

# snap shots

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## **May 7th Meeting Features PHSNE Board Member Sabine Ocker** ***Vernacular Photography: Stories and Observations*** **Woman's Club Workshop, 72 Columbus St., Newton MA, 1:30 P.M.**



What makes a compelling snapshot? What is the difference between interesting and amazing? *Stories and Observations* is an exploration into these concepts, illustrated with images from my collection. Looking at images carefully often reveals an engaging detail or an accidental mystery.

Sometimes we can unlock that mystery, and other times we must let the subject matter of the image speak for itself. At the PHSNE meeting, I will provide a brief history of the snapshot and some tips on how to date them, and will talk about topics such as:

- The role of the collector as curator
- Unknowable stories—why was this photo taken
- Grand themes
- The back story—writing on the reverse of images
- The decisive moment—accidentally captured
- Teaching your eye to see

I will encourage the audience to participate in an exercise of looking. It will be a fun and interesting talk about the magic of vernacular photography, specifically the snapshot.

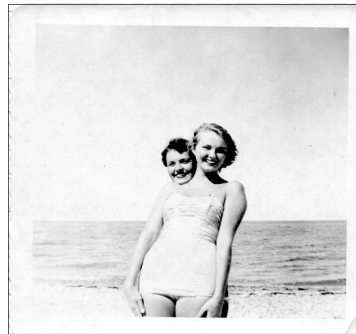
~Sabine Ocker



Water

Sabine Ocker has been collecting vintage snapshots for 20 years. She is a member of several photo history organizations, as well as a long time

PHSNE member and current Board member-at-large. She lives in Gloucester MA, surrounded by 450 photo albums and thousands of loose images.



Trick



Mystery

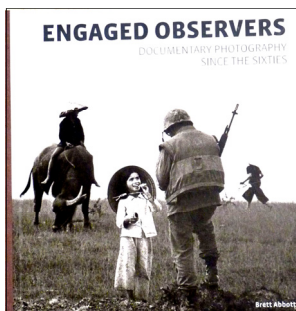
Sabine has spoken about her collections and on topics about the history of photography at the George Eastman House (now the Eastman Museum), Endicott College, and PHSNE.

### June Members' Auction

The January Membes' Auction was very successful. However, due to weather-driven re-scheduling of the auction, many members who planned to attend were unable to do so. We are therefore holding another Members' Auction at the June 4<sup>th</sup> meeting. PHSNE has several boxes of items available for this auction and expects lively participation and additional offerings by those attending.

PHSNE will provide pizzas, a Members' Auction tradition, so please bring your appetite along with money and your items to be consigned. We look forward to seeing you on June 4<sup>th</sup>.

## Book Review: *Engaged Observers: Documentary Photography Since the Sixties*



Published in conjunction with a 2010 exhibit at the Getty Museum, *Engaged Observers* features hundreds of powerful images that portray troubling or sensitive subjects. The book's opening paragraph states, "In the decades following World War II, an independently minded and critically engaged form of photography began to gather momentum. Its practitioners have combined their skills as artists and reporters, creating extended photographic essays that delve deeply into topics of social concern and present distinct personal visions of the world." Included in this impressive volume are photographs by Leonard Freed (Black in White America), Philip Jones Griffiths (Vietnam, Inc.), Sebastiao Salgado (Migrations), and James Nachtwey (The Sacrifice—casualties in Iraq).

In his July 10, 2010 review of the book, Grady Harp noted, "Instead of the regular photojournalists paid to document with their cameras a 'happening', these artists represented here have independently sought out realities they felt compelled to share" ([amazon.com/review/R3ELZRSD28DHK9](http://amazon.com/review/R3ELZRSD28DHK9)).

### PHSNE Membership

*New members are invited to join for half the rates for the first year.* Regular PHSNE membership (U.S. and Canada) is \$20 for students, \$40 for individuals and institutions, and \$45 for a family; foreign membership is \$50. 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, 47 Calvary St., Waltham MA 02453. (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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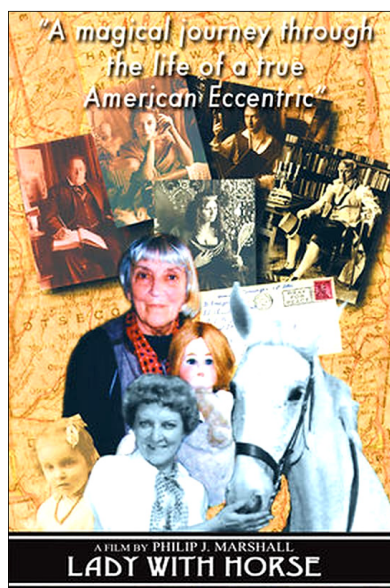
## Lady Ostapeck, 1918—2017

Lady Ostapeck was born Alma Kaukinen to Finnish parents, and when her mother died shortly after her birth and her father took off for lumber country, she was raised by members of the Finnish community. Her name derives from her brief marriage to Peter Ostapeck and the fact that she was known locally at her farmhouse studio as the "Lady with Horse."



Jim Kevlin photo, 2007

A founding member of the New Pictorialist Society, her photographs and paintings have been widely exhibited in the U.S. and Finland. and her photographs appeared in many magazines. Two video biographies were made of her life and two books of her portraits have been published. See [vimeo.com/ondemand/ladyo](http://vimeo.com/ondemand/ladyo) for information about renting the 87 minute video *Lady with Horse* or [youtube.com/watch?v=heJgd6ye-2I](http://youtube.com/watch?v=heJgd6ye-2I) for a trailer introducing a 56 minute documentary.



In the 1940s, Lady Ostapeck worked as a negative retoucher in Manhattan under the name Alma Jordan. With no formal training, she educated herself in art and design. Lady purchased a Korona 4x5 view camera, vintage 1910, at a Salvation Army store and "compiled a

large collection of clothing and props, mostly obtained from thrift stores and garage sales, to be used in her unique style of Victorian portraiture. Those who were fortunate to sit for a portrait with her would experience a delightful journey in time and imagination as she created on film, a world of artistic interpretation" ([tinyurl.com/zj5uc5u](http://tinyurl.com/zj5uc5u)). The renown portrait photographer passed away on February 2, 2017, days before her 99th birthday.

## Sony Mavica: A “Maverick” of a Camera

Introduced in 1981, the Sony Mavica was the “world’s first electronic still camera,” according to Wikipedia ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sony\\_Mavica](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sony_Mavica) *Sony Mavica*). “It was not a digital camera, as its CCD sensor produced an analog video signal in the NTSC



Left: Mavica CD 200; 2001. Right: Mavica FD7, 1993

format”; however, it was considered the “pioneer of the digital era.” Fifty still frames were written on floppy disks, and the photographs were displayed on a television screen. The name Mavica derives from magnetic video camera.

As technology improved, digital cameras, USB interface, and high-capacity storage media forced Mavica to develop new ways to store and share images. Floppy



Inside a Mavica CD 200

disks gave way to a Memory Stick floppy disk adapter, which eventually morphed into a dedicated Memory Stick slot. Mavica models included “still” video cameras.

Blogger James Grahame notes that, “The Sony Mavica name dates back to 1981, but it took 16 years to reach its stride. The original Mavica electronic camera is laughable by today’s standards. . . . Even though it was an SLR camera that accepted interchangeable bayonet-mount lenses, it offered only one shutter speed: 1/60 second. The CCD resolution was a mere 570 x 490 pixels, offering only one quarter megapixel resolution. The unit was expensive and of limited use.” ([retrothing.com/2007/12/sony-mavica-dig](http://retrothing.com/2007/12/sony-mavica-dig)).

Having one or two Mavicas in a collection helps to explain the transition from analog to digital cameras. However, for practical purposes, mobile phone cameras can do everything Mavicas could do and more, so they probably have little value on the resale market.



Mavica FD7

Sony no longer produces the Mavica. Its new digital cameras are in the Cyber-shot and Alpha series, both of which use Memory Stick technologies. For a video demonstration of the FD7, visit [youtube.com/watch?v=Q-nfqPrzf3Y](http://youtube.com/watch?v=Q-nfqPrzf3Y).

~Photos by Lew Regelman

### Memory Unearthed

#### MFA Presents Lodz Ghetto Photographs

Photographer Henryk Ross states, “I buried my negatives in the ground in order that there should be some record of our tragedy.” When the Polish city of Lodz was occupied by the Germans in 1939, the photo-journalist Ross, a Jewish resident of the Lodz ghetto, was assigned to take official Jewish identification cards as well as propaganda images. He secretly photographed the brutality of life in the ghetto and buried his negatives in 1944, retrieving them after the war. With over 160,000 inhabitants, the Lodz ghetto was second in size only to the Warsaw Ghetto.

The MFA exhibit features over 200 of his images. *Memory Unearthed* runs through July 30th.

See [mfa.org/exhibitions/memory-unearthed](http://mfa.org/exhibitions/memory-unearthed) for more information and for a video slideshow.



Children talking through fence of central prison on Czarniecki Street prior to deportation, 1940-142

## NEH Seeks Cornelius Daguerreotypes



Portrait of Grandma Toppan owned by the Library Company of Philadelphia.  
This is a representative second studio portrait

The National Endowment for the Humanities launched “a collaborative research project on the materials and techniques of pioneer daguerreotypist Robert Cornelius . . . A key component of the project is the documentation of extant plates for inclusion in a database of his work. As many Cornelius plates are in private hands, we would greatly appreciate the participation of private collectors in assembling this digital catalogue.”

The project will foster better understanding of “the technical evolution of Cornelius' work” and “help safeguard these fragile plates for future generations.” Mail to [thedaguerreian@daguerre.ccsend.com](mailto:thedaguerreian@daguerre.ccsend.com)

### PHSNE Meetings

Meetings are usually held on the first Sunday of each month, September to June, at 1:30 p.m. preceded by an open meeting of the PHSNE Board at 11:00 a.m.

### Upcoming meetings:

**June 4**—Members' Auction

### Driving directions to Woman's Club Workshop, 72 Columbus Ave., Newton Highlands MA:

From I-95/Rt-128 exit 20 take Rt-9 East toward Brookline/Boston. Turn left at Woodward St, right onto Lincoln St, and left onto Columbus St. WCW will be to your right. The WCW is about 1.4 miles inside 128.

Coming west on Rt-9 from Boston, turn right on Walnut St then left on to Lincoln St, then right onto Columbus St. The WCW (#72) will be to your right.

Limited time parking rules do not apply on Sundays. Park on Columbus or Lincoln. There is a public parking lot on the other side of Lincoln opposite the Church.

### Public transportation:

See [mbta.com/rider\\_tools](http://mbta.com/rider_tools)

### Connect to PHSNE Online and by email:

PHSNE's Web site is online at [phsne.org](http://phsne.org). See [facebook.com/phsne](https://facebook.com/phsne) for items of PHSNE interest. Comments are welcome, so join the discussion of photo history. Visit [phsne.org/archive](http://phsne.org/archive) for PHSNE history and *snapshots* issues. Scheduling changes due to weather conditions or other factors will be posted on this website.

Stay connected to PHSNE via our emails: a *snap shots* e-copy, email newsletter, and *Photographa* show announcements. Sign up at [phsne.org/emails](http://phsne.org/emails).

## Online Sites of Interest

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eF1-XTx8nCI>—you tube video, story behind development of original Leica camera by Oskar Barnack , lengthy video includes much biographical information

<http://hyperallergic.com/299912/the-photographers-of-1870s-london-who-documented-their-disappearing-city>—carbon prints over 100 years old documenting demise of historic buildings in London

<https://petapixel.com/2017/01/09/kodak-investigating-take-bring-back-kodachrome/> exploring the idea of reviving kodachrome—and related podcast <https://soundcloud.com/the-kodakery>

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/anedub/background.html?loclr=blogpic>—African American Photographs Assembled for 1900 Paris Exposition