

# snap shots

Volume 17 Number 9

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## Your Picture in Gold: The Rare and Beautiful Portrait Orotone Sunday, May 6<sup>th</sup>, Americal Center, Wakefield, MA



Woman with headband, 1920's

was a time period of several unusual and beautiful photographic processes; one of these was the orotone. Many image collectors are not familiar with this rare and lovely process, and fine examples of orotones or Curtis-tones, produced by the likes of Edward Curtis and A.C. Pillsbury, sell for many thousands of dollars at auction. However, art photography was not the only application of the orotone process, as there were studios which provided customers with portraits in gold as an alternative to silver gelatin and platinum.

In a marketing brochure, one photographer likened his little art gem to the old Daguerreotype, but then went on to explain many reasons why gold is very much better than silver for photographs. Although the orotone is a photographic print on glass from a negative, its silver gelatin emulsion is colored on the glass plate with a gilded back to give it an ethereal quality similar to the daguerreotype.

Sabine's talk will provide a high level overview of her research and interest in the orotone process util-

PHSNE member Sabine Ocker of Gloucester, MA, will present a version of a well-received talk on orotones that she first gave at last Fall's PhotoHistory Symposium at the George Eastman House Museum in Rochester, NY.

The early 20th



Princeton marching band member, 1930's

ized as a medium for portraiture during the period from 1910 to 1930. The artistic orotones created by Curtis and other Western photographers are better known, but are not within the scope of the talk.

During her presentation, Sabine will provide specifics relating to the business of the making and selling of these portraits—how the orotone is made, popular presentation methods such as cases and frames, the patents and awards, and the marketing materials provided both to photographers by manufacturers and those given to customers.

Orotones were made and sold across the country. Sabine will discuss photographers working in the medium from Boston, Philadelphia, and New Orleans. She will also talk about the orotones available at the 1933 *World's Fair: A Century of Progress* in Chicago. The talk will be illustrated with examples from Sabine's collection of nearly 100 orotones.

Sabine Ocker has been collecting photography for 20 years. She has been a PHSNE member for more than 12 years and also belongs to several other photo historical societies.

Beside the orotone talk, she gave

another presentation at the 2003 Symposium on the art of the cyanotype as practiced by female college students at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She has also written widely on photography.

~Gold tone images were converted to black and white for publication.; images from Ocker collection



2 boys outdoors, 1920's

## MFA Exhibit: *Silver, Salt, and Sunlight: Early Photography in Britain and France*

The invention of photography was a pivotal achievement that changed the course of cultural history. The early years of the medium were rich in experimentation. As each process and technique was invented, artists enthusiastically explored new possibilities for visual recording and expression. This exhibition celebrates the golden age of early photography in France and Britain, the two countries in which the medium was simultaneously invented.



Louis Remy Robert, *Still Life of Sevres Porcelain*, 1865.

Arranged according to theme and exploring a range of photographic approaches, *Silver, Salt, and Sunlight* features some rare early photographs from the Museum's collection.

Among the photographic pioneers included are William Henry Fox Talbot, Hill and Adamson, Roger Fenton, Edouard Baldus, Gustave Le Gray, Nadar, Julia Margaret Cameron, and Francis Frith.

Boston's Museum of Fine Arts celebrates the golden age of early photography with an exhibit that runs through August 5<sup>th</sup>. A lecture titled *The New York Times Magazine: Twenty-Five Years of Photographs* will be presented on May 16th. For museum information, visit [mfa.org](http://mfa.org). ~MFA Press Release

### PHSNE Membership

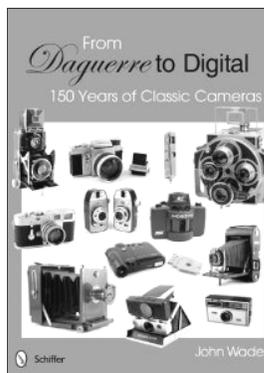
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Members should check the expiration date on the *snap shots* mailing label before sending in dues.

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](mailto:membership@phsne.org); or use the Web form at [phsne.org/contacts](http://phsne.org/contacts)).

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## Book Preview: *From Daguerre to Digital*



### *150 Years of Classic Cameras*

John Wade has written a book of interest to collectors which will be published on May 28, 2012. At the time of writing, a pre-publication price, almost \$20 less than the list price, is available at [amazon.com/gp/product/0764340263](http://amazon.com/gp/product/0764340263)

Over 500 crisp color photos display the wide range of cameras produced from the earliest days of photography to the rise of the digital age. The informative text provides a history of cameras, organized into chapters by category, including snapshot, folding, rangefinder, single lens reflex, twin lens reflex, stereo, panoramic, miniature, and spy cameras. Cameras within each chapter are arranged chronologically to show the development of the camera type. Every camera presented has earned its place by meeting one or more of these criteria: it is a major landmark; epitomizes a certain era; is rare or a prototype; contains something different or unusual in the design; and/or is especially weird or strange.

Rounding out this engrossing guide are a glossary of technical terms and an index. This book will be enjoyed by camera collectors, photo historians, and all who have ever captured life on film or in pixels.

Amazon offers a pre-order Price Guarantee. If the *Amazon.com* price decreases between your order time and the end of the day of the release date, you'll receive the lowest price.

### An Invitation from our Northern Neighbors

The Photographic Historical Society of Canada invites you to its Annual Spring Photographica Fair on Sunday, May 27, 2012 in Woodbridge, Ontario, a suburb of Toronto. Antique, classic and modern cameras, images, books, and accessories are available for both the collector and photographer from many vendors. Admission is \$7.00, and doors are open from 10:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. For more information or table reservations, check the web site at [phsc.ca](http://phsc.ca) or e-mail [marklsinger@gmail.com](mailto:marklsinger@gmail.com). You can also write to Fair Chairman Mark Singer at 789 Woodland Dr., Orillia, Ontario L3V6H1.

This is a good opportunity to plan a get-away weekend to Toronto, a delightful city to visit any time, but especially in spring.



## The Sound of Music

You can find songs fitting just about any subject, and photography is no exception. PHSNE members may be familiar with the 1973 Paul Simon hit titled *Kodachrome*, but they have probably not heard other Kodak related songs that preceded it.

Singer Jeff Barnhart has performed three tunes from the early 20th century that reference Kodak and the “new technology”:

- *You Press the Button, We do the Rest*, by W. S. Mullaly, c1892
- *The Kodak Girl*, by William T. Cramer, c1902
- *The Girl from Kodak Town*, written by Arthur Penn, c1917

All three can be accessed on [pbs.org/wgbh/amex/eastman/sfeature/music.html](http://pbs.org/wgbh/amex/eastman/sfeature/music.html) (PBS posting, American Experience, People and Events, David Lindsay) and played on a computer or MP3 player.



Lyrics to *You Press the Button, We Do the Rest*, based on the Kodak slogan of the day, were reproduced in 1980 by the

Royal Photographic Society Historical Group of Bath, England. They included these words:

“Isn’t it simple? Isn’t it quick?  
Such a small box, It must be a trick!  
How do you work it? What is the test?  
You press the button, We do the rest!”

*The Girl from Kodak Town* opens with a poetic description of Rochester:

“Down where the Genesee River is flowing a blue  
way to the sea,  
Lies a fair city, so quaint and so pretty,  
It’s home sweet home to me.  
It’s nature’s own bow’r and I long for the hours  
’neath its cool gray shadows flown,  
It was known as the beautiful city of Flow’rs,  
Now we call it Kodak Town!”

There are others. Visit [elyrics.net/read/s/skypark-lyrics/the-gir-in-your-picture-lyrics.html](http://elyrics.net/read/s/skypark-lyrics/the-gir-in-your-picture-lyrics.html) to find a song that includes the words,

“I decided that You’re much nicer on Kodak paper  
You’re always smiling at me  
Your’re much nicer on Kodak paper  
I really wish you could be  
Like the girl  
in your picture.”

A 2011 YouTube offering titled *Eastman Can I?*, sung to the tune of *Sexi Can I?*, presented The Kodak Girls teaching viewers how to use the Kodak Camera. And finally there’s a racy and quite politically incorrect rap titled *Call Me Mr. Kodak* at [hotnewsonglyrics.com/t-i-mr-kodak-lyrics.html](http://hotnewsonglyrics.com/t-i-mr-kodak-lyrics.html). There are probably others as well, but none compete with *Kodachrome* in popularity.

### 1893—2011: The More Things Change — The More They Stay the Same

PHSNE volunteers, working at the warehouse, came across a Kombi Camera, manufactured by Alfred C. Kemper of Chicago and introduced in 1893, whose shape seemed similar to that of the newly released Lytro featured in the April *snap shots*.



Left: Lytro, [lytro.com](http://lytro.com) photo. Right: Kombi, photo by Lew Regelman

The Web site [vintagephoto.tv/kombi.shtml](http://vintagephoto.tv/kombi.shtml) lists a number of “firsts” for this tiny camera: “the world’s first miniature roll film camera, the first camera to use film manufactured by Kodak solely for use in a non-Kodak camera, the first camera to combine the taking and viewing of photographs in the same instrument, the first metal-bodied roll film camera, [and] the first interchangeable back for roll-film cameras.”

The size and square shape of the Lytro is similar to that of the Kombi, though the Lytro is deeper. Dimensions of the Kombi are approximately 1 3/4 x 1 3/4 x 2 1/8 inches, while the Lytro is 1.61 x 1.62 x 4.41 inches. Both cameras were/are marvels in their time.

## Special Offer from PEM

The Peabody Essex Museum celebrates a Year of Photography with three distinctive exhibitions. *The Mind's Eye: 50 Years of Photography* by Jerry Uelsmann (through July 15, 2012) offers a lively investigation of Uelsmann's surreal, funny, and provocative images; *Natural Histories, Photographs by Barbara Bosworth* (April 14, 2012 – May 27, 2013) presents images



*Christmas Solar Eclipse in My Father's Hands, Sanibel, 2000, Barbara Bosworth*

from the photographer's childhood home; and *Ansel Adams: At the Water's Edge* (June 9, 2012 – October 8, 2012) features the legendary photographer's images of water in all its forms.

Beginning June 9, the PEM will offer 15 months membership for the price of 12. Sponsor level members also receive the accompanying catalog for the Ansel Adams exhibit.

PHSNE members who recently saw the Uelsmann exhibit enjoyed the continuous film showing how he creates his composite prints.

### 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, 467 Main St., Wakefield, MA, preceded by a mini trade fair at 12:30 and an open meeting of the PHSNE Board at 11:00 a.m.

### Upcoming meetings:

**June 3**—*Cameras: The Wonderful, the Weird, and the Worthless*, Bud Midgley

### Driving directions to Americal Center:

I-95 to exit 39, North Ave. toward Reading/Wakefield (right turn on North from the south; left turn from the north). Drive approximately 1.5 miles, then turn left at Main St. Destination is on the left: 467 Main St., Wakefield, MA 01880.

Parking available next door at the school, behind the building, and on Main St.

### Public transportation:

The Wakefield station of the Haverhill rail line is within 1/2 mile of the Center, and a bus line stops in front of the building. Details are available at [mbta.com](http://mbta.com).

### PHSNE Online

PHSNE's Web site is online at [phsne.org](http://phsne.org). George Champine is the Webmaster.

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

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Photographic Historical Society of New England  
Next Meeting: Sunday, May 6, 2012  
Your Picture in Gold: The Rare and Beautiful Portrait Orotone  
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