzenbecker, Jeff Rowe, and Chuck Fehl. Other board members not present at time of photo.

My Homage to Argus

By Chuck Fehl

Argus—and I don't mean the Greek mythological “all seeing” figure whose head was covered with 100 eyes—but rather the camera company from Michigan named after him. Although not an initial fan of Argus cameras, after visiting the Argus Museum in Ann Arbor and exploring its exhibits and programs, I certainly am now.

The Argus Museum's small but comprehensive displays won me over so much that I became a member. I have visited the museum several times, most recently to participate in their Annual Meeting and Open House in October. The meeting was held at the Argus Museum within the Argus Building where most of the early cameras were designed and manufactured.

Argus' original corporate name was the International Radio Corporation when it manufactured radios and electronic gear in the increasingly crowded broadcast radio segment after World War I. However, if your name wasn't RCA, Zenith or Westinghouse, you were in trouble. So, they changed the corporate name to International *Research* Corporation (still known as IRC) and set out to bring 35mm photography to the masses—which was still in its infancy.



An early example of an Argus A with its collapsible lens extended. Early shutters and lens assemblies were supplied by well-respected Ilex. This was one of the first 35mm film cameras available in the United States.

Argus was a more familiar name to our parents or grandparents as it hasn't sold a Michigan made camera in over 60 years. It's been 70 or 80 years since its prime, when Argus sold millions of reputable 35mm and roll film cameras. Their target audience was initially 35mm film enthusiasts who couldn't afford the \$300 Leica or Contax. The 1936 Argus A sold for \$12.50—and was a sales success!

For that affordable sum you got a precision molded plastic body with a collapsible lens supplied by Ilex with a f/4.5 to f/11 anastigmat and six-speed shutter topping out at 1/200th sec. Most photographers can do a lot of work with those specs! Approximately 500,000 model A's and variants with various ancillary features were produced before production stopped in the early 1950s.



A late model Argus C-3 from 1959. It didn't look much different from the original C and C-2 of the late 1930s. It was nicknamed the "Brick" for its shape, but also for its hefty 27 oz weight from its all metal body. The design was so unique it could be spotted from 50 feet away.

IRC's next camera was the foundation for its infamy: the Argus C-3—also known as “the Brick”, which was in production starting in 1938. This camera became the “Model T” of 35mm film photography. The C-3 was almost universal with students, family photographers, travelers, or anyone needing a full featured quality camera where concerns about weight and sleek appearance were secondary. The Argus C-3s were nicely finished in black enamel with chrome accents. It had an accurate coupled rangefinder for “automatic” focusing, flash sync, 1/10 to 1/300 second behind the lens shutter and interchangeable lenses* (of sort). This camera started as the “C” (w/o coupled RF) and continued through the metered Matchmatic of the mid-1960s when the two millionth Argus C-3 variant was produced.



Close up detail of Argus C-3's coupled rangefinder. Be sure not to lose that idler gear while changing lenses!



Many of the C-3's accessory lenses were manufactured by foreign suppliers. The wide angle and telephoto lenses shown here were from Steinheil Munchen of West Germany.

continued next page

continued from page 11

Next came the Model K of 1939, which appeared briefly as a way to reuse camera bodies manufactured for an abandoned Model F. The F was intended to have a spring motor film advance like the German Robot II. The advance mechanism was deemed too unreliable for the consumer and the F was scratched. It was replaced by the Model K which used the F body modified with a manual film advance. The remarkable thing about the Model K was its coupled extinction meter that automatically set the exposure on a shutter-preferred basis. After setting the shutter speed, the aperture (and exposure) was set automatically by manipulation of the meter's grey extinction scale calculator. That all took practice as extinction meters are subjective at best—as your discerning eye was actually the meter. The K's lens and shutter are the same as in the Argus A. These are the rarest of the early production Argus' as only about 2000+/- were made. It also has a unique shape. It sold for \$19.90 in 1940.



The rare Argus Model K was originally designed to have a motor driven film advance. Notice the viewfinder and meter windows on the bottom edge of the camera.



The aperture coupled extinction metering system had to be the first shutter priority meter built into the camera body. Bravo Argus!

At the same time, other cameras were being developed or sold by Argus with price points in the \$10 to \$15 range. The camera used Kodak 828 film (paper backed 35mm stock) to compete with Kodak's short-lived Bantam line of compact cameras. These plastic streamlined designs scream 1930s Moderne, and were made by Camro Corporation in New Jersey under the names Camro 28, Minca 28, Delco 28—but known in Ann Arbor as Argus 19s. Also in 1941, Argus introduced its Model 21 which evolved into the C-4. This was produced until 1961. This successor to the C-3 sold well at introduction but was limited by having no interchangeable lenses like most of its 35mm competition (Canon, Nikon, Pentax) until late in its product cycle.



Example of a Model C-4r of 1960. The "r" stood for *Rewind Crank* which also included a thumb trigger film advance. It spent most of its product cycle without interchangeable lenses.

During the early to mid-1940s, Argus began development of roll film cameras of the twin lens reflex (TLR) type. Most of these cameras had molded plastic bodies and some looked like copies of Voigtlander's Brilliant TLRs of that period. TLR was a little misleading, as on the Argus Model 40s and Model 75s, the viewing lens was stationary as on the Kodak DuoFlex and most of the Brilliants. Therefore, it's really a box camera with an uncoupled reflex viewfinder. Various apertures were available on certain models but only one shutter speed of about 1/50th second on most. These sold for \$20 to \$30 after World War II—depending on the outfit. These cameras were entry level at best with a f/8 maximum aperture, and many were produced for educational use in schools.



Argus' lineup of "Model 40" and "75" roll film cameras in the 1950s. These were basic plastic box cameras with a bright reflex viewer not coupled to the camera lens. It was a favorite with school photography students of the day. They took both 120 and 620 films.

The focusing Argoflex of 1940 (right) was a very close copy of Voigtlander's Focusing Brilliant camera but at half the price.

There was an exception to these snapshot cameras and that was the Argoflex and Argoflex II of 1940 and 1948. These came in molded and metal bodies and had the viewing and taking lens coupled together like the Kodak Reflex or Focusing Brilliant. The anastigmat lens was upgraded to f/4.5 to f/18 and the variable shutter 1/10 to 1/200 second. Another nice feature of the Argus TLRs is the ability to use both universal 120 and Kodak's 620 film.

Argus' annual production peaked in the early-to-mid 1950s at \$22 million (equivalent to \$100 million today) and went downhill from there after a series of mergers and acquisitions with Sylvania, GTE and finally its 1962 sale to Chicago's Mansfield Industries that pirated Argus' still respected name. By then all of Ann Arbor's remaining offices, manufacturing, and servicing were shut down or moved to Chicago. "Argus" became a distributor of second tier projectors, movie equipment, and imported cameras from Germany but increasingly from Japan. One of its main suppliers was what is now Cosina.

What happened to Argus happened to many U.S. companies that became complacent with postwar success and the status quo. It failed to invest in R&D to keep reinventing itself in a changing world and marketplace. It was a slow-motion case study on what would happen to practically all camera manufacturers. What happened to Argus should have been recognized earlier by the mighty Kodak and Polaroid corporations which could possibly have avoided the same demise.

continued next page

continued from page 13

From a collector's standpoint there are several angles here. For budding new collectors, the stock of working classics such as Argus As, C-3s, C-4s and Argoflexes are plentiful at reasonable prices. I just picked up a mint late model C-3 and C-4r with manuals and cases for \$25 each. These cameras usually just need a good cleaning to be usable, as the internals are virtually bulletproof. The only rare production camera is the Model K that commands a premium price (\$300-\$400). Then there are prototype cameras with foreign lenses or special body colors. Michigan is a good place to be for those occasional finds since Ann Arbor is where they were designed and manufactured. There is no organized market for such, but if you see a C-4 with a French Angenieux lens, or a cream colored Argoflex, please let me know!

For an in-depth 500-page history of the Argus story, please see the 2023 publication "*Argus - Fine American Cameras*" by Robert Kelly and other contributors. I believe the museum has a few copies left at \$50. Visit the Argus Museum located at 525 W. Williams Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48103. The museum is open from 8 to 5 Monday through Friday. Admission and onsite parking are free. Website address: argusmuseum.org

Personal note: My own relationship with photography started on a negative note around 1960 by enduring my grandfather fiddling with his Argus C-3, flash gun and GE light meter as he methodically set up his Brick for a picture (by then) of frowning, complaining grandchildren. I still own that torture apparatus!

*When I said "sort of" regarding the C-3s' interchangeable lenses, the lens focal length selection was very limited. They offered only a 35mm on the wide side and 100mm on the telephoto side. To go wider or longer would have caused severe vignetting caused by the behind-the-lens leaf shutter-induced shadows. This is why that system with its limitations was abandoned by all manufacturers for focal plane or between-the-lens leaf shutter systems that avoid that problem.



This is a good representation of some of the Argus cameras made in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

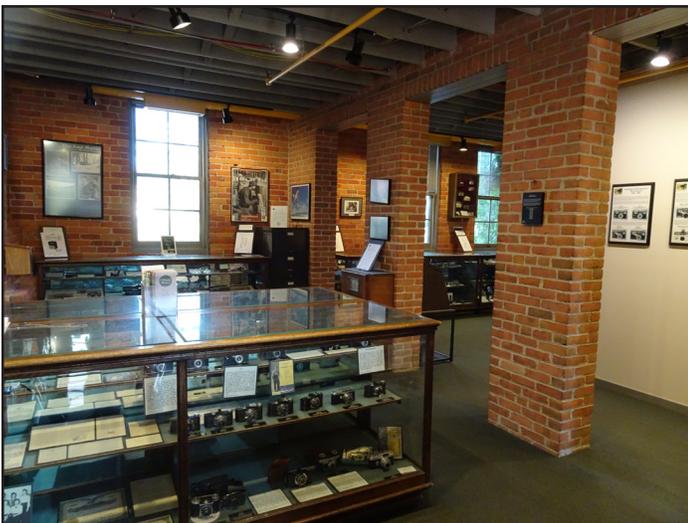
The Argus Museum is located at 525 W. Williams Street (five blocks west of Main Street) in Ann Arbor. The museum's entrance is behind the building where there is free parking. It is open daily between 8 and 5 for self-directed tours. It would take about an hour to see all the exhibits and displays. Admission is free but donations are welcome. The museum itself is located on the second floor. Additional info is available on their website: argusmuseum.org. The Executive Director is longtime MiPHS friend Ashley Wimbrough. She can be reached at 313-499-0551 if special arrangements need to be made or if you wish to join the museum. Membership is \$25 per year and includes a newsletter, educational meetings and activities.



Look for this marquee off the back parking lot to enter the building. The Argus Museum is on the second floor.



This is the front of the Argus Building on W. Williams Street in Ann Arbor. For 30+ years it was the design, manufacturing and HQ for IRC (Argus).



Displays include production and prototype cameras, wartime exploits, and early radio models. Exhibits are well described.



More display cases of product, plus posters showing the development of various product lines. There are several hallways of Argus photographs, awards, and advertisements.

The Blizzard of 1898 in Fall River, Massachusetts

By Steven J. Hanley

Photographs that depict a specific date or event hold a special kind of magic. They give us the illusion of immediacy — the feeling that we are standing right there, just as it happened.

That is the case with this photograph I acquired several years ago. It came with a detailed inscription on the back and several intriguing visual clues.

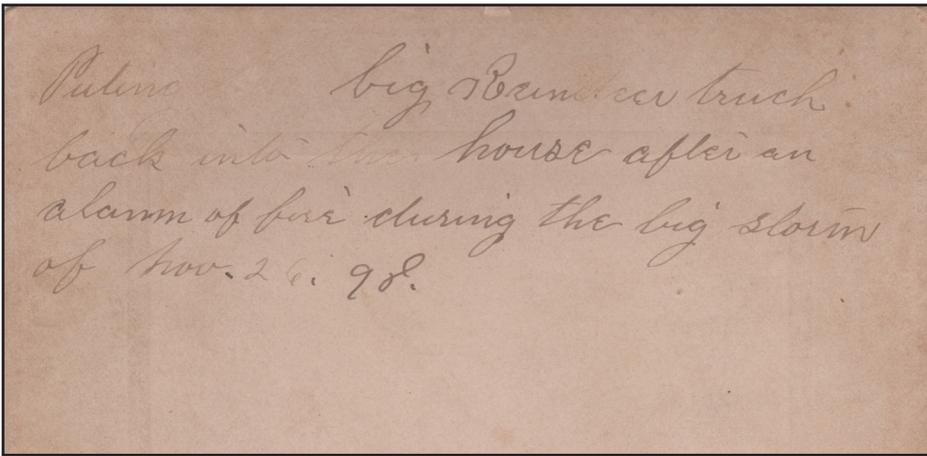


**A horse-drawn fire truck returns to the station after an alarm during
Fall River's Blizzard of November 26, 1898.**

In the image, a snowy street scene unfolds: men amble through deep drifts as a horse-drawn fire truck, ladder atop, returns from duty. Two storefront signs dominate the view—"Ye Tavern" and "Quirk Brothers."

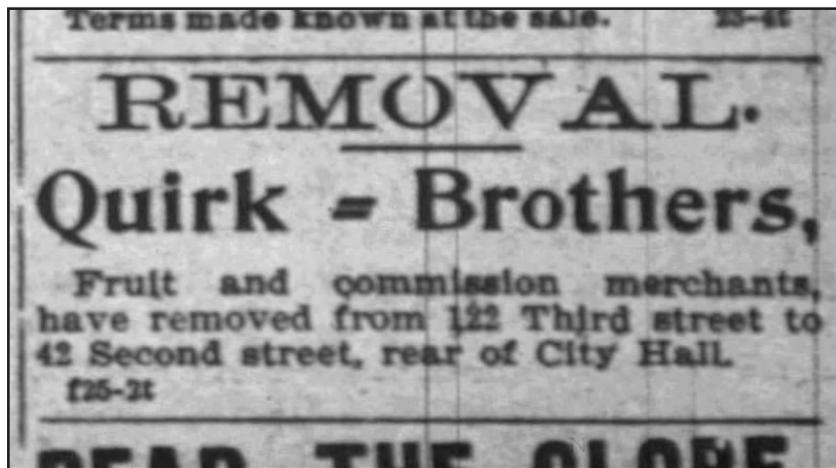
On the reverse, someone noted in cursive:

"Putting the big Reindeer truck back into the house after an alarm of fire during the big storm of Nov. 26 '98."



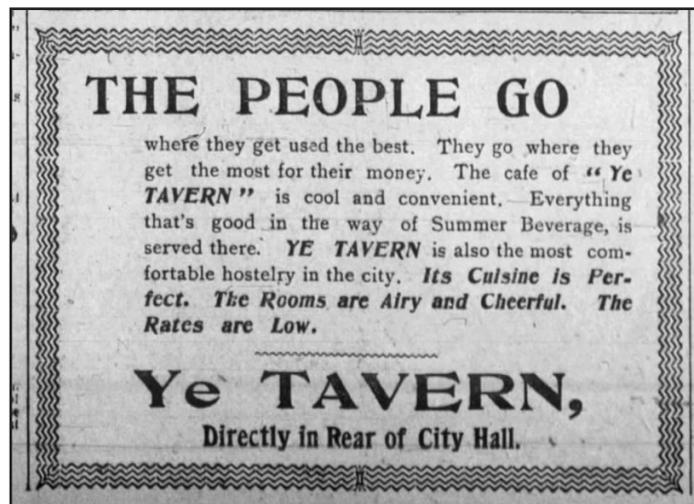
Reverse side of the photograph showing the handwritten inscription that helped identify the scene.

Quick research confirmed that the Quirk Brothers were "fruit and commission merchants." In 1897, they relocated from 122 Third Street to 42 Second Street, just behind City Hall in Fall River, Massachusetts.



Fall River Globe (Fall River, MA) - February 26, 1897.

The neighboring Ye Tavern, also behind City Hall, was described in an 1899 advertisement as "cool and convenient," "the most comfortable hostelry in the city," with "perfect cuisine," "airy and cheerful rooms," and "low rates."



The Fall River Daily Herald (Fall River, MA) - July 10, 1899.

continued next page

Further searches turned up accounts of the Reindeer truck itself—and vivid newspaper coverage of the fierce November 1898 blizzard.

of Mrs. Louisa F. Conroy.

The Reindeer truck and Metacomet steamer and hose wagon were backed into the new house on Second street this morning, to allow measurements for the swinging harness. The house will be ready for occupancy in a short time.

When the new fire department building in the rear of City Hall is finished, as it will be when fixtures are in place, the Metacomet steamer and Reindeer truck will be moved into it. When work on the new Cascade house is begun Captain Harrington's men will be quartered in the Reindeer house.

Crawford Lindsey, treasurer of the

Fall River Globe
(Fall River, MA) -
March 31, 1897.

WORST IN YEARS.

How Fall River Fared from the
Blizzard.

**60-MILE GALE AND 16 INCH-
ES OF SNOW,**

Traffic Suspended, Telegraph Service
Stopped and Telephone Service
Interrupted.

The Streets a Confusion of Big
Snow Drifts and Tangled Wires.

Railroad Bridge, Tiverton, Badly
Damaged and Impassable.

*Fall River Daily Evening
News* (Fall River, MA) -
November 28, 1898.

The most magical moment came later, when I shared the photo in a Fall River history Facebook group. A viewer recognized the Ye Tavern building—and revealed that he had salvaged its original storefront sign, now resting in the rafters of his barn. He sent this photo of it.



**The original “Ye Tavern” sign, now stored in a barn loft
(rotated for clarity).**

These are the photo-collecting experiences that keep me engaged—moments of history discovered, brought to life, and shared.

Adapted from my original blog post:

<https://www.psychogenealogist.com/blog/2021/2/28/fall-river-massachusetts-blizzard-1898>

My Collection Has an Ugly Duckling

By Rob Niederman

Earlier this year, pictures of an ugly (by my standards), poor condition camera were sent to me for review and comment. The camera was from a prominent collection and an accompanying note claimed it to be a prototype No.5 Folding Kodak (Figure 1). It only took a couple days to dispel the “prototype” claim but, unexpectedly, the camera became attractive to me. And as with any camera in my collection, my belief is there might be an underlying story. The camera was inexpensive, so it is not much of a loss if nothing is learned from research. (Yeah. Nothing says quality research time like trying to understand an ugly, misfit camera!)



Figure 1: The ugly duckling, a suspected prototype.

The Folding Kodak series of cameras, 1890 to 1897, charted a new direction for portable, folding designs. The leather covered box and self-casing concept set forth a pattern later copied, improved, and simplified by numerous companies.

Folding Kodaks are remarkable designs that introduced a new community of amateurs to the wonders of quality photography. Yet as with any new product breakthrough, weaknesses are not immediately obvious, but can rapidly become apparent.

Photographers' field use is a product's truest classroom, and design "no's" are quickly uncovered. Could this be an enthusiast's attempt for course correction to find "yeses," or an effort to add higher-end view-camera lenses to Kodak's design? Or maybe something else altogether.

In the case of Folding Kodaks, use and time uncovered two key frailties (*no's*); leather hinges holding the top-lid and rear-door tore and screws sometimes popped out of the wood and leather. (Then again, the body leathers were crap.) Today, I would say that nearly all Folding Kodaks of any model have torn top-lids and rear door hinges. What's interesting is the leather hinge problem remained throughout the entirety of the camera's production run. The screw problem on the ugly duckling was fixed by riveting the leather straps and using copper caps, countersunk into the wood, as bolts (which was probably expensive).

My intention with this article is to highlight the effort someone went through to improve on some of the Folding Kodak's *no's* or simply merge some view camera goodness into a self-casing pattern. Maybe both. Not all details will be described, but the pictures convey the major differences.

Body Comparison to a Factory Model The most noticeable build characteristic is the ugly duckling being constructed of a combination of Kodak factory and hand-fabricated parts. And it's evident that a nice finish was not important. Most importantly, its body is identical in size to a factory-built No.5 Folding Kodak as shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2: Comparing the two camera bodies.

continued next page

continued from page 21

The ugly duckling's body dimensions match Kodak's No.5, but construction details vary a lot. The most noticeable difference is the plain front standard that has no movements and incapable of swapping lens boards. Looking more closely, a pair of metal hinges attach the lid to the body as opposed to the infamously fragile leather hinge. The rack & pinion focusing is based on the Kodak's later Improved models.

In referencing Kodak catalogues, two design details help date the ugly duckling to c.1894. The first is the enlarged back door for glass plate work. The second is the continuous geared focusing track also found on the 1894 No.5 Folding Kodak.

The large rear door faithfully copies Kodak's factory design right down to the brass hardware to hold the door closed (refer to Figure 3).



Figure 3: Comparison of Kodak's 1894 glass plate catalogue listing to the ugly duckling.

While there are several design variances to an original Folding Kodak, another key difference is the rear door also being attached with metal hinges; a big yes improvement. On the *no's* side, the wood is much lighter (maybe poplar?), has knot-holes and is poorly finished, something that Kodak's patent and design teams would never find acceptable.

Full compatibility with Kodak's holders was significant because the ugly duckling accepts No.5 factory plate and roll film holders (Figure 4). Using Eastman's factory roll-film holders also avoided potential patent infringements.



Figure 4: The ugly duckling fitted with a standard No.5 Folding Kodak roll film holder.

The Face of the Ugly Duckling (Figure 5) In addition to functionality and ease-of-use, we judge cameras by how they appear. The ugly duckling's front standard is not pretty. It is a simple board design with a central hole for a quality brass barrel lens, what appears to be a shutter adjustment mechanism, nipple for a pneumatic shutter tube, and prongs to hold waterhouse stops.

The builder mounted a brass lens marked "A.S. Aloe & Co. St. Louis. Rectilinear 5 x 7." In order to allow the camera to completely self-case, the lens mount is positioned deep behind the lens board so that only a small portion of the lens protrudes outward.

The rear of the lens is mounted on a wood block housing a very simple two-blade scissors style shutter. My attempts to repair the shutter were short lived; the mechanics fell apart after a couple tests, suggesting it was unreliable compared to Kodak's choice of using B&L or Unicum shutters. Furthermore, the limited shutter speed range and waterhouse stops do not equal an external shutter's features and build quality.

continued next page



Figure 5: The front detail of the ugly duckling.

Compared to a factory camera, my opinion is the Aloe lens, with waterhouse stops and primitive shutter, are backward steps, meaning a reasonably reliable *yes* design degraded to a *no*. It is not clear why this approach was taken unless it was done to conceptually understand if this type of camera could work with a more sophisticated lens, or the photographer personally liked the Aloe lens.

Other hand-made parts include a rack & pinion focusing knob that looks like a small gear from a Cirkut camera, and a crudely hand-crafted, reversible viewfinder made from non-matching wood.

Summary Earlier I mentioned the camera's previous owner thought it was a prototype. I dismissed this opinion for two fundamental reasons: George Eastman would have likely asked Frank A. Brownell to look at the design, and Brownell typically marked his cameras. The ugly duckling has no markings. Furthermore, nearly all of Kodak's experiments and concepts are better made.

The overall construction finish is poor even by Kodak's prototype standards and the build is cruder than what the factory would create. The hand-made parts are irregular. While the wood used for the body is lighter weight, this might have been purposeful. The faded bellows has a suede finish instead of the usual smooth, pebbled skin.

After having the camera in my hands for most of the year, I did not uncover an exciting, underlying story, yet I do find the camera an interesting attempt to fix several *no*'s and reimagine Kodak's successful four-year-old design into something a bit different. IMO, it fails as a reimaged design. And unlike Hans Christian Andersen's beleaguered cygnet, this camera will always remain ugly.

From the Collection of Cindy Motzenbecker Some Snowy Scenes



Lady in the "Snow"

This cabinet card studio shot, from Fenton & Andruss in Jamestown, New York, just has the best backdrop doesn't it. Check out the fake snow on the house and trees, including a "lake." Plus the line that shows where the backdrop ends. It does a good job showing off the subject. I first noticed the long jacket clashing w/ the plaid skirt when I saw this image for sale on Facebook(?). The pose is quite different too, with the subject holding up the muff in her gloved hands. She also has some "rubber" footwear that seem to have buttons up the outside. Too bad there was nothing on the back...



Child with a Sled holding a Snowball

This RPPC (Real Photo Postcard) drew my attention as it's evidence of a time that has passed and can still be repeated today. Love the child holding the snowball. The glass negative crack didn't bother me one bit either.

Grab & Brag

Grab your photographic gems and brag about them here. They can be historically important photographs, technically unique cameras, or some interesting stories you are willing to share. Just a short one or two page article!

The Unique Fujica GS 645 Professional *By Chuck Fehl*



The GS 6X4.5 Pro opened for business. This folding design was a throwback to the 1930s, but with modern features like LED metering, thumb lever film advance, and a parallax compensated viewfinder.

My camera collection usually has cameras grouped together by maker, format, and type—not too many "one of a kinds". One exception is my Fujica GS 645 Professional made in the early 1980s which became an instant classic as soon as it was discontinued in 1989. The prices soared to almost double its last retail price of \$399.

The GS Pro is a compact folding 120/220 medium format camera with a 75mm f/3.4 (six element) fixed lens with a Seiko 1 to 1/500th second internal leaf shutter. Other features include thumb lever film advance, self-timer, frame counter, and an LED over/under exposure meter in a parallax corrected viewfinder. It provides for 15 exposures of 6x4.5 centimeters, on a roll of 120 film. This is a totally manual camera—no auto exposure or focus.

This format was of ideal dimensions for 8x10 or 11x14 inch enlargements by yielding the same or better utilization than a 6x6 cm square negative with no wasted negative area. This format was the same as Zeiss Ikon's mid-1930s Super Ikonta A and a host of other European medium format cameras, although most of them achieved that 6x4.5 cm format through the use of masks on the more popular 6x9 cm format.



The Fujica GS Pro in it's folded position. It was compact enough to slip into a coat or jacket pocket and weighed just under two pounds. Remember that old adage: "the best camera is the one you have with you".

The Fuji GS was not alone in the later waves of 645 format cameras. Probably the most popular was the Mamiya 645 SLR family which had the most comprehensive line of lenses—from extreme wide angle to long telephoto—and even offered a soft-focus f/1.9 portrait lens. Other manufacturers with 645 format lines were Contax (Kyosera), Bronica, and Pentax. The main benefit to the 645 format was that it had 270% more usable negative area than a standard 35mm (double) frame and the cameras, lenses, accessories were not that much more expensive than 35mm equipment. A Mamiya 645 zoom lens, while expensive at \$300-\$400 still was not like buying a Hasselblad or even a Pentax 67 zoom starting at \$2,000. 645 enthusiasts probably mourned the loss of 220 (double) length roll film more than anyone—as it produced 30 exposures per roll in this format.

There are other similar 645 cameras in the Fujica's GS line, but the GS Pro was the first and only one that folded for traveling. You could easily slip it into a jacket or coat pocket. The only accessories were a suede case and strap and a hooded filter set.

Things to watch out for in GS Pro shopping are worn or damaged bellows (yes bellows!) which if not folded correctly will have problems, and the meter tends to stop working if stored with batteries installed. The viewfinder is also not well sealed and dust and haze there is common. Also, there is a strict procedure in folding the camera that is non-intuitive. I keep a tag on mine to remind me of the sequence(s) involved—without which you chance a jam. There are instructions to this effect on the camera back—if you read Japanese.

I have not shopped for one recently, but I understand they are getting rare in working condition and the price reflects this. A good Fujica GS 645 now lists for \$700; a Mamiya 645 for \$500; a Pentax 645 for \$600, and the Contax for \$3,000-\$4,000 reflecting the value of its low production Carl Zeiss lenses.

Photographic Collector Corner

Please check websites for updates. Listings on this page are FREE.

Antiquarian Book and Paper Show

www.curiousbooks.com/shows.html

Bièvres Photo Fair (France)

<http://www.foirephoto-bievre.com/en/>

Camerama Camera Show

<https://ca.eventbu.com/toronto/camerama-camera-show/6143133>

Edward Village Hotel, 185 Yorkland Boulevard, Toronto Ontario M2J 4R2, 9:30 am - 2:30 pm Admission \$7.00

Chicago Camera Show

www.photorama.com

Chicago Postcard and Paper Show

www.courthousesquare.net

10:00 to 6:00 & 8:00 to 3:00
Admission \$5.00

Cleveland Camera Collectors Show

<https://10times.com/cleveland-camera-show>

9:30 am - 2:30 pm

The Daguerreian Society

www.daguerreiansociety.org

DC Antique Photo and Postcard Show

<http://www.antiquephotoshow.com/>

Detroit Camera Show

www.photorama.com

Detroit Stereographic Society

<http://detroit3d.org/>

Grand Rapids Postcard & Paper Show

www.postcardarcheology.com

2327 Byron Center Ave SW, Wyoming, MI
American Legion Hall 10-4

London (ON) Camera Show

<https://londonvintagecamerashow.vpweb.ca/>

Carling Heights Optimist Community Centre
656 Elizabeth, London, ON 10 am - 3 pm

Michigan & Ohio Postcard & Paper Show

www.postcardarcheology.com

MiPHS 2026 Photographica Show & Sale

Date TBA 10am-3pm.

Elk's Hall, Royal Oak MI

www.MiPHS.org

National Stereoscopic Association

www.stereoworld.org

www.3d-con.com

Ohio Camera Collectors

www.cameratradeshow.com

Ohio Civil War Show

<http://ohiocivilwarshow.com/>

Richland County Fairgrounds
750 N. Home Rd, Mansfield OH 44906

Photographic Historical Society of Canada

<http://phsc.ca/> Trident Banquet Hall

145 Evans Ave. Toronto, ON

Photographic Historical Society of New England

<https://phsne.org/index>

Rob Niederman's website for Camera Shows

www.antiquewoodcameras.com/shows.html

York International Postcard Show

<https://www.marylmartin.com/>

York Fairgrounds, 334 Carlisle Ave, York PA



Scan the QR code with your device's camera app to be taken directly to the MiPHS website.