

snapshots

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Not Quite a Genius: the Story of Thomas H. Blair and His Cameras

Camera-maker and entrepreneur Thomas H. Blair is the subject of PHSNE's meeting on Sunday, October 1. Blair, who was born in Nova Scotia in 1855, began making innovative cameras and film in Boston in 1881. He designed and sold many cameras and launched several companies, competing and finally selling out to George Eastman in 1899.



Robert Ellis

Blair's chronicler is Robert Ellis. Ellis retired as a professor of English at Worcester State College in 1995 and became the historian of the Northborough, MA, Historical Society. He has written several booklets dealing with Northborough history. The first one, called *Northborough Notables*, published in 1997, featured short biographies of accomplished townspeople. One of them was Blair. Ellis became

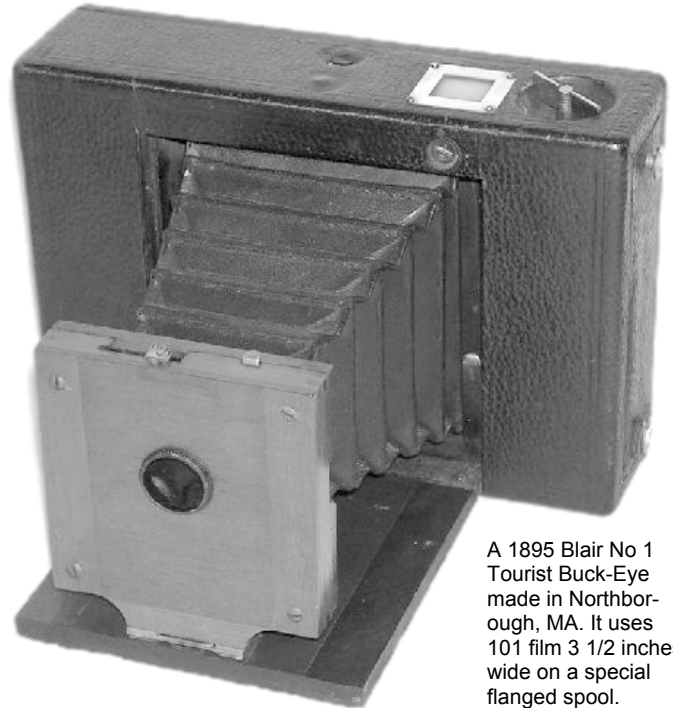


Photo by Jack Billington

A 1895 Blair No 1 Tourist Buck-Eye made in Northborough, MA. It uses 101 film 3 1/2 inches wide on a special flanged spool.

intrigued with his subject, and in 2003 he enlarged his portrait of Blair in *Not Quite a Genius: From Nova Scotia to Northborough with Thomas H. Blair*.

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Jack Naylor to Sell Daguerreotypes in Live/Online Auction Sept. 30

Jack Naylor, famed collector of photographica and PHSNE Life Member, will sell some 300 daguerreotypes and other pieces of early photographica at an auction at the Fairmont Copley Plaza Hotel in Boston on Saturday, Sept. 30, beginning at 10 a.m..

The sale, which includes works attributed to Boston daguerreotypists Southworth and Hawes, and John Adams Whipple, will be conducted by Paul Royka, and the auction lots may be previewed in Royka's Boston gallery, 213 Newberry Street, from 11 to 4 Sept. 25 to 29. An online catalog is available on Royka's Web site, at <http://www.roykas.com/earlyphotographyauction.htm>.

"Many of these are highly valuable pieces that have never been my collection. There's no room to put them in," said Naylor. "They've been in a box in the back room. So I'm selling them."

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Royka's Gallery

Southworth & Hawes portrait of a daughter of Hawes, either Alice Mary or Marion Augusta.

Exhibitions and Shows in the New England Area

By James B. Hill

The Williams College Museum of Art presents *The Moon is Broken: A Collection of Photography and Poetry* October 12-December 24, 2006. The Williams College Museum of Art boasts major holdings from the history of photography, and this exhibition will showcase some of the finest images in the collections, including works by Brett Weston, Aaron Siskind, Ralph Gibson, Anne Hamilton, Man Ray, Paul Strand, Robert Mapplethorpe, and others. The museum's announcement says the exhibition "... seeks to survey one strand in the history of the media, specifically the creation of photography of indeterminate meaning open to poetic interpretation." Local poets will provide label text to accompany the images on display. (15 Lawrence Hall Drive, Williamstown, MA 01267, telephone 413-597-2429, www.wcma.org.)

The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT: *Edward Weston: A Photographer's Love of Life* September 16-December 31, 2006. More than one hundred vintage prints from Twentieth Century master Weston. (600 Washington Street, Hartford, CT 06103, telephone 860-278-2670, www.wadsworthatheneum.org.)

The Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College: *Paris 1968: Photographs by Serge Hambourg*, September 9-November 18, 2006. French photographer Serge Hambourg's eyewitness account of the May and June 1968 strikes by students and workers that brought France to a standstill. (Wheelock Street, Hanover, NH 03755, 603-

646-2808, www.hoodmuseum.dartmouth.edu)

The Bennington Museum, Bennington, VT: *In Place: The Photographs of Neil Rappaport*. This is the first major retrospective of the late landscape, portrait, and documentary photographer's work, through November 3, 2006. Also through November 3, *"The Search for A Little Girl"*, an exploration of Lewis Hines' portrait of a young Vermont girl at work in a cotton mill, with archival material and enlarged Hines photographs. The museum holds the world's largest collection of Grandma Moses art and memorabilia, collections of Vermont glass, Vermont furniture, and Bennington pottery, and the only remaining Martin Wasp automobile, made in Bennington by Karl Martin (circa 1920-25). (75 Main Street, Bennington, VT 05201, 802-447-1571, www.benningtonmuseum.com.)

Not Quite a Genius: Thomas Blair



Jack Billington is one PHSNE member with an interest in Blair cameras. This one is an 1889 Blair Improved Reversible Back. 6 1/2 inches by 8 1/2 inches.

Don't Forget The Great American Thirty-Five Exhibition in December



Now is the time to prepare your entry for PHSNE's December program, The Great American Thirty-Five Exhibition.

The program will feature slides shot by members.

It's not a contest, but the rules are strict: All photographs submitted for the show must be shot with an American-made 35mm camera (and if you use a light meter, that must be U.S.-made as well).

For the complete Great American 35 Exhibition program rules, see the PHSNE Web site at www.phsne.org.

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Blair is best known for the Hawkeye camera, developed by Samuel Turner but improved and marketed by Blair. Blair waged a photographic and legal battle with George Eastman, who had brought out his first Kodak camera in 1888. Blair left Boston. He established an overseas business in London and another in Northborough, Massachusetts. Neither of these operations lasted long, but during the three years his American Camera Company operated in Northborough Blair developed the Buckeye camera, with a front-roll system that Eastman's cameras lacked.

During this period Blair and Eastman conferred about joining forces; in 1899 the financially more successful Eastman purchased Blair's company. He incorporated the Blair name in cameras which he later produced in Rochester and attempted to hire Blair himself, but the latter rejected that part of the offer. Instead he remained in Northborough for another 20 years and continued to invent, developing cash registers, incandescent lights, and other products.

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Jack Naylor to Sell Daguerreotypes at Auction on Sept. 30 in Boston

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(Naylor is also seeking a buyer for "The Naylor Collection," about 31,000 items related to the history of photography that he hopes to sell intact, perhaps to a museum, for \$20 million.)

Naylor's auction comes at a time when interest in early photographica and especially daguerreotypes seems to be on the increase, fueled by events like the "Young America" exhibition of work by the Boston partnership of Southworth & Hawes.

The auction lots begin with three letters related to Southworth & Hawes that Naylor expects to be among the most sought-after items in the sale. Several daguerreotypes attributed to Southworth & Hawes are included, as well.

Another piece Naylor expects to draw much interest is a mammoth plate, an 11x13 inch daguerreotype attributed to John Adams Whipple of Boston. "There are only four of these in the world," he said.

While interest in photographica is rising and values for daguerreotypes keep soaring, sales like this one are still not common, according to Naylor. "There hasn't been an auction like this in six years," he said. "That was at Sotheby's and even then the prices were enormous."

Auction Both Live and Online

A print catalog is available through the auctioneer, and an online catalog for the auction is available at <http://www.liveauctioneers.com/catalog/10400>. The catalog lists 176 lots, many of them including multiple items. The catalog links to eBay's LiveAuction site, which will accept bids both before and during the live auctions. (For an explanation see http://pages.ebay.com/liveauctions/help/welcome/how_works.html.)



A 1/6-plate image of a mother and child by Jeremiah Gurney, New York, is dated about 1850.

how_works.html.)

Naylor is the former CEO of Thomson International Corporation, a manufacturer of aircraft and automotive parts headquartered in Waltham, MA. In addition to long service to PHSNE that included the editorship of PHSNE's *New England Journal of Photographic History*, he has been involved with many photographic organizations.

Naylor began collecting in the early 1950s: cameras, items of photographic technology, images, and associated ephemera. In the mid-1980s Naylor sold 9,000 pieces from his collection that have since become the Naylor Museum of Photographic History in Yokohama, Japan.

A digital PDF file of the 34-page catalog that features lavish photography of a few of the 30,000 items from "The Naylor Collection" can be downloaded from the Web at <http://tinyurl.com/gydtx>.

This mammoth 11x13-inch daguerreotype (2.5 times larger than a whole plate) of a Maine family group is attributed to John Adams Whipple of Boston. (Photos by Royka's Gallery.)

Photographica 66 and Other Sales

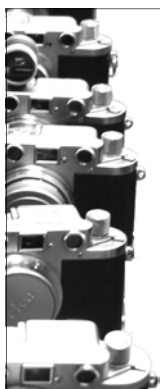
PHSNE's Photographical Show and Sale is coming up October 28 and 29 at the Armenian Cultural Center, 47 Nichols Avenue, Watertown, MA. Tables are still available. Call John Dockery at 781-592-2553

Michigan Society Annual Sale November 5

If you're too far west to get to Photographica, the Michigan Photographic Historical Society will hold its annual show and sale on November 5 in Novi, MI, a suburb of Detroit. The event will be held on Sunday, November 5, 2006 from 10am-4pm at the Novi Community Center, 45175 West Ten Mile Road (1/2 mile west of Novi Road). Admission is \$5.00.

Team Köln Schedules Photokina Auction Sept. 30

Uwe Breker's Auction Team Köln will hold an auction of photographica in Cologne, Germany on Sept. 30, to coincide with the annual Photokina trade show in that city. For information see www.breker.com.



PHOTOGRAPHICA!
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Armenian Cultural and
Educational Center
47 Nichols Avenue, Watertown, MA
Tables are still available.
Call John Dockery at 781-592-2553

PHSNE Meetings

Meetings are usually held on the first Sunday of each month at 1:30 p.m. at Waltham High School, preceded by a mini trade fair at 12:30 and a PHSNE board meeting at 11:00 a.m.

November 5 — John Anderson on the daguerreotypes of the early Boston amateur Samuel Bemis.

December 3 — The Great American Thirty-Five Exhibition: A slide show by PHSNE members.

Directions

Waltham High School is at 617 Lexington St. in Waltham, MA. The high school is at the top of the hill, behind other school buildings.

From I-95 (Route 128) Northbound: Take Exit 27 and follow Totten Pond Road 1.2 miles east until it dead-ends into Lexington St. Turn left and go .5 miles north. Turn right into the school complex.

From I-95 (Route 128) Southbound: Take Exit 28, Trapelo Road, east 1.3 mi. to Lexington St. Turn right and go south .8 mi. to school complex.

From Boston/Cambridge: Take Rte. 2 west to Exit 54B, then Lexington St. south 1.7 mi. to school complex on left.

From Lincoln and West: Take Rte. 2 east to Exit 53, Concord Ave. Go east 1 mi., then right onto Lexington St. and 1.3 mi. south to school complex on left.

PHSNE Online

PHSNE is online at www.phsne.org. PHSNE member Ralph Johnston is the Web master.

FIRST CLASS MAIL
 Address Service
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Photographic Historical Society of New England
 Next Meeting: Sunday, October 1, 2006
 'Thomas Blair and His Cameras' with Robert Ellis



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PHSNE
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