

snap shots

Volume 15 Number 7

March 2010

The Largest Lenses on Earth:

The Rise of Long-Focus Photography in 19th Century America

March 7, 2010 at the Dexter School, Brookline, MA

(Note change of venue)



John W. Briggs

John W. Briggs, Faculty Astronomer at the Dexter and Southfield Schools and past president of the Antique Telescope Society will be the featured speaker at the March PHSNE meeting. The program will take place at the Clay Center Observa-

tory, Dexter & Southfield Schools, 20 Newton Street, Brookline, MA. Please meet for a prompt start at 1:00 PM. (In case of difficulties, visitors may call John Briggs at 575-491-6113.)

The impact of photography has been no greater in any field than in the science of astronomy. One of America's early attempts at celestial photography was at Harvard College Observatory in 1847, and the target was the Sun. Soon afterwards a rapid and successful development of astrophotography took place, making it possible to record progressively fainter celestial subjects. Harvard College Observatory, in fact, became a world leader in the classification of stars by photography of their spectra, and the scientific results were profound.

America's rise in astronomy had much to do with the availability of excellent lenses and telescopes from local makers like Alvan Clark & Sons of Cambridgeport, Massachusetts. Other clever Americans pioneered the application of new photographic technology to the sky, and the results were spectacular. Of the great pioneers, a leader was Lewis M. Rutherfurd of New York. Rutherfurd developed large, new lenses optimized specifically for photography. His greatest, a 13-inch aperture completed in 1868, will be displayed at Clay Center as part of the program, as well as original Rutherfurd glass-plate negatives exposed the 1870s.

John W. Briggs is well-known for his enthusiastic interest in the history of telescopes, observatories, and related technologies. Mr. Briggs will outline a number of players in the development of astrophotography, including Henry and Harry Fitz, Rutherfurd, Alvan Clark & Sons, E. E. Barnard (the "Ansel Adams of the sky"), and George E.

Hale (1868-1938). Hale, in his life-long fascination for solar spectrography and his organizational genius for the funding, construction, and operation of large observatories, is a heroic figure. Hale led the American transformation from the older astronomy-of-position into the new astrophysics.

All along, photography was central, as well as the instrumental tools that made the imaging possible. In cul-



Photo by J. W. Briggs

Operator (barely visible at right) and 40 inch refracting telescope at Yerkes Observatory, Williams Bay, WI (University of Chicago) largest refracting telescope on earth.

mination, Briggs will describe his personal experience using the largest telephoto lens in the world – Hale's 40-inch refractor – an f/19 glass that, although built and dedicated in 1897, remains the largest successful refractor to this day.

On display will be significant artifacts from the speaker's collection, including a copy of Barnard's sumptuous *Atlas of Selected Regions of the Milky Way*, considered by some to be the most desirable rare book from early American astronomy; a complete 1875 telescope by Clark & Sons; and more. The group will also tour the Clay Center Observatory and view its 25-inch telescope built by DFM Engineering.

See page 4 for directions to the Dexter School

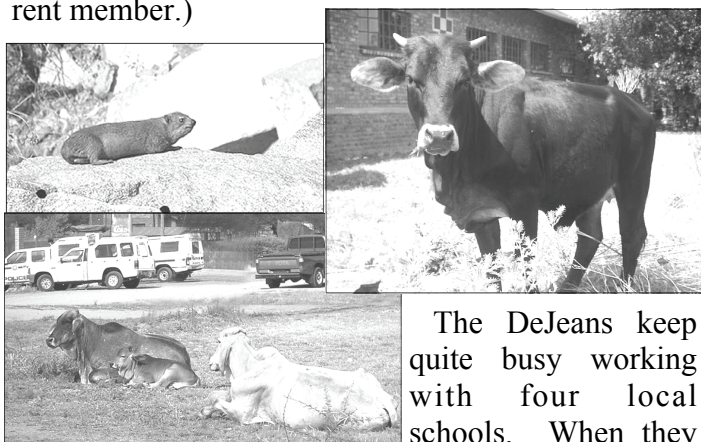
Dave DeJean Sojourns in Africa



Sally and Dave DeJean
(left and right center)
and colleagues

Days after he placed the newsletter in new hands, former *snap shots* editor Dave DeJean and his wife, Sally, headed for Africa where they are serving in the Peace Corps, living and working in a small village near Pretoria. Dave sent photos of places, people,

animals, and events to share with his fellow PHSNE members. (He probably has the distinction of being the farthest distance from New England of any current member.)



The DeJeans keep quite busy working with four local schools. When they have free time, Dave

and Sally may be found exploring the area, cameras in hand. They're hoping to see "the big five" during their stay: elephants, lions, leopards, buffalo, and

rhinos. In the meantime, they have seen and photographed lots of other animals.

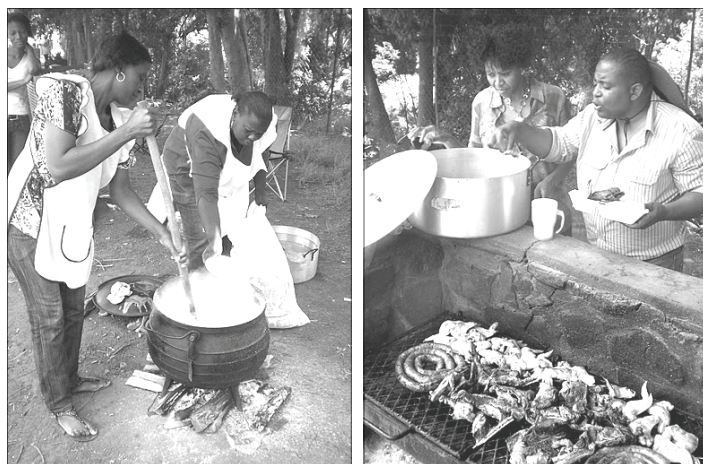
Dave says he "causes a stir among the kids" every time he takes his camera out, and he is looking into setting up an after-school camera club. He is investigating what it would take to get film processed at one of the Kodak shops that are in all the local shopping centers. He has had some digital images printed at a relatively expensive price (3 rands each, ~ 36 cents).



Sally DeJean teaching in
The local Middle School

A school field trip with the graduating ninth graders ended in a braai, a South African barbecue where everything is cooked outdoors. Dave met several photographers in the park equipped with digital SLR's and Canon's battery-powered Selphy printers. He writes, "It was the latest technology, but the business model was exactly the same as the strolling tintype photographers of a century ago; they would get a couple or a group to pose, and sell them a nearly instant 4 x 6 print for 10 rands, just about a buck and a quarter." He adds, "The tintype business model persists in the digital age."

For updates on the DeJean activities, check out Dave's blog at dejean.com.



A school field trip at a local park, a popular outing spot with large swimming pool and plenty of room for braais, the South African barbecue

PHSNE Membership

PHSNE membership is \$15 for students, \$35 for individuals, \$40 for a family, and \$45 for foreign membership. Please send checks in U.S. dollars drawn on a U.S. bank or dollar-denominated international money orders. An application is available at phsne.org/membership.

Members should check the expiration date on the *snap shots* mailing label before sending in dues.

Send payments, changes of address, and other contact information, to Joe Walters Jr, PHSNE Membership Chair, P.O. Box 650189, West Newton, MA 02465 (Call: 617-826-9294; email: membership@phsne.org; or use the Web form at phsne.org/contacts).

snap shots, edited by Beverly Regelman, is published by the Photographic Historical Society of New England, Inc., P.O. Box 650189, West Newton, MA 02465-0189. Articles and exhibition/book reviews are always welcome. Send to snapshots@phsne.org.

Correction to list of Board Members

We regret that Marti Jones' name was omitted from the Board roster in the February issue of *snap shots*. As immediate Past President, Marti is automatically a Board Member.

Hidden Treasure in New Jersey: The Fleetwood Museum of Art and Photographica



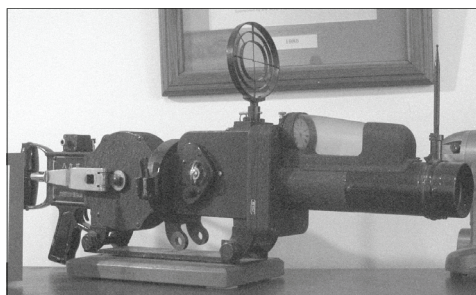
Tucked away in a mansion dating back to the early 19th century is a treasure trove of antique cameras. Collectors and photographers will find this display well worth a side trip. Hours may be limited, and a phone call

to set up an appointment is highly recommended.

The museum is rarely crowded, and you are likely to receive an extended and possibly private tour from a very knowledgeable guide. Cameras may be seen “up close,” and some may be available for handling and photographing.

Open since 1985, The Fleetwood Museum houses the collection of the late Benjamin Fleetwood. It was catalogued by his friend Edward K. Kaprelian, a well known camera designer, who also designed the showcases and set up the initial display.

According to the website, “The museum



Japanese Navy gun training camera, Konica

contains over 800 cameras, illustrating the 150 year evolution of camera design, and examples of many of the photographic processes which evolved during that period. The mission of the museum is to preserve and display these artifacts and to use them to stimulate interest in the art and science of photography.”



European stereo viewer

The mansion, located on an eight acre site in North Plainfield, also serves as the Vermeule Community Center. The museum also features oil paintings by Matilda Fleetwood, Benjamin Fleetwood’s late wife. See fleetwoodmuseum.org for additional information.

- story and photos by Lew Regelman

Current Area Exhibits:

Annie Leibovitz: Women

A collection of about 30 “larger than life” Annie Leibovitz photographs is on display at the Heftler Visiting Artist Gallery, Endicott College Center for the Arts, Beverly, MA, through March 25, 2010.

The show is a traveling exhibit from the Women’s Museum: An Institute for the Future, in Dallas, TX. The photographs, drawn from Leibovitz’s book *Women* published in 1999, are approximately 4 feet by 3 feet or 5 1/2 feet by 4 feet and feature women from all walks of life, famous and unknown. Globe reviewer Mark Feeney preferred the latter, commenting that “If a subject’s fame can mask a portrait photographer’s artistry, anonymity puts it at a premium.” He suggests that photos of Hillary Clinton and Madeline Albright resemble ads, not portraits.

A reception for the exhibit will be held on Thursday, February 25th at the Center for the Arts beginning at 5:00 P.M. A few visitors will be offered the opportunity to have students take portraits of them using the lighting style favored by Leibovitz. Tim Hossler, former in-house Art Director for Leibovitz and co-designer of the book *Annie Leibovitz: Women*, will deliver a lecture on Leibovitz’s aesthetics and studio work. Refreshments will be served.

There is no charge for admission to the exhibit or for the special events. Viewing hours, directions to the college, and other information may be found on the school’s website endicott.edu/centerforthearts or e-mail Kathleen Moore at kmoore@endicott.edu.

What’s your bid?

The Austrian auction house Westlicht is offering a “Daguerréotype Giroux from 1839, the first commercially produced camera in the world” on May 29, 2010 as



Westlicht catalog photo

part of a larger auction. They say it was manufactured by Alphonse Giroux, Daguerre’s bother in-law.

Bidding will start at 200,000 euros (\$280,000), and they estimate the camera will fetch up to 700,000 euros (\$980,000) - the highest price ever paid for a camera. For more information, see westlicht-auction.com.

In Memoriam:

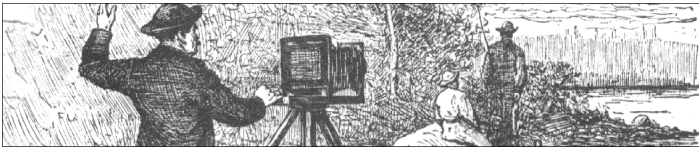
Craig S. Pflug, Dealer of Images

We recently learned of the death of PHSNE member Craig S. Pflug on May 10, 2009. The obituary printed in the *Star-Ledger* (Newark, New Jersey) noted that "Craig was an avid photographer and trader in antique photographs and images, and an expert in Civil War Daguerre type images." He sold images at PHSNE shows on a regular basis, often sharing a table with Dr. Marty May, a former PHSNE member who passed away in 2006. The obituary can be accessed at tinyurl.com/y9myeao.



Craig Pflug
at Festival of Antiques
Mullica Hill, NJ
June, 2007

Craig was a dealer in The Yellow Garage Antiques Marketplace in Mullica Hill, NJ. His brother, Brian, has kept the booth going in Craig's memory and also has many of Craig's images at his home. Brian is trying to slowly liquidate some of Craig's inventory with the help of colleagues at the Yellow Garage. You can contact Brian at bpflug@cinedigm.com for information about the images.



PHSNE Meetings

Meetings are usually held on the first Sunday of each month, September to June, at 1:30 p.m. at the Americal Center, Wakefield, MA, preceded by a mini trade fair at 12:30 and an open meeting of the PHSNE board at 11:00 a.m. **Note: The meeting on March 7, 2010 will be held at the Clay Center, Dexter School, Brookline, MA.**

Directions to Dexter School:

I95 to exit 20A (Rte 9 East). Merge onto MA 9 East (Worcester St.) towards Brookline/Boston. Drive 2.9 miles, then make slight right at Florence St. Turn right at Hammond Pond Parkway. At traffic circle take third exit onto Newton Street. Proceed .7 miles to 20 Newton St. The entrance to the campus is on St. Pauls Avenue, a small road off Newton Street. St. Pauls Avenue is nearly opposite the landmark Lars Anderson Park and Automobile Museum. Clay Center is the tallest building on campus, and the observatory dome is obvious.

April 11 - 3 Member Presentations

April 17, 18 - Photographica 73

PHSNE Online

Visit PHSNE's web site at phsne.org. George Champine is the Webmaster.

Join the PHSNE Forum online discussion: sign up and log in at phsne.org/forum, moderated by Joe Walters. For an archive of back issues of *snap shots* and meeting presentations, visit phsne.org/archive.

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Photographic Historical Society of New England
Next Meeting: March 7, 2010
Dexter School, Brookline, MA, 1:30 P.M.
(Note change of venue)

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