



**Nicolette Bromberg Presents *East Becoming West*
PHSNE Meeting on Zoom, Sunday, February 7, 2021, 7:30 P.M.**

As Visual Materials Curator at the University of Washington Libraries Special Collections, Nicolette Bromberg is in charge of several million photographs along with other visual items. Part of the collection she oversees consists of photographs from the Seattle Camera Club, founded by Japanese American citizens in 1924. The history of the club is the subject of the focus of the February PHSNE meeting.



In 2011 Bromberg co-authored a book about it, *Shadows of a Fleeting World*, and worked with the Henry Gallery on the University campus to put on a major exhibition of the work. She quotes Dr. Kyo Koike, a physician, poet, and one-time leader of the Seattle Camera Club, “We Japanese waited patiently for a long time, thinking some American might organize a Society for friends of photography but no light appeared in the dark sea. At last we Japanese determined to establish one by ourselves and the result is the Seattle Camera Club” (*Photo-Era*, 1925).

Beginning after World War I and ending with the internments of Japanese-American citizens in the 1940s, a group of talented Japanese immigrants in Seattle took up the practice of pictorial photography. In the years between the wars, Japanese pictorial photographers were so numerous on the west coast that they formed large camera clubs—particularly in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle. They produced work that was exhibited in international competitions and was published widely in popular books and magazines on photography. Their work became so prominent that



Dr. Kyo Koike, Spring Mud 2

the editor of the 1928 *American Annual of Photography* wrote, “the influence of this group on our Pacific coast has put a lasting mark on photography in this country, the repercussions of which are echoing throughout the world.”

Seattle’s Japanese camera club was organized in 1923-24 with 37 charter members (all of whom were Japanese). Beside their photographic work, they published a bilingual journal *Notan*. The club did not intend to be exclusively Japanese, in fact, they welcomed American photographers, but the overwhelming majority of the members remained Japanese.

The camera club photographers were very prolific and successful. They had their prints accepted around the world wherever pictorialists showed their work. Dr. Koike was admitted as an associate of the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain—one of the highest honors a pictorialist could attain. Sadly, the Seattle Camera Club decided to disband in 1929, as the membership began to decline and the members made fewer photographs. Since many of the members were working in low paying jobs, it had become increasingly hard for them to afford the costs of participating.



Frank Kunishige, Queen of Darkness

But some members continued to photograph, among them Dr. Koike and Frank Kunishige, a commercial photographer, who created and marketed his own printing-out paper. They continued to work until they were removed to internment camps in the 1940s and not allowed to photograph. Most of the work of these photographers was abandoned, lost or forgotten.

More information about the Seattle Camera Club can be found at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seattle_Camera_Club and <https://tinyurl.com/y7effv3>.

View-Master Successful After Redesign

A bulky version of the View-Master was introduced at the 1939 World's Fair in New York City. Used mainly by photographers, it did not achieve commercial success with the general public—at least not until it was redesigned by Charles Harrison in



Jeffrey Trimmingham, via Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum

1958. He “made it simple enough to use without instructions. . . . he made it lighter, more durable and much easier to use — easy enough for a child.

The View-Master then became a very popular toy, especially after the color changed from boring beige or black to a bright child-friendly red. Harrison was an industrial designer whose specialty was making items simpler, mass produced, and aesthetically pleasing. As a dyslexic who had trouble reading, he wanted products to be so intuitive that reading instructions would be unnecessary.

“By the time he retired in 1993, Mr. Harrison, who was African-American, had broken through racial barriers and risen to become the chief product designer for Sears, Roebuck & Company. When he was

hired at Sears headquarters in Chicago in 1961, he was the first black executive there” (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/05/obituaries/charles-harrison-dead.html>). Harrison died in November, 2018 at the age of 87.

“Although it has since gone through many iterations, the View-Master retained Mr. Harrison’s basic design for nearly four decades.” In 1966, when General Aniline & Film (GAF) Corporation acquired the rights to View-Master, they designed the reels to appeal to children and a wider adult audience; scenic views gave way to toys, cartoons, and popular tv series. Talking versions appeared in 1970 and were available for almost a decade.



In a series of acquisitions, GAF sold View-Master in 1981; the company morphed into the View-Master International Group which purchased the Ideal Toy Company in 1984, then purchased by Tyco Toys in 1989, merging with Mattel Inc. in 1997. The View-Master is now marked by Mattel’s Fisher-Price division. Details about the long corporate history of View-Master can be found at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/View-Master>.

The evolution of the View-Master includes adaptation to the digital age. Current models use apps and virtual reality.

PHSNE Membership

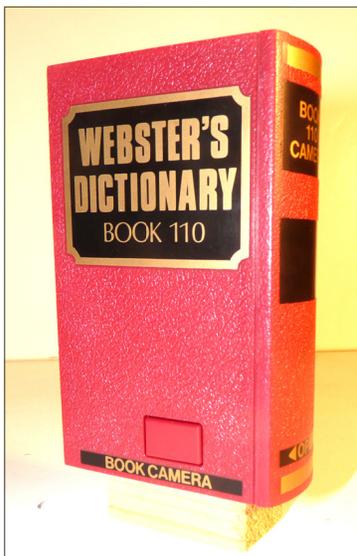
New members are invited to join for half the rates for the first year. Regular PHSNE membership (U.S. and Canada) is \$20 for students, \$40 for individuals and institutions, and \$45 for a family; foreign membership is \$50. Join or renew online at <https://phsne.org/join> or <https://phsne.org/renew>, or send a check in U.S. dollars, drawn on a U.S. bank or dollar denominated international money order. Please 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-chair@phsne.org; or use the Web form at <https://phsne.org/application>).

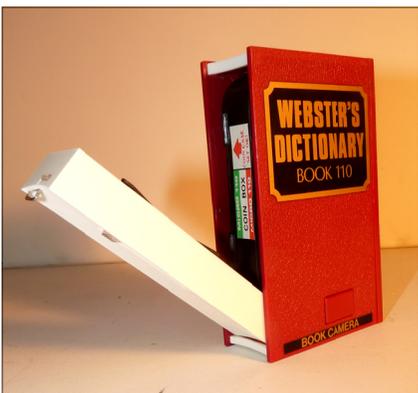
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Are You In The Market For A Good Book?

There are books *about* photography, and books that *contain* photographs, but there are also books that *take* photographs. The late Jack Naylor, charter PHSNE member and collector extraordinaire, wrote about book cameras in an article in the 1993 twentieth anniversary issue of the *Journal*. That article is excerpted below with photographs of a book camera in the collection of a current PHSNE member.



Asking the question, “Have you read a good book lately?,” Naylor cited two new photographic books that were not for reading: “They are cameras from Poland and China disguised as small books. The book from Poland [the Notebook] was made for serious photography, and the Chinese *Webster’s Dictionary Book 110* could have been made for spies on a budget.”



Camera and film

Naylor writes at length about the camera from Poland. He describes the Notebook as a “well-made device with a reliable U.S.S.R. 16mm camera built in.” But it is the Chinese camera “for spies who must pinch pennies” that

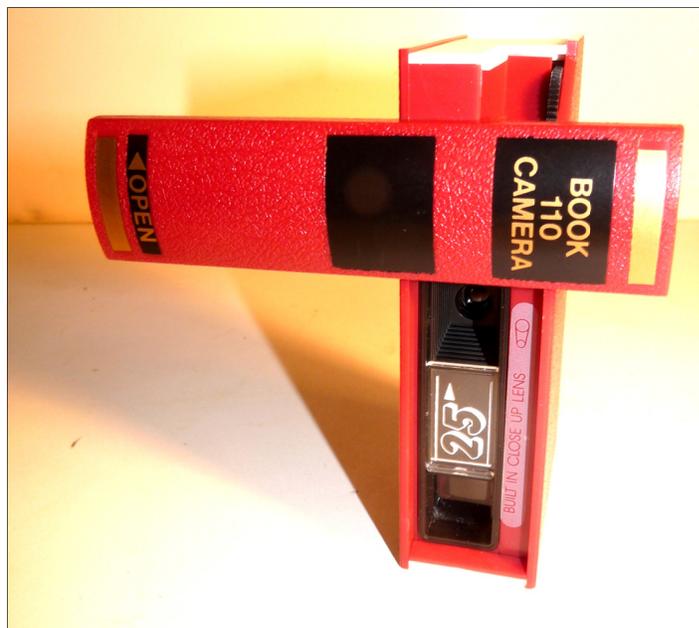
interests the PHSNE member who owns one. Naylor notes that “the *Dictionary* could easily pass as a small book.” It measures 2 3/8 inches wide by 4 1/4 inches high.” The title is embossed in gold on the red cover.

“The Chinese camera is a simple point-and-shoot design. The front of the ‘pages’ pull open to insert the 110 cassette, either ISO/100 or ISO/400, depending on lighting conditions. The book spine swings

90 degrees to uncover the lens, viewfinder, and the sliding close-up lens. Film is transported by a large thumb wheel which is normally hidden by the spine. The plastic shutter release is built into the cover and is not conspicuous.

The *Dictionary* comes in a light brown paper slip case, with words that only the Chinese manufacturer would understand. The case reads ‘Shutter Chance Book Camera’.

The *Dictionary* camera lens is f 8/26mm, fixed from 5 1/2 feet. With the auxiliary close-up lens in place the focus is from 10 to 15 inches.



Camera open—ready to shoot

Book cameras are not new. From 1886 to 1904, at least five companies made book cameras. Literally, in the shape of a small book, the book cameras held glass plates which in one way or another were pushed into the focal plane, then stored in the Book after exposure. There was the English Optimus Book of 1886, Krugener’s Books of 1888, Scovill and Adams’ book of 1892 (here three ‘books’ were fastened together, their titles *French, Latin, and Shadows*), and Goerz Reporter Roll Film Book Camera.”

Naylor’s article is the only source of information that was found about book cameras; a search that included wikipedia and camera-wiki came up empty. At the time he wrote the article, Naylor indicated the value of the Polish Notebook was considerable, but the *Dictionary* was common and had little value.

Author Photos

What do Lewis Carroll, Eudora Welty, George Bernard Shaw, and Jack London have in common? The headline provides a clue: these famous authors were also accomplished photographers. Nobel Prize novelist Orhan Pamuk joins their illustrious ranks with the recently published *Orange*, “a collection of some 350 nocturnal photographs of Istanbul. They are at once similar — all showing densely packed old urban neighborhoods — and varied — what those neighborhoods are packed with is profusely diverse” (<https://tinyurl.com/y5rbvygt>).



Orhan Pamuk, from *Orange* © ORHAN PAMUK/COURTESY STEIDL

In this context, an “author photo” is not a dust-jacket photo of an author, but images taken by the author. In his *Boston Globe* review, Mark Feeney wrote, “What inspired Pamuk to take the photos was noticing that the progressive installation of fluorescent streetlights has meant ‘the slow retreat of yellow light.’ He set about on nighttime expeditions to capture the waning of that orange cast of light — hence the book’s title.”

Color is a constant theme for Pamuk. His fictional book titles include *The White Castle*, *The Black Book*, *My Name is Red*, and *The Red Haired Woman*, and a non-fiction collection is titled *Other Colors*. Feeney notes Pamuk’s fascination with Istanbul: “That city is Pamuk’s greatest subject — as London was for Dickens or Dublin for Joyce. *Orange* conveys a nearly overwhelming sense of the density of possibility Istanbul has to offer.”

While focusing on *Orange*, Feeney’s review discusses the photography of other noted writers, Jack London in particular.

PHSNE Meetings

Meetings are usually held on the first Sunday of each month, September to June. Meetings are being held online during the COVID restrictions. A link will be sent to PHSNE members a few days before the meeting.

Upcoming meetings:

March 7—Mary Panzer, *Street Vendor Portraits Around the World*

April 4—TBD

May 2—Nicole Hudgins, *The Gender of Photography*

June 6—Edith Cuerrier, *Cromer Collection*

Connect to PHSNE Online and by email:

PHSNE’s Web site is online at <https://phsne.org>. See <https://www.facebook.com/PHSNE/> for items of PHSNE interest. Comments are welcome, so join the discussion of photo history. Visit <https://snapshots.phsne.org> for *snap shots* issues since 2005.

Stay connected to PHSNE via our emails: a *snap shots* e-copy, and *Photographa* show announcements. Sign up at <https://phsne.org/emails>

2021 Photographica On Hold

There will **NOT** be a *Photographica* Show in April 2021. We all know why. There are too many variables that come into play and all of them have to go our way to have a successful show. We would need Phase 4 large crowd gatherings to be sanctioned by the Commonwealth of MA, then our show would have to be approved by the Commonwealth of MA, the City of Newton, MA, the Newton School Committee, as well as the North High School Headmaster. At the time of this writing, if you’re not from Hawaii, you cannot come into MA without a recent negative test result or a plan to quarantine here for two weeks.

I am hoping, however, we will be able to have a fall show. I’m thinking about an early to mid-October show date. The Go / No-Go decision will be made no later than July 1, 2021.

I’ll be sticking my hand-sanitized finger into the wind and checking it twice this spring and summer. It could just be too soon for the public to come out and attend an event like *Photographica*.

Stay safe.

~John Dockery, Photographica Show Manager