



Historic Camera Collector Club Newsletter

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Volume 9 No. 7, December 2011

Camera Heritage Museum Staunton, Va

Probably all the people reading this article have been collecting cameras enthusiastically for a long time. How we got to our current state in our collecting history may vary but our stories reveal a common interest that has grown to a passion. The Camera Heritage Museum has gone one step further. It is now working to share the result of this passion with as wide a group of interested people as possible.

Camera museums are much more rare than they seem at first glance. Everyone knows of the George Eastman House. It is a monument both to the accomplishments of George Eastman and to the history of the camera industry. The cameras in this collection cover vast areas of photography and the history of camera manufacturing. The George Eastman House is a true gift to the public, but looking further through the Internet there are no other museums in the USA that even come close to this collection. There are some museums including the Smithsonian that have camera collections but what is on display is limited, hard to get to and sometimes the display is even temporarily withdrawn. If you are a collector with a great deal of patience, the sites offer many possibilities. If you are a member of the general public and you wish to

educate yourself about cameras and the history of photography you will not find this very accessible. Lastly if you search further into the Internet you will find many websites that loosely use the term museum to attract patrons to a retail operation. Again this does not answer the public's need for a true museum where they can walk through a space and be surrounded by cameras. Where they can take guided tours or spend as much time as they wish.



Collections have been standing in for these missing museums. Collectors are the pioneers of historical preservation. They are the first to recognize the value of the subjects they collect. They research and preserve each piece. They put countless hours and,

sometimes, small fortunes into their collections. Their collections become important places of historical research. They provide the safe havens that insure that historic cameras do not disappear. Collectors quietly serve as the men on the guard wall of preservation protecting their charges from the ravages of age and lost knowledge. But time marches on relentlessly and collectors are becoming outnumbered by those who never knew what it was like to use a classic camera.

Soon will come the museums who are in effect the Johnny-come-lately's of preservation. They follow the paths of the early collectors and they benefit from what these collectors have done. They don't live the impassioned life of the collectors. They are larger entities with governing boards, government supervision and sometimes-massive inertia. But they can insure that these wonderful collections are not lost. They are designed to span many generations and they have the organization to gain the funding needed to match rising preservation costs.

There is a progression from the initial use of these items to their collection by individuals and finally to the incorporation of these collections into a museum. The Camera Heritage Museum stands at the end of this progression. We're starting with a collection of over 2000 cameras, many accessories and over 1500 historic photographs. This collection has been the labor of love of a collector like yourselves who started with a small idea. He collected some cameras, was given some by friends, and even received unsolicited packages from strangers who supported his efforts from afar. People saw his passion and supported him so after 40 years his collection is a monument to much more than just one person's effort. During all this time he has enjoyed sharing his collection with the visitors to his camera shop. Now he wants to insure that the collection will last into the future. It was his idea to create a

camera museum. And so it is our goal to preserve this collection and share it with the public so that they can see in their brief visits what collectors have worked their whole lives for.

We think that we will be successful in sharing our collections with the public because we can appeal to many different levels of interest. Collectors of course. Photographers too. But also non photographers because even though most will not have the expertise to appreciate what a collector would see in our cameras we will touch them from a different angle. We recognize that everyone has a photographic history of his own. They may have never owned a camera in their life but they still remember those important moments when someone took a picture. Many of these memories are happy and rich parts of their lives. For that reason it may be only one camera in our whole collection that invokes those memories but that camera means a great deal to them. We see their eyes light up when they tell their stories and we know that we have brought a special moment back to them.



The Camera Heritage Museum is starting out in part of the main floor of an old bank building in historic downtown Staunton Va. We plan to expand eventually and take over both floors of our building. The town is full of old buildings and business that date back to

the eighteen hundreds making it blend well with our plans. There is a very slow pace here and the town has changed little in the last one hundred years. Staunton is a place conducive to walking for the downtown is quite small. Yet there are many things to do and see in our town. Woodrow Wilson's birthplace and Blackfriars Shakespearian theater are just a few of its draws. Our museum although small and out of the way has been honored by visits from collectors, well known photographers, amateurs and those who have no photographic expertise. Some sought us out as their destination, others just walked in off the street. We entertained them all and feel we can entertain most of our visitors in the future.

Our goal is to expand our collection so that we can appeal to people in many ways. We hope to add to our collection with all kinds of cameras, historic photographs of the area and photographs relevant to the camera industry. Visitors will be able to easily identify landmarks in our collection of local historic photographs that still exist right outside our windows. We will create displays showing interpretations of the development of cameras and the photographs they produced. Collectors will be able to see a large array of cameras that they may not have seen before. We will do research on our cameras that we will share. And we aim to educate kids and adults about the history of photography, to teach them how science applies and finally to show them photographs that bring it all together. We will exhibit studies on the different photographic processes. Lastly and by no means least we will tell the fascinating stories of the people who made and used these cameras. Just like us, they were drawn into photography from all walks of life and ended up changed by what these little machines did.

I hope this article has provided you with a view into the activities and future of the Camera Heritage Museum. Our website

www.cameraheritagemuseum.com is still under construction but it does provide more information about us and how to contact us. My congratulations on your accomplishments with you collections and the activities of your organization and I hope you can come visit us sometime soon.

By
John Thompson
Executive Director
Camera Heritage Museum

HC Msg Board Hot Topics

"After 31 years of being the custodian of Mathew Brady's Studio Wet-Plate Camera, *Mr. Garfield* has decided to let another person or institution have the pleasure of owning 'the most important piece of photographic Americana' and 'a highly important Civil War / Lincoln artifact' [Click here](#) for info.



Web Site Update

Our History Librarium's New Voigtlander camera reference section is almost complete. It was a large undertaking, and is planned to list about 100 Voigtlander cameras with the belief that many more will need to be added at a later date. [Click here](#) to view the icon listing. If you collect Voigtlander cameras we would like to post examples of your camera images in our references. Send to admin@historiccamera.com.



Help Wanted Newsletter & Librarium

Please consider submitting an article to our newsletter. Either about a collecting topic of interest or about yourself or your hobby or website.

As always we are always open to receiving help in populating our History Librarium database with historical information on people, companies and special topics.

Featured Biography Antoine Claudet

Born in Lyon, France on August 12, 1797, Antoine Francois Jean Claudet was the second of six children. After his father's death in 1807, the large family was raised by their mother, receiving assistance from other relatives whenever possible. At the request of his uncle, Mr. Claudet moved to Paris in 1818 to embark upon a banking

career, but quickly became fascinated by the process of glassmaking. After his marriage to Julie Bourdelain, her nephew Georges Bontemps named him assistant director of Ponce Grimblot's studio located on the outskirts of Paris.

Relocating to London to open his own glass warehouse in 1829, Mr. Claudet became a serious student of the daguerreotype process, and traveled to Paris to be taught its fundamentals by the creator himself, Louis-Jacques M. Nicéphore Niépce. Upon his return to England, Mr. Claudet purchased a daguerreotype operating license, and although his first daguerreotypes were of Rome and Paris, he soon focused exclusively upon creating and selling daguerreotypes that featured Victorian London. Mr. Claudet sought to speed up the daguerreotype exposure process, which led to his patent that recommended using red light and flat, painted backgrounds in darkrooms.



In June 1841, Mr. Claudet opened the Adelaide Gallery daguerreotype studio, which re-ignited his professional rivalry

with another London daguerreotypist, Richard Beard. However, Mr. Claudet's studio quickly became the more popular of the two, and his inclusion of camera equipment imports further cemented his reputation in England and elsewhere. These sales also financed Mr. Claudet's daguerreotype research.

Because his process reduced the time that was required for portrait sitting considerably, Mr. Claudet's subjects look more natural in comparison to other daguerreotypes produced during the mid-nineteenth century. In 1842, he began turning his attentions to stereoscopic photography, which became his primary preoccupation throughout the next decade. Mr. Claudet's skillful employment of the calotype process developed by William Henry Fox Talbot enabled him to produce a large number of prints from negatives. During this period, he also experimented extensively with Frederick Scott Archer's wet collodion processes.

Mr. Claudet's Temple to Photography was opened in 1851, and so impressed Queen Victoria that he became the official royal photographer two years' later. Also in 1853, he was elected Fellow of the Royal Society. During his lifetime, Mr. Claudet composed more than 40 papers documenting his scientific research, which expanded to include stereoscopes. He secured a patent for a folding pocket stereoscope in March of 1853, and two years' later was issued another patent for a large stereoscope upon which up to 100 slides could be rotated. This was a crucial first step in the eventual screen projection of motion pictures.

Seventy-year-old Antoine Claudet died on December 27, 1867. Sadly, shortly afterward, a fire swept through his Temple to Photography studio, destroying nearly 20,000 prints, negatives, and

daguerreotypes. Fortunately, some of Mr. Claudet's daguerreotypes still exist and are being exhibited in historical photographic collections throughout the world, including the National Galleries of Scotland and the J. Paul Getty Museum.

Ref:
2008 Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography, Vol. I (New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group LLC), pp. 302-304.

Donations



Every now and then we get a small donation through the website. We recently received a box of movie film equipment. We are always looking for good homes to place these type items. If you are a movie buff and have a need, drop the admin an email expressing interest. If we have many we will pull a name from a hat. The items include : Elmo Film Cleaner; Elmo Film Counter; Robins stereo tape splicer; Guillotine super 8 film splicer; and a Kodak Carousel Stack Loader. Lucky recipient need only pay actual shipping charges.

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