



# Historic Camera Newsletter

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## Camera Value and Rating

The Historic Camera website has been updated with a new community feature. In efforts to provide as much camera reference information as possible to our sites users, a new feature to estimate camera value has and will be added to all camera information pages. In keeping with an open system where members and users can contribute personal information to the website, the system also allows for individual inputs. The goal is to allow a true representation of estimating value by having multiple inputs from various sources. Auction sales, ebay sales, street fairs and personal purchases will be included in the estimate providing a low, high and average value. The site will continue to include a five star collectible rating value without change, except for formatting. The combination of these two metrics will help individuals in estimating overall camera worth.

Historic Camera Value and Rating - Estimating Overall Worth (about)

- HC Community Collectible Rating

RATE IT!

☆☆☆☆☆ average rating: **Not Rated** stars, from 0 votes.

- HC Community Estimated Camera Value

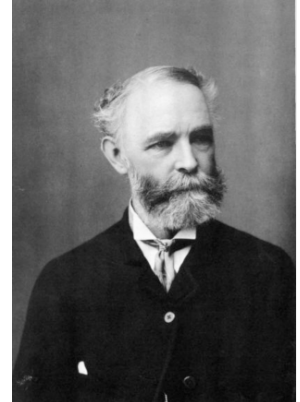
VALUE IT!

\$0      \$0.00      \$0  
LOW      AVERAGE      HIGH      from 0 submittals.

The value input will require the inputters name and email. All inputs will be reviewed for authenticity and applicability and will only be included upon admin approval. Please see our new feature on the Historic Camera site and if you have comments or suggestions direct them to [admin@historiccamera.com](mailto:admin@historiccamera.com).

## J. H. Kent, Photographer

Rochester's most acclaimed nineteenth-century portrait photographer John Howe Kent was born to John and Lodoski Howe Kent on March 4, 1827 in Plattsburgh, New York. A gifted painter of landscapes, Mr. Kent moved to Brockport, New York to teach oil painting at the Brockport Normal School. He opened a small art gallery on State Street, before moving it to 55 Main Street in 1864. The following year, he married he married Julia Ainsworth, with whom he would have a daughter Ada, and moved his gallery to a location at the corner of Main and Erie Streets that was large enough to include a photography studio. The carte-de-visite photography craze was at its zenith, and Mr. Kent became an enthusiastic practitioner of the new art form. He then progressed to its larger cabinet card incarnation, and although he continued painting, he quickly learned that photography was the more lucrative of the two genres.



**J. H. KENT,**

**PHOTOGRAPHER,**

58 STATE STREET,

**Rochester, N. Y.**

In 1868, Mr. Kent moved his young family to Rochester, which became his permanent location, and where he operated nine different

studios until his death. His precision CDVs and cabinet card photographs earned him lavish praise - with one early biographer lauding Mr. Kent as "the leading photographic artist of the country" - and gained him access to some of the most important celebrity visitors to Rochester, most notably suffragette Susan B. Anthony and abolitionist Frederick Douglass. Mr. Kent tended to highly romanticize his subjects with a heavy emphasis upon "grace and elegance," and delighted in featuring props that characterized the Victorian Age. He manipulated lighting to his satisfaction using his own hand-held screen creation that led to the collapsible hand-held reflectors many photographers still use today. With this screen, Mr. Kent could completely open his skylights and sidelights and use the screen to control and soften the lighting of his subjects to achieve his desired effect. An unabashed promoter of his invention, Mr. Kent informed his colleagues, "My sittings are made anywhere under the light; the screens being so arranged that they can be opened or closed at any point by the operator while standing at the camera." He received awards, acclaim, and controversy at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia with his life-size contact prints he claimed were made from direct negatives. Photographic publisher Edward L. Wilson stated publicly he believed the photographs were enlargements, a charge Mr. Kent angrily refuted in an issue of *The Philadelphia Photographer*, stating, "Whether good or bad, the pictures are from 'direct negatives' printed in contact and there is no dodge or cheat about him," without offering any explanation as to how they were made.

## The American Optical Company

The American Optical Co. was founded in 1856 in New Haven Connecticut. The new company manufactured box cameras,

stereoscopes and accessories, and had developed an international reputation due to its high quality and low cost of American wood box cameras.



In 1866 The Company Organized under the laws of the State of New York, with 150,000. The Office and Sales room was established at 458 Broadway, corner of grand street. The President was Chas. B Boyle, the treasure was W. Rockhill and the Secretary W.J. Buck. At this time the company acquired John Stock Camera manufacturing company and the Harrison Camera Factory or otherwise known as Nelson Wright Co. The expanded American Optical Co. continued production of American Optical apparatus, John Stock apparatus and the C.C. Harrison Portrait lenses and the Harrison and Schnitzer Patented Globe lenses.

In 1867 The Scovill company acquired the American Optical Co. along with the recently acquired John Stock Company and the Harrison camera factory. It became a division of Scovill Mfg. Co. until 1871.

From 1871 to 1889 The American Optical Company cameras were labeled as the The American Optical Company, Scovill Mfg. Co. Props. The company grew so large that they

established a warehouse at 419-421 Broome Street, New York City. An

During this time period the American Optical cameras were led by Adams, Who later help lead Scovill into consolidating the photography business under the separate name of Scovill & Adams Co.

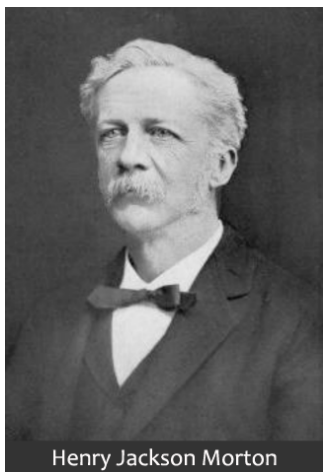
By 1873 the firm grew to establish a European branch in Birmingham England and in 1874 the profits if the photography division totaled over \$1,000,000.

In 1889 Scovill consolidated its photography business and established the Scovill & Adams company.

In 1891 the Henry Clay cameras were introduced.

## H. Walter Barnett

Henry Jackson Morton, son of St. James Church of Philadelphia rector Rev. Henry Morton, was born on December 11, 1836 in New York City. He attended the University of Pennsylvania, where he provided an impressive



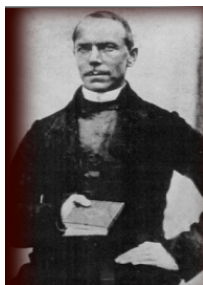
interpretation of the hieroglyphics of the Rosetta stone. He began studying law; however, after giving a series of well-received lectures on chemistry and physics at Philadelphia's Episcopal Academy, Mr. Morton had unwittingly chosen his new scientific career path. He became a Professor of Chemistry at the Philadelphia Dental College in 1863, and the following year he became secretary of the Franklin Institute and

served as its journal editor. Mr. Morton applied his interest in art as theater to revive the Institute's tired lecture series. He engineered scientific demonstrations that were designed to be informative as well as entertaining on such topics as eclipses, fluorescence, reflection, and refraction. He paid particular attention to projection, and his experiments yielded a vertical projection lantern that he introduced to enthusiastic spectators.

A year after joining the chemistry staff of his old alma mater, the University of Pennsylvania, Professor Morton received a Ph.D. from Dickinson College. That same year, 1869, he organized the U.S. Solar Eclipse Expedition. That August, his team of scientists and photographers assembled in Iowa, with the professor using specially constructed Alvin Clark & Sons telescope fitted with a box at its end to hold a 4-1/4x5-1/2" plate sufficient to capture two images on each plate. The shut-off slide at the front of the plate would activate the slide drop that would instantly expose a solar image onto the plate. Two telescopic cameras (for observation and direction, were invented by Professor Thomas Leighton specifically for capturing the eclipse, as was the equatorial stand that weighed nearly 500 lbs., which allowed the cameras to fully track the orbit of the sun. The large darkroom had two holes cut into one side to pass out the plates and then pass them in quickly after exposure. The telescope was positioned approximately five feet from the darkroom, which further expedited the exposure-making process. Negatives were produced at 5-to-10 minute intervals for the duration of the eclipse. While studying the photographs later, Professor Morton determined that the bright line beside the edge of the moon was not of scientific origin, but rather "purely a photographic phenomenon."



## Janez Puhar



Janez Puhar (also spelled Puhar, Puher, Puchar, or Pucher) was born in Kranj, Slovenia on August 26, 1814. Despite his working-class roots - his father was a stonemason - young Janez charted a more scholarly

course at an early age. While a grammar school student in Ljubljana, he became fluent in German, French, Italian, and English, and in high school he excelled in botany, chemistry, mathematics, music, and physics. Although Mr. Puhar intended to pursue a career in art, he acquiesced to his mother's wishes and entered the priesthood in 1838.

After completing his seminary studies, he was sent to several Slovenian villages to serve as a chaplain. It is believed he discovered the new art of daguerreotype in Metlika, and his earliest experiments were published in the Carniola newspaper in late spring 1841. Because photographic processes were too costly for his meager income to afford, Fr. Puhar developed more inexpensive, but equally effective techniques utilizing sulfur, mercury, bromine, alcohol, and a transparent glass plate instead of metal. He further streamlined the process by first cleaning the glass plate coated with sulfur that was light sensitive. While holding the plate over a flame, it would be covered with iodized vapors. The prepared plate was then inserted into the back of a camera, and after setting the motif, he poured mercury into a metal flask that was placed at the bottom of the camera. The mercury was heated and the plate was exposed to light for 15 seconds. The mercury vapors coated the exposure and Puhar added bromine steam to enhance the image quality. The plate was then treated with alcohol, preserved with varnish, and coated with another glass plate to protect from scratches. Amazingly, this refined process only took 5-8 minutes. The first public reference to Fr.

Puhar's invention was on April 19, 1842. However, they were completely overshadowed by Frenchman Claude Felix Abel Niepce de Saint-Victor's heavily promoted glass photography techniques. Fr. Puhar did not receive any official recognition for his groundbreaking invention until the Reports of the Vienna Academy of Sciences were published in 1851. Afterwards, he was invited to attend the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations in London, where he received a bronze medal for one of his glass photographs and later attended a world exhibition in New York.

When Fr. Puhar was sent to the remote region of Certlje, he focused on serving people in need and never again appeared on the international photography scene. However, he continued his photographic experimentation, and it is believed repeated exposure to toxic chemicals contributed to his death from tuberculosis on August 7, 1864 at the age of 49. Janez Puhar left behind five photographs that have been lovingly preserved at Ljubljana's National Museum, the Museum of Architecture and Design, and in a private collection. Appropriately, a year-long photographic celebration of Fr. Puhar's 200th birthday was launched at the Slovene Academy of Science and Art on January 29, 2014. The "Janez Puhar Gold Medal for Best Portrait" was awarded at several 2014 International Federation of Photographic Art (FIAP) events in the year 2014 in such global locales as Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Luxembourg, Japan, and Argentina.

Ref:

2014 Janez Puhar (1814-1864) (URL: <http://www.fotodrustvo-kranj.si/wp-content/uploads/Internet-FDJP-Eng.pdf>).

2007 Janez Puhar: Biography (URL: <http://puhar.si>).

2011 Janez Puhar, Inventor of Photography on Glass (URL: <http://www.fotodrustvo-kranj.si/images-and-floats>).

2013 Photography as Exhibited in The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, 1851 by Robin O'Dell



Send Comments & Suggestions to  
[admin@historiccamera.com](mailto:admin@historiccamera.com).

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