



# Historic Camera Newsletter

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## **Barker & Starbird Photographic Supply**

Mr. C. R. Selce originally founded a popular Boston photography supply business in 1880. It continued until 1888 when Mr. F. R. Barker was admitted as a partner and the business name changed to "Selce & Barker". Selce however retired shortly after the partnership in October of the same year and Mr. N. W. Starbird entered the business.

Hence, the firm of Barker & Starbird was established in 1888 at 56 Bromfield street in Boston, Massachusetts. The business continued as trade agents and manufacturers

of photographic supplies and apparatus. Among the firms offerings included silver paper, chautauqua plates, high quality "Eurygraph" lenses with iris diaphragms, lower quality "Amateur" lenses and a line of "Our Own" supplies including camera outfits, chemicals, and equipment. F. R. Barker was a native of Boston and was formerly in the "Starch" business with his father on Commercial Street. Mr. N.W. Starbird was a buyer for the Danvers hospital at Danvers, Mass., and was born Boston.

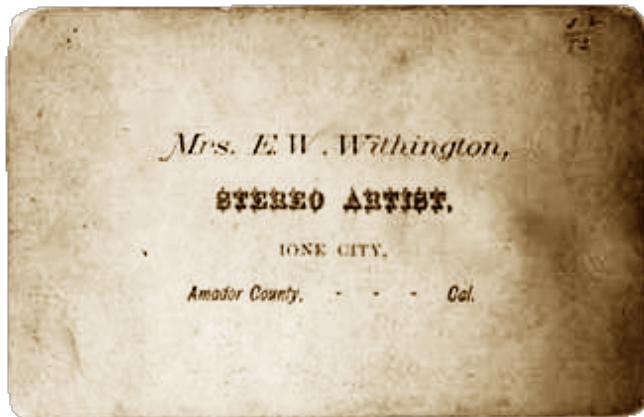
In approximately 1889, the Bromfield detective hand camera was introduced . It was a 4 x 5 leather covered box fitted with a Eurygraph lens with a four-leaved shutter. The camera had two finders and two right angle levels. The set, spring, release and focusing lever were all underneath the box. Inside were compartments for the diaphragms and lens hood, along with ample room for six double holders. It was fitted with three light weight Scovill holders and was priced at \$50.00.

In 1900 N. W. Starbird announced the dissolution of the partnership of the oldest photo-supply store in Boston and He alone continued operation of the store at the same location as N.W. Starbird & Co.



Interior of the Barker & Starbird Photo-Supply Store, Boston, Mass. c1892

## E.W. Withington



Elizabeth W. Kirby was born in New York City on March 17, 1825. At the age of 20, she married farmer and shingle maker George Withington, who decided to feed his gold fever by moving to California in 1849. Two years later, his wife and young daughter joined him. Looking for ways to supplement the meager family income, Mrs. Withington noticed that the farming and mining areas were also fertile photography ground. In 1856, she returned to New York to study photography at Mathew Brady's illustrious gallery, and early the following year, she opened her Excelsior Ambrotype Gallery in Lone City, California. She did not have to travel far for inspiration – it was all around her in the forms of the abundant stagecoach lines, railway stations, mills, breweries, restaurants, miners and farmers. A female photographer was a novelty in those days, and curious locals were soon lining up to have their pictures “taken by a Lady!” Specializing in the wet collodion plate process, Mrs. Withington captured breathtaking stereoscopic views of Silver Lake, California and its surrounding areas. She also indulged her artistic inclinations by teaching ‘Oriental Pearl Painting’ to the ladies, a popular parlor activity during the nineteenth century.

By 1871, Mrs. Withington and her husband were living separately. With her two

daughters now grown, she could focus solely upon stereographic photography. Her mastery of wet collodion platemaking is evident in her mining town stereographs. In 1875, she became a member of the Photographic Art Society of the Pacific, and the following year, her article, “How a Woman Makes Landscape Photographs,” was featured in the *Philadelphia Photographer*. She described the arduous tasks of preparing at least 50 albumenized 5 x 8 plates, making sure to place blotting paper between them to preserve them during transport. Her supplies included the obvious chemicals, a negative box, iron and wooden fixing and developing trays, and a Newell bathtub, all of which had to be moved gingerly over rigorous terrain by a stagecoach. Mrs. Withington preferred Morrison lenses for landscapes and a Philadelphia box camera she lovingly referred to as “the pet.” She carried a black linen parasol more for practicality than fashion, to protect her views from sun and wind.

Sadly, shortly after her article was published, she learned she had terminal cancer. Elizabeth W. Withington died on March 4, 1877 in her adopted hometown of Lone City, less than two weeks shy of her 52nd birthday. She left behind an impressive body of work that immortalize the pioneering spirit of the Old West. Her photographs can currently be found in the collections of the Amador County Museum in Jackson, California; the Women in Photography International Archive in Arcata, California; the Huntington Library in San Marino, California; the International Museum of Photography at the George Eastman House in Rochester, New York; and the Princeton University Art Museum at McCormick Hall in Princeton, New Jersey.

Ref:  
1998 100 Years of California Photography by Women 1850-1950 by Peter E. Palmquist (URL: <http://www.cla.purdue.edu/waaw/palmquist/Essay1.htm>).

2014 Elizabeth W. Withington by Peter Palmquist (URL: <http://www.cliohistory.org/exhibits/palmquist/withington>).

1990 How a Woman Makes Landscape Photographs by Eliza W. Withington (URL: <http://www.cla.purdue.edu/waaw/palmquist/Photographers/WithingtonEss>

ay.html).

1874 The Photographer's Friend, Vol. IV (Baltimore: Richard Walz), p. 126.

2005 Silver Cities: Photographing American Urbanization, 1839-1939 by Peter Bacon Hales (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press), pp. 107-108.

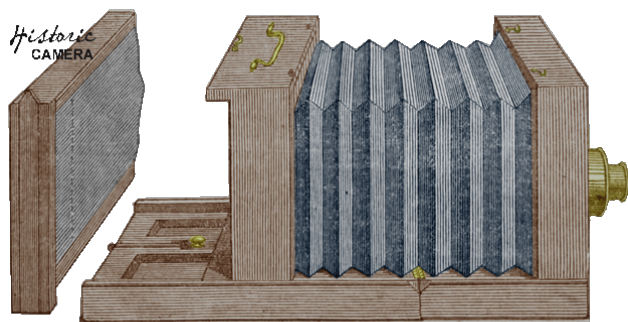
2003 Women Artists of the American West edited by Susan R. Ressler (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc.), pp. 339-340.

## J. J. Atkinson

The Photographic firm of J. Atkinson was established in c1845 by John Atkinson Senior and located at 37 Manchester Street, Liverpool.

During the 1850s, John Atkinson or also referred to as J. J. Atkinson was a heavy importer of American made products and ephemera in what the Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography describes as an "American Photographic Store" in Liverpool. He imported the Scovill camera line where he was the sole English agent. He was one of the first to offer American made Union cases, he was a distributor for Dr. John Towler's book the Silver sunbeam, and also a distributor for the Photographic Times periodical. Atkinson also imported products from France including the Jarmin-Darlot lenses.

In 1857 J.J. Atkinson advertised the manufacture of "Atkinsons Portable Camera", one of the earliest makers to use the tail board construction.



ATKINSON'S PORTABLE CAMERA (1857)

In 1859, the company was described as a dealer and manufacturer. Several cameras bear his name with the label indicating J. J. Atkinson as "maker". In this year the company advertised the manufacture of "Woodward Solar Camera, designed by D.A. Woodward of Baltimore. This camera enabled the artist to make quarter plate positive picture using a half-plate lens on ordinary chloride of silver paper.



In 1866 John Atkinson Senior retired from the business and his son John J. Atkinson continued managing the business.

In 1875 John Atkinson Senior, described as "Honest John" died. At this time, John J. Atkinson was listed as a wholesale and retail photographic warehouse and optical shop located at 33 and 37 W. Manchester St. Liverpool. It is believed that the 33 Manchester st. building was his stock house.

Mr. John J. Atkinson died on June 14th 1898 and his son Frederick Atkinson carried on the business.

In 1899 the business is Called Frederick Atkinson, Photographic Material Dealer, located at 66 Victoria St. in Liverpool. In 1903, the business was incorporated as the Atkinson Brothers of Liverpool Limited with a capital of £1,500 in £1 shares by G.H. Atkinson to carry on the business of photographic materials, chemists, druggist, etc. at 66 Victoria St. in Liverpool.

Ref:  
 1857, The Journal of the Photographic Society – P267  
 1875, The commercial directory and shippers guide, P5.  
 1858, photographic news, page vi  
 1860, Photographic Notes, May 1st,  
 1875, The British Journal of Photography, Jan. 15, p36  
 1898, The Photographic Dealer, page 10  
 1899, The Photographic Dealer, page 157  
 1903, Pharmaceutical Journal, page 563  
 1995, British Camera Makers, page 20  
 2013, Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography, p180, 1093,1421

## D. H. Cussons & Co.



Photo Courtesy of Eric Evans

In 1864 D.H. Cussons read a letter entitled the "French Pharmacy" to the Leeds Chemists' Association based on his personal experience of holding the post of manager of the English department of a pharmacy in Paris.

D. H Cussons & Company is believed to have been established in approximately 1866 in Southport, Lancashire, originally for the business of chemistry.

In 1871 D.H. Cussons & Co. was located at

50 Hoghton st. Southport

In 1873 D.H. Cussons & Co. was recorded as a dealer in photographic goods as part of a in a law suit. Where D.H. Cussons & Co. was sued by a person called Harman over a carte-de-viste that Cusson's requested to be enlarged and coloured. Cussons alleged the work was poor.

In approximately 1876, D.H. Cussons & Co. published the "Photographers Almanac", which turned out to be a popular reference book.

In 1878 D.H. Cussons & Co. was located Birkdale Park, Southport. At this time D.H. Cusson's in association with A. Cowan patented a "photographic camera shutter", no. 2608 dated June 29, 1878. This was believed to be one of the first if not the first electro-magnetic shutter, being "open and closed by an electromagnet".

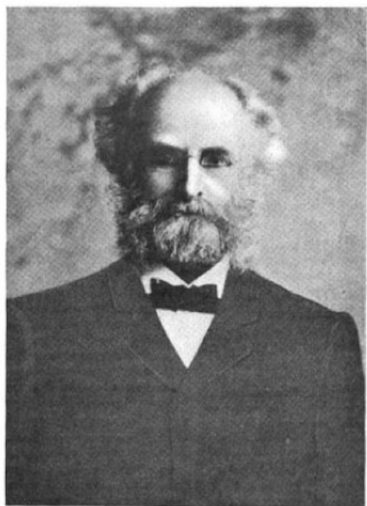
**THE ELECTRIC CAMERA**  
**(CUSSONS & COWAN'S PATENT),**  
 For effecting exposure of the plate from any part of the room, unknown to the sitter. The only scientific and perfect instrument, noiseless, unseen, and absolutely reliable in action. For taking two cartes or two cabinets with one lens, bellows-body, screw focus, &c. Full particulars on application to the Patentees and Sole Manufacturers,  
**D. H. CUSSONS & CO., Southport.**

The Photographic News, July 1878

**PRICE LIST OF COMPLETE OUTFITS**  
 FOR THE AMATEUR, THE ARTIST, THE TOURIST, &c.  
 Including Lens, Camera, Stand, Dry Plates, Chemicals, Lamp, and every requisite for the practice of  
**INSTANTANEOUS DRY PLATE PHOTOGRAPHY,**  
 with full printed Instructions.  
 Post free for 1 Stamp. Direct from the Manufacturers.  
**D. H. CUSSONS & CO., The Liverpool Dry Plate Works,**  
 79, BOLD STREET, LIVERPOOL.

The Artist Magazine, Oct 1882

## Robert Henry Bow



ROBERT HENRY BOW, born at Alnwick, January 27, 1827.

Born in Alnwick, Northumberland, England on January 27, 1827, there is virtually nothing known about the personal life of Robert Henry Bow. This is not altogether surprising considering he was

uncompromisingly devoted to his career as a civil engineer. Based in Scotland, it is believed Mr. Bow became acquainted with physicist James Clerk Maxwell during Professor Maxwell's lectures on color at Edinburgh University. An expert on iron roof and bridge construction, Mr. Bow established his professional reputation at an early age with the publication of *A Treatise on Bracing* (1851), which was followed up by several well-received articles on structural engineering. In his text *The Economics of Construction in Relation to Framed Structures* (1873), in which he collaborated with fellow civil engineer Edward Sang, he subdivided 136 trussed frameworks into four distinct classes – Class I, statically determinate; Class II, kinematically determinate; Class III, statically indeterminate; and Class 4, others that he identified as dual polygons of forces. A design enthusiast, he teamed with renowned builder Thomas Bouch to rebuild the Firth of Tay bridge after its decimation due to high winds. He also offered his services as an engineering consultant, specializing in trussed roofs for railway stations. For his efforts, he received a prestigious fellowship at the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

Mr. Bow became fascinated with stereoscopic photography in the 1860s, and like many

amateur photographers of the period, grew increasingly frustrated with distortion caused by flawed lenses or improper square placement of the camera. He believed lenses were the culprit, and championed an achromatic plano-convex focal length lens measuring 4 1/2 inches he maintained was free from distortion. He subsequently designed an instrument he dubbed a focimeter, which allowed transparencies to be viewed from the same angle as they appeared in the lens. Mr. Bow also became a vocal champion of using ammonia to fix photographs. He cited its affordability and the short time required between the toner bath and print finishing. Furthermore, he believed that the lack of sulphur chemical compounds resulted in greater print quality, subtle shadings, and richer tints that were particularly advantageous in portraiture and landscape photography.

In his later years, engineering again became Mr. Bow's primary preoccupation. However, his passion for stereoscopic photography and focal lens experimentation never waned. Eighty-two-year-old Robert Henry Bow died in Edinburgh, Scotland on February 17, 1909.

#### Ref:

1907 *The British Journal of Photography*, Vol. LIV (London: Henry Greenwood & Co.), pp. 62-63.

1892 *The Chemistry of Photography* by William Jerome Harrison (New York: The Scovill & Adams Company), p. 387.

2012 *The History of the Theory of Structures* by Karl-Eugen Kurrer (Berlin: Ernst & Verlag fur Architektur und technische), pp. 369, 1984.

1899 *The International Annual of Anthony's Photographic Bulletin and American Process Year-Book*, Vol. XI (London: Percy Lund, Humphries & Co., Ltd.), p. 14.

1864 *Journal of the Franklin Institute*, Vol. XLVII (Philadelphia: The Franklin Institute), p. 408.

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Send Comments & Suggestions to  
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