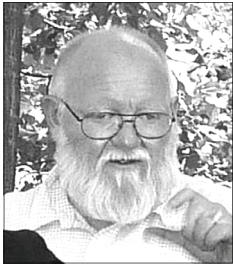


# snap shots

Volume 19 Number 2

October 2013

## October 6<sup>th</sup> Presentation Features Large Format Press Cameras Four PHSNE members lead panel discussion



Whitey Morange

Many great and memorable photographic images in the collective American memory were shot with press cameras, those boxy workhorses of the reporter and researcher throughout the twentieth century. While the best known is the Speed Graphic, along with its brother, the Crown Graphic and cousin, the RB

Graflex series, good, solid examples of the type were produced by companies all over the world. Busch, Linhof, Meridian, and Beseler made similar models in the tens of thousands.

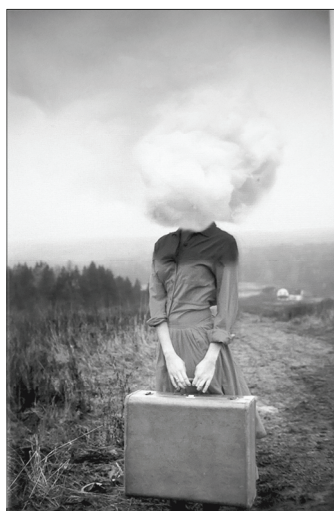
Sturdy, very portable and quite easy to use, press cameras represent a great way for photographers to work in large format film. They pack up small, have great flexibility, offer many choices for lens and format, and can

## Savage Beauty at Griffin Museum

Alicia Savage is an emerging self-portrait photographer based in the Boston area. Her imagery captures recorded reflections of herself exploring life and new experiences.

A series of her photographs, *Savage Beauty*, is featured at the Griffin Museum annex at Digital Silver Imaging in Belmont MA (9 Brighton St.) through December 6, 2013. A gallery talk with the artist will take place on November 7th.

"Photography has opened my mind and heart to understand myself and the world beyond what is assumed; to always be inspired by my curiosity and imagination of what is and could be," says Savage.



*Destinations (imagined)  
Morning Light*

### Library Display Features Stonebraker Photos

*Aqueous Abstracts*, the work of PHSNE member Ernie Stonebraker, will be on view at the Acton Library, 486 Main Street, Acton, MA from September 3 thru October 30, 2013. Stop by if you're in the neighborhood! Check with the librarian for the display location.

### PHSNE Membership

*New members are invited to join for half the rates for the first year.* PHSNE membership is \$15 for students, \$35 for individuals and institutions, \$40 for a family, and \$45 for foreign membership. Join or renew online at [phsne.org/join](http://phsne.org/join) or [phsne.org/renew](http://phsne.org/renew), or send a check in U.S. dollars, drawn on a U.S. bank or dollar denominated international money order. Members should check the expiration date on the *snap shots* mailing label before sending in dues.

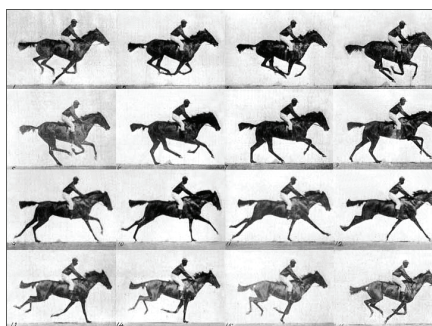
Send payments, changes of address, and other contact information, to Joe Walters Jr, PHSNE Membership Chair, P.O. Box 650189, West Newton, MA 02465. (Call: 617-826-9294; email: [membership@phsne.org](mailto:membership@phsne.org); or use the Web form at [phsne.org/contacts](http://phsne.org/contacts)).

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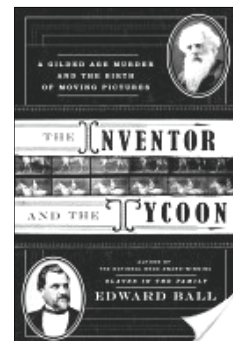
## Book Review: Muybridge Mystery *The Inventor and the Tycoon*

PHSNE members are probably familiar with Eadward Muybridge, the 19<sup>th</sup> century inventor who developed the techniques and equipment for taking and viewing sequenced still photos of action in rapid succession, creating the illusion of motion. His groundbreaking series of pictures proving that all four of a galloping horse's legs leave the ground at the same time helped pave the way for what we now refer to as motion pictures.

Did you know that Muybridge was also a confessed, cold-blooded murderer? He took pride in the crime, insisting that he murdered his wife's lover and adamantly refuting, from his prison cell, the suggestion that the death might have been the result of an accident.



*Eadward Muybridge, 1887*



Edward Ball's non-fiction account *The Inventor and the Tycoon*, sub-titled *A Gilded Age Murder and the Birth of Motion Pictures*, was published in January of 2013, garnering

considerable media attention. The *New York Times* review noted that, "Ball, who won the National Book Award in 1998 for *Slaves in the Family*, has found in Muybridge's innovative genius and his troubled life a subject that would fascinate any reader. This story, however, is not the only one Ball tells." Set in California about 130 years ago, the narrative describes the friendship between the eccentric inventor and railroad tycoon Leland Stanford.

The murder trial was a sensation—the O.J. Simpson trial of its day. Reconciling Muybridge's incarceration with his later accomplishments makes for an interesting read. In its review on the eve of publication, the *Christian Science Monitor* used the subtitle "Movies, money, and murder in the Gilded Age West." Rarely is a book dealing with the history of photography also a page-turning murder mystery.

## Where a Werra Comes From

In central Europe, just after WWII, the Soviets sent to the Ukraine many of the best technicians and engineers from what was left of the the Zeiss factories at Jena, Germany to set up manufacturing plants and train Soviet citizens to produce top quality cameras. Despite this and the fact that other Zeiss personnel had already been spirited away by the allies, the East German version of Zeiss, now known as CZJ or Zeiss Jena, stayed on course and continued to make optical goods for export.



Those who were “deported” to the Ukraine were eventually allowed to go home in the mid 1950’s with a promise of continued employment for Zeiss; they presented both an opportunity and a quandary for management. Here were some of the most talented people in the company, but they were

completely out of the loop in terms of what the German plant was doing.

The solution settled upon was to establish a special project for them, the creation of a completely new camera. It was to be small, modern, use 35 mm film, and be of the highest quality; something the East German regime could use as bragging rights in international manufacturing. Named after a small river near the factory where it was to be produced, in Eisfeld, the Werra was born.

The camera—simple, elegant, very much a mid-century design—was a winner, produced from 1954 through 1968 in at least five different versions. All share the clean, uncluttered aluminum shell and large leatherette-covered ring at the base of the lens assembly which, when twisted sharply a quarter turn clockwise, both cocks the shutter and advances the film. They also share a lens cap that comes apart and serves as a lens hood when reversed and re-attached.

A cold shoe mount on the top came and went with various models. The lens, first a fixed focal length and later a set of dedicated Zeiss lenses in 35, 50 and 100 mm lengths, was branded according to the destination and the state of international negotiations over copyright. Many of the first cameras have a simple

“T” on the lens. The one I have in front of me, a Werra 3, from late 1958, carries the full name, Carl Zeiss Jena Tessar. It is also the first version to come with a coupled rangefinder.

There are a number of unique design elements in this camera that I am surprised were never adopted by other companies. Indeed, most never migrated to other models in the extended Zeiss line, such as Contax. In addition to its

unusual cocking mechanism, the shutter on this Werra 3, a Prestor RVS 750, is one of the fastest iris shutters ever made, using two sets of leaves, one to cover the aperture while cocking and one that simply rotates rather than having to open and then reverse motion. This gives it a top speed of 1/750<sup>th</sup> of a second. The shutter sits behind the lens, allowing the entire lens to be moved for focusing and simplifying the exchange of lenses without changing shutters. Later models included uncoupled and eventually coupled light meters.



I never had the chance to use one of these cameras before acquiring mine; they were much more popular in Europe, where they remain fairly common. When I shot a roll of B&W film, I found the experience both satisfying and a little awkward.

With practice, of course, the awkwardness will pass.

A microscope version was available and, judging from the number that turn up on Ebay, a fairly good seller. Less so was the DoppWerra, a plate that connected two cameras, baseplate to baseplate, allowing the photographer to shoot two images at the same time. In this case the result was not a stereo pair, one image being above the other, but it offered a possibility of two film stocks being used at once. Have you ever had the desire to shoot black and white and color at the same time? How about print and slide film? If so, the Werra may be the camera for you. ~Story and photos by Richard (Whitey) Morange

### PHSNE Repeats Special Offer

Last month we announced that PHSNE received a donation of about 250 copies of *The Naylor Collection, The Complete History of Photography* from Dinny Starr. These were made available at no cost to members who attended meetings and postage costs if copies were to be mailed.

Several recipients sent notes to express their appreciation for the books. Susan Pinsky and David Starkman wrote that “this delicious package arrived today with the Jack Naylor catalog. We were fortunate to have known Jack and deeply appreciate having this beautiful memento to remind us of his amazing collection and his warm and charming smile. . . The catalog arrived in near pristine condition, and faster than we would have imagined. Thank you for making this opportunity available for us.”



A limited quantity of books remain, and we repeat the offer. There will again be copies available for members who attend the October meeting, one per family, and we will mail them, while supplies last, upon receipt of \$4. shipping cost to any address in the United States. Information about foreign postage will be provided upon request. Email *snapshots@phsne.org* to reserve a copy.

### 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:

**November 3**— Laura Blacklow discusses historical photographic processes

**December 1**—Holiday party, Members’ Auction

### 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.

Free 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 MBTA buses #136 and #137 stop in front of the building. Details are available at *mbta.com*. Use weekend schedule.

### PHSNE Online

PHSNE’s Web site is online at *phsne.org*. Join the PHSNE Forum online discussion moderated by Joe Walters; sign up and log in at *phsne.org/forum*. For an archive of back issues of *snap shots* and meeting presentations, visit *phsne.org/archive*. Scheduling changes due to weather conditions or other factors will be posted on this website.

Address Service Requested  
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Photographic Historical Society of New England  
Next Meeting: Sunday, October 6, 2013  
Large Format Press Cameras  
Americal Center, Wakefield MA, 1:30 P.M.



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