



# Historic Camera Collector Club Newsletter

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## Coronet Camera Co.

This month we feature information on the Coronet Camera Company. We have generated both a company history and a complete, as far as we know, listing of over 60 camera models made by coronet. Our friends participating in our flickr group made this effort possible. Since little trade catalogue information was available on the cameras and company, the piecing together of bits and fragments has allowed us to have a complete story.



In 1926 The Coronet Camera Company was established at 48 Great Hampton Street, Aston, Birmingham by Mr. Frederick Pettifer. The company set out to manufacture an inexpensive line of cameras. Various marketing methods were explored including repacking of similar cameras and mail order catalogs.

In the 1930s the company engaged the British Optical Lens Co. for lenses and Mr. Edwin Elliott, a local plastics manufacturer in Birmingham. The firm of E. Elliot fabricated several molded cameras for Coronet. By 1933 it was recorded that 510,000 cameras were sold. Also during this time frame, the Coronet Co. either had a relationship with the newly formed Standard Cameras Ltd., located at 51 Mott Street or the Standard Cameras Ltd company purchased the same plastic camera bodies and parts from Edwin Elliot's plastics firm. Standard Cameras Ltd sold a cheap box camera named Conway, which took 6x9cm images on 120 film very similar to the Coronet Ambassador. The Standard Camera Ltd Co. went out of business in 1955.

In 1946 the company formed a limited partnership and the name changed to Coronet Ltd.. During this period the company was located at 308-310 Summer Lane, Aston, Birmingham. (Current photo of old Coronet building depicted)

After World War II ended, the company specialized in low cost plastic bakelite camera's. Also due to import restrictions imposed by the French Government, Coronet partnered with Tiranty of Paris to manufacture and sell existing and new models with parts from Birmingham and lens from Trinaty, similar to scheme that the Eastman Kodak co used to avoid the restrictions.

In addition to cameras the company produced accessories, Coro-flash units, filters and its own Coronet Corochrome film in 120 and 127 sizes and black & white Coronet Panchromatic film.

In 1967 the company ceased operations. Over the forty-one years of operations the Coronet Camera Company produced thousands of low priced cameras, which most are still commonly found today.

Ref:  
Photo Courtesy of John Houghton [Aston Brook Through Aston Manor - Preserving the History of Aston](#)  
2010 JP MADEINBIRMINGHAM.ORG

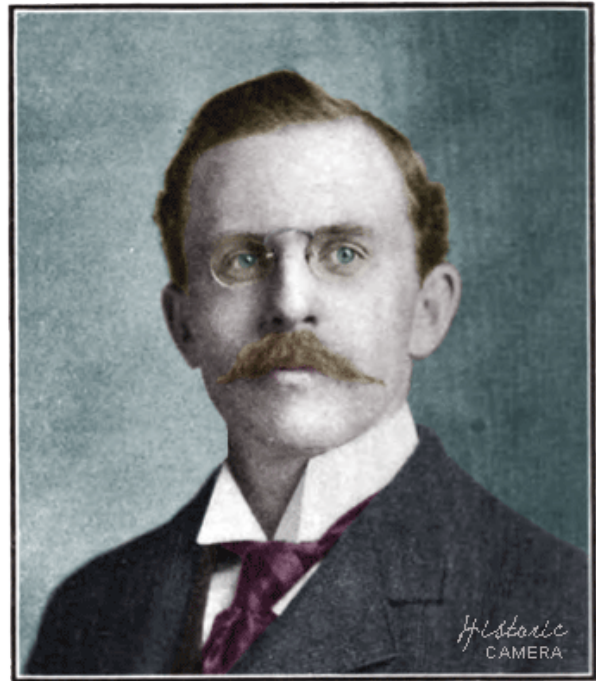
## Maurice Gennert

Maurice Gennert was born in Chatsworth, Illinois on January 13, 1868. The son of successful photographic equipment distributor Gustave Gennert, his family soon relocated to New Jersey, which is where young Gennert spent his childhood. In 1881, he moved to Germany to attend Braunschweig's Real Gymnasium for three years. After returning to the United States, Mr. Gennert entered Columbia University to major in mathematics and dead languages, and graduated in 1887.

After college, family responsibilities intervened, and Mr. Gennert was asked to succeed his brothers in the operations of the G. Gennert company located on 24 and 26 East Thirteenth Street in New York City. Despite his youth and business inexperience, he learned quickly and engineered the firm to even greater success. Mr. Gennert became known for his business acumen and for his engaging personality. The photographic industry was particularly competitive and ruthless at this time, but Mr. Gennert established a reputation for integrity and fair-mindedness in his business

dealings. He married Claire Chatain on April 16, 1902, and two daughters joined the family in rapid succession.

Maurice Gennert was always searching for the latest photographic innovations, and found a particularly popular item in the compact Sylvar hand-held camera. About an inch larger than a conventional plate, the Sylvar camera weighed less than two pounds, and lenses were available in eight lengths suitable for plates ranging from a 4-1/4 inch carte-de-visite to 8 x 10 inch portraits. Mr. Gennert was also impressed with Sylvar's versatility, for the cells of its third series fit other hand-held cameras



MR. MAURICE GENNERT

including Hawkeye, Ansco, and Kodak.

In addition to carrying a wide selection of cameras and lenses, G. Gennert also offered customers a variety of developing chemicals (like Hauff's Metol) and film from which to choose under Mr. Gennert's tenure. Ensign Film was a favorite because it did not curl and could be used in all types of cameras and developing machines. Mr. Gennert also included the latest photographic innovations in his inventory

such as the Primus printing gauge that had a design-friendly design for professionals and amateurs alike, and the wide-angle Gray extreme angle stigmat lens. As a testament to his business prowess, Mr. Gennert obtained the licenses for several European photographic specialty items that could not be found anywhere else in the United States. He prided himself on compiling a massive Gennert catalogue that contained the finest quality cameras and optical equipment at reasonable prices.

After a period of ill health, Maurice Gennert died on October 2, 1915 at the age of forty-seven. Without his assertive and charismatic leadership, the business floundered, and sadly, G. Gennert closed its doors for the last time in 1921.

Ref:  
1910 Camera Magazine, Vol. IX, p. 486.  
1915 The Photographic Journal of America, Vol. LII (New York: Edward L. Wilson Company, Inc.), p. 594.  
1901 The Photographic Times, Vol. IX (New York: The Photographic Times Publishing Association), p. 186.  
1910 The Photographic Times, Vol. XLII (New York: The Photographic Times Publishing Association), p. 163.  
1915 The Photo-Miniature, Vol. XII (New York: Tennant and Ward), p. 513.

## Leon Warnerke

By Krzysztof Słowiński

Leon Warnerke (real name: Wladyslaw Malachowski)  
- Polish civil engineer, inventor, industrialist, and independence activist.

Born 26 May 1837 in a manor Macie near Grodno (presently territory of Belarus) of Polish-Lithuanian nobility. His nationality in earlier sources was wrongly quoted as Russian or Hungarian, as it was in case of other prominent Poles who lived in these times. Poland was then divided into three parts being occupied by Russia, Prussia (Germany) and Austro-Hungary.

Having completed his civil engineering studies in 1859 he began working at building the Petersburg - Warsaw railroad line. In 1863 he took part in an uprising against occupying rulers (the so-called January Uprising) and, after the fall of the uprising, to

avoid being arrested by Russian tsarist police, he left on ship to Great Britain with passport for the name Leon Warnerke, under which he is well recognized.

He settled in London about 1870 and soon started lively scientific activity in the field of photography, fully devoting himself to that discipline. In his private laboratory he experimented with various chemicals, in attempts to improve light-sensitive layers as well as with camera designs to simplify photographing process.

In 1875 he designed a camera with a special roll cassette, enabling to take 100 images on paper "film". The camera used Warner-invented silver bromide collodion stripping paper "film" and its bellows extension moved on a single rail. An orange-colored glass control window in the back allowed visual numbering the frames.



Warnerke founded manufacturing companies in London and Petersburg to produce his paper "film". However, in spite of excellent photographic results, the high production costs made the enterprises commercially unsuccessful. Also, for some time he published a technical journal.

At the end of 1870s he investigated gelatin silver bromide emulsions and discovered the tanning action of pyrogallol in the development of silver bromide plates. This property was later used in the bromoil process.

For improving production of silver bromide collodion emulsion, he received in 1877 in Belgium a prize from *Association Belge de Photographie*. Four years later *The Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain* awarded him with a Progress Medal for his works. In these years he used to keep contacts with various photographic organizations throughout Europe, giving numerous lectures before the photographic societies of England, France, Belgium and Germany and propagating most recent achievements and novelties from the field of photography. He was the first to bring to England description of Gabriel Lippman's interference method of color photography (a Nober Prize winner in 1908) and to demonstrate the results, or early effects of Lumiere Brothers' works on color photography material called autochrome. He personally introduced in England the Goerz double anastigmat lens, manufactured by C. P. Goerz in Berlin.

The year 1880 brought sensitometer of his design and make, that was marketed in England where it was approved as a standard and used till the end of 1890s. The device using 25-degree scale proved very useful for both photographers and plate manufacturers to determine sensitivity of photographic materials. For example - 'wet collodion plates' average sensitivity equaled 10 Warnerke degrees.

Another type of camera, with improved features of the cassette, was designed in 1881. The paper "film" length was reduced to allow 40 images and it bore kind of perforation (one hole for each frame). The holes served as checking points to electrically control the number of the frames - advancement. Each frame was signaled with an electric ringer powered by a battery located inside the roll holder.

Having been accused, though not sentenced, of passing counterfeit banknotes in 1898, he retired after this to Geneva where he spent rest of his life in almost complete solitude.

Leon Warnerke died in Geneva (Switzerland) in 7 October 1900.

All Warnerke's devices, instruments, apparatus and designs that were owned and taken care of by his daughter were lost in Nazi heavy bombing of London during WW II.

Reference Sources:

1. History of Photography by Josef Maria Eder, Dover Publications, Inc., New York 1972
2. Słownik polskich pionierów techniki ["Dictionary of Polish Pioneers of Technology"] by Boleslaw Orłowski (editor), Wyd. Slask, Katowice 1986

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## W.D Gatchel



Born circa 1825, W. D. Gatchel became involved in the daguerreian trade while still in his early twenties when he entered into a partnership with Henry A. Hyatt. Together they opened a photographic stock dealership in St. Louis, Missouri in 1848. Thirteen years later, Mr. Gatchel met photographer R. P. Appleby, and shortly thereafter became manager of his photographic stock company. In 1863, he moved to Cincinnati, Ohio to manage the L. B. Darling company, and when Gatchel & Hyatt assumed the corporate reins, a branch was opened in Louisville, Kentucky, under the leadership of Mr. Hyatt.

Mr. Gatchel's photographic empire grew when his firm overtook William H. Tilford's St. Louis company and Mr. Merritt's Louisville, Kentucky business to

form the Tri-City Stock House in 1873, which operated until 1881. At this time, Mr. Gatchel bought out Mr. Hyatt's interest in the Louisville company and returned to manage the Cincinnati stock house until selling it to Jordan and Sheen the following year. He and his family established permanent residence in Louisville in 1883, which is where Mr. Gatchel opened W. D. Gatchel & Sons. His great success in the photographic industry was attributed to his uncompromising integrity. Mr. Gatchel painstakingly provided his customers with the best products he could find. He also had a great appreciation for the creative side of portrait photography. Mr. Gatchel advised portrait photographers to study the art of posing so that their subjects would look natural rather than "stiff as a photograph." He emphasized the importance of perspective and of reminding the subject of the significance of a particular pose to the aesthetic appeal of the photograph. Such understanding, according to Mr. Gatchel, focused the subject's attention on the importance of the pose to the overall photograph and away from the focus of the camera lens. This resulted in a more relaxed posed instead of a stiff, statue-like posture that was common in many late nineteenth century photographs.

During the 1890s, Mr. Gatchel's health began to fail, and his sons, Albert and Frank began taking more active roles in the family business. W. D. Gatchel died at his Louisville home on December 29, 1895 at the age of 70. Albert. D. and Frank Edwin Gatchel continued their father's commitment to quality, and were also active and well-respected members of the Louisville community. On September 11th, after a short illness brought on by overwork, Albert D. Gatchel died.

The Gatchel family continued running the company until it ceased operations in 1990.

Ref.:  
 1896 Anthony's Photographic Bulletin, Vol. XXVII (New York: E. & H. T. Anthony & Co.), pp. 64-65.  
 2005 Pioneer Photographers from the Mississippi to the Continental Divide: A Biographical Dictionary, 1839-1865 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press), p. 275.  
 1881 Wilson's Photographics (New York: Edward L. Wilson), p. 54.

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## Website Update

May was another productive month. We cataloged eight new biographies, one new company history, and five camera manufacturer product lines. Links to all new content can accessed directly from our Librarium's photo history page. ([http://www.historiccamera.com/photo\\_history.html](http://www.historiccamera.com/photo_history.html)) Here is a listing of the content excluding the ones published in this newsletter:

## New Camera Listings:



[Ciro Camera, Inc.](http://www.cirocamera.com)

# CORONET

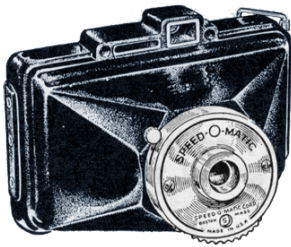


"Cheapest Cameras  
in the World"

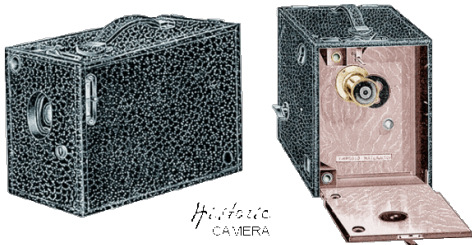
Coronet Camera Company



Agilux Ltd.



Speed-O-Matic



*Historic  
CAMERA*

Photo Materials Company

*New Biographies:*



Louis-Dèsirè Blanquart-Evrard



William Henry Jackson



Anna Atkins First Woman  
Photographer



Edward Weston



Joseph Niepce

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Send Comments & Questions to  
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