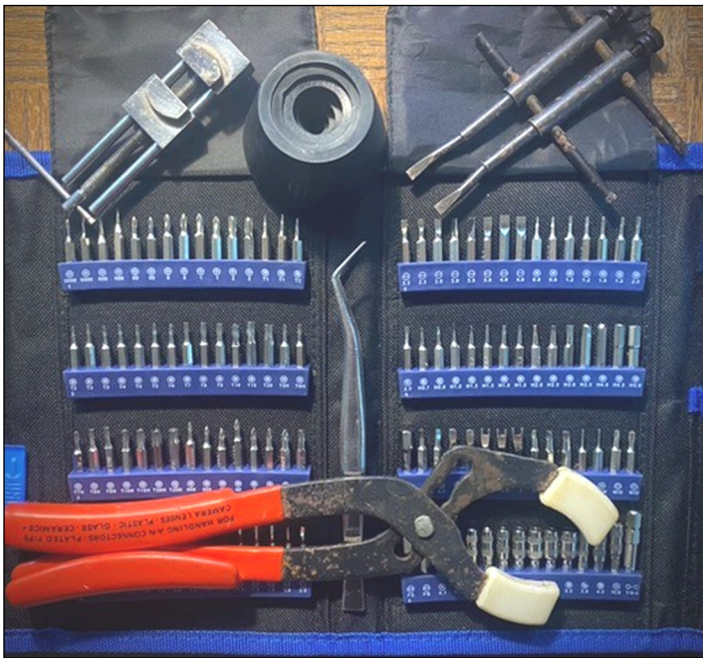


snap shots

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Camera Repair—Basic How To Discussion With Carl Mastandrea Sunday May 4th, 7:30 P.M. (EDT), via Zoom



Camera repair is not for the faint of heart. It takes a fair amount of patience, a set of particular tools, a good memory and excellent eyesight. And above all, access to Google.

I have been fixing things since I was a teenager and found that I had a natural talent for it. The very first machine I took apart was an old Victrola (a wind-up record player). I was 12. It didn't take me long to figure out the problem. The main barrel spring which was caked in grease was broken. It took me much longer to figure out a solution. Remember, this was before Google where you can look up any repair or Amazon where you can order any part.

Another important key element to any repair is making a fair and reasonable assessment on whether you can afford failing at the repair. In this case, the Victrola was already broken. I had nothing to lose. But if you are thinking about repairing a piece of your own equipment, you have to be very clear-eyed about the potential consequences. And yes, much to my father's amazement, I fixed the Victrola.

I moved on from making a mess of things in my parents' house to starting and building a darkroom in rental facilities in Jamaica Plain in the 90's. We had

both a black-and-white and color darkroom with ten enlargers in each. From there, I started taking care of many of the darkrooms at all Boston-area high schools and colleges. I started repairing enlargers, timers, easels, cameras and lenses. Needless to say, my repair skills came in very handy during that time. Also, needless to say, my vast knowledge of darkroom equipment repair is fairly useless at this point.

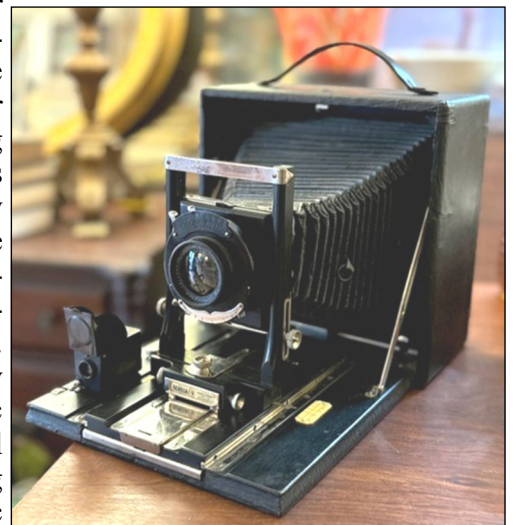
The main lesson I've learned in my career is that most mechanical machines are easily fixable. The key is trying. The problem almost always presents itself and with the aid of google videos, the solution is readily available. But then you have to ask yourself two questions. Can I do this? Is it worth it?

The repairs I do today are only on pre-digital cameras and lenses. Fixing the electronics in a digital camera is often not cost effective and it is far less fun to me.

For this presentation, I will be going over basic cleaning and repair as well as my other favorite pastime, refurbishing antique cameras. I will show you the basic set-up you'll need along with the basic tools required to do most repairs. I'll share whatever tricks I know. I'm also happy to answer any questions.

In addition to repairing cameras, I also am an active photographer and I shoot everyday.

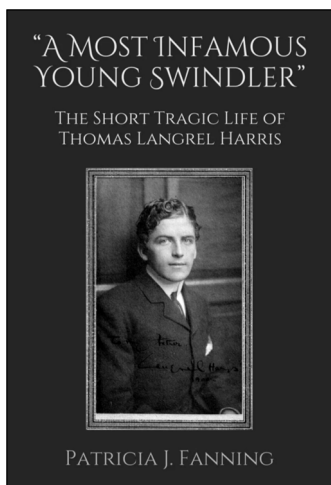
~Carl Mastandrea



Refurbished 5x7 camera

Check Out This Book

Patricia Fanning, repeat PHSNE presenter and author of two articles about F.H. Day in the 2024 *Journal*, has written a new book published by Rock Press titled “*A Most Infamous Young Swindler, The Short Tragic Life of Thomas Langrel Harris*.” Fanning writes, “This project has been a labor of love for more than a decade and finally tells the story of F. Holland Day’s most elusive model and muse.”



“Artistically gifted, rejected by his parents, plagued by uncontrollable mood swings, and a suicide at age 24, Thomas Langrel Harris was gay, manic and, quite possibly, a genius. Oscar Wilde called him “a most infamous young swindler” while Edward Steichen referred to him as ‘one of the biggest men of our time.’”

This is the story of a talented artist, significant photographic model, and mercurial young man, all trace of whom Fate seemed determined to erase. The settings range from the small town of Petersburg, Illinois, to the grand boulevards of Paris, France. Unidentified for nearly a century, the tale of this elusive yet fascinating figure can now be told” (<https://tinyurl.com/ysubr7nz>).

PHSNE Membership

New members are invited to join for half the rates for the first year. Regular PHSNE membership (U.S. and Canada) is \$30 for students, \$50 for individuals and institutions, and \$55 for a family; foreign membership is \$60. 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.

Send payments, changes of address, and other contact information, to PHSNE Membership Chair, 47 Calvary St., Waltham MA 02453, email membership-chair@phsne.org, or use the Web form at <https://phsne.org/application>.

Snap shots, edited by Beverly Regelman, is published monthly, September through June, by the Photographic Historical Society of New England, 47 Calvary St., Waltham MA 02453. Volumes 11-29 are available at <https://snapshots.phsne.org>. The current volume is only available to members.

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Weather Disasters: Saving a Photographic Archive

The serious weather events that are becoming more frequent and severe due to climate change are a real concern for anyone protecting a special collection. Under the threat of Hurricane Milton in October, 2024, Tampa based photojournalist Christopher Morris took action to protect his archive. “For days, he lifted folders of photographs onto 10-foot-high shelves inside his home while also rolling metal filing cabinets into a U-Haul in his driveway — to keep his archive above the storm surges. His life’s work — hundreds of thousands of photographs, negatives and digital files taken over decades — hung in the balance” (<https://www.redlakenationnews.com/story/2025/03/11/opinion/photos-are-disappearing-one-archive-at-a-time/129814.html>).

Fortunately for Morris, the storm changed direction and his home was untouched. The event was a wakeup call that is prompting him to find a way to avoid future disaster.



Christopher Morris

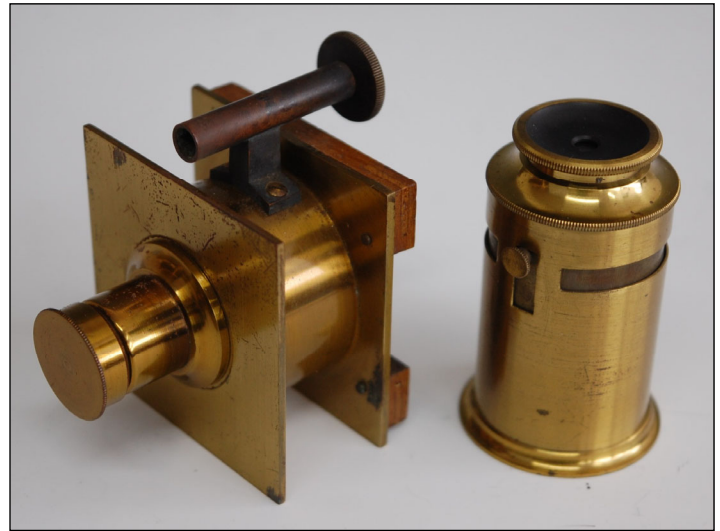
Christopher Morris reviewing his images in his archive from Moscow in 1993

“Morris's dilemma is not unusual. His work and countless other photographic archives like it represent our collective visual history. Institutions such as the Library of Congress, which holds 16 million images, play a crucial role in preserving photojournalism, yet the surge of at-risk archives far exceeds anyone's capacity. Adam Silvia, a photography curator at the library, usually receives two or three inquiries each month from photographers or their estates hoping to place a lifetime of work, but only a fraction can be accepted. The library holds just 12 complete archives of individual photojournalists. And there are many more photos than places to house them, digitize them and make them publicly available.”

Chambre Automatique De Bertsch

At a 2017 auction in the UK, a rare Chambre Automatique purchased for 60 pounds (\$81) at an antiques fair sold for 20,000 pounds (\$27,156). The seller was Paul Laidlaw, one of the Antiques Roadshow experts. Laidlaw told a reporter, “Everyone’s looking for the Ming vase amongst the dreary Victorian Willow pattern dinnerware, or the Stradivarius amongst the old ex-school violins. In this instance, I identified what had been clearly overlooked by all who’d come before me . . . At the time I suggested it was an extremely early sub-miniature camera of circa 1861. What I didn’t realise is that it’s considered the first sub-miniature camera.”

After doing a bit of research, Laidlaw says “I immediately realised I’d bought something spectacularly rare, however, I couldn’t find records of any examples having been sold. I kid you not, I didn’t know whether it would sell for £2000 or £100,000 - and neither did the auctioneer - though I considered either to be possible” (<https://tinyurl.com/mdpuj54d> and auction video at <https://tinyurl.com/3fr3n2kb>).



<https://tinyurl.com/32zjjbpp>

(probably) born in 1813 and was killed during the Paris Commune uprising of 1871. In 1860, Bertsch introduced the Chambre Automatique to the Societe Francais de Photographie. The instrument, basically a four-inch cube made of brass, used wet-collodion plates to produce a 2 1/4 x 2 1/4 images. The miniature version, also constructed of brass, was exhibited the following year. The George Eastman Museum has 11 items Bertsch designed in their collection including a miniature kit similar to the one Laidlaw bought, see <https://tinyurl.com/ynvp2wwf>.

Chambre Automatique is French for automatic camera. According to *A Century of Cameras*, it was “so named because of its fixed focus lens. That is, as the lens could not be adjusted to focus on objects at various distances, it was in a sense ‘automatic,’ all objects beyond a certain distance being in sharp focus” (Eaton S. Lothrop, Jr., *A Century of Cameras: From the Collection of the International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House*, 1973).

Writing about the larger version, Lothrop says “The camera came, with all the necessary equipment and chemicals for sensitizing and developing, in a wooden case” that was nested into a larger outer case that “had a hinged top which, when opened, revealed an orange glass window.” By attaching a light-tight sleeve, the case would become a miniature “darkroom.”

Lothrop notes that “sensitizing of the plate was done in the [outer] case and the plate then directly loaded into the wooden plate holder which was permanently attached to the rear of the camera. All of the manipulation related to development could also be performed in the outer carrying case.”



<https://tinyurl.com/32zjjbpp>

Auguste Adolphe Bertsch was a pioneer photographer and exponent of microphotography. He was

Photographing a Historical Restoration

The Farm Security Administration photographs during the 1930s and 1940s, created to promote FDR's "New Deal," are probably well-known to PHSNE members. Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, and Gordon Parks are among the iconic photographers who worked on the project. One of the photographs included in a FSA collection curated decades later by Roy Stryker, head of the FSA's Historical Section, was of the Meacham Barn in Hartland, Vermont, built in 1893 and still owned by the original family when photographed in 1936.



Gordon Webster, *The Meacham Bar prior to restoration*

With personal ties to the area and farm, Gordon Webster was honored when asked to photograph the conservation project to restore the Meacham Barn. Webster wrote, "The barn itself is imposing—an impressive four-story structure built around a framework of massive wooden beams. In addition to its heavy wood frame, the barn has stone supporting walls and three entrance ramps, including an enclosed bridge visible in the photograph. When I first saw the barn, it was impossible not to be impressed by its sheer scale. More than a century of Vermont's often severe winters had taken a toll on the structure, and while it had stood up to the rigors of the Vermont climate pretty well, it was definitely showing signs of the wear and tear inevitable for a wooden structure of this age" (<https://fstoppers.com/architecture/photographing-restoration-historical-american-landmark-696017>).

The photographs were to document the "before" condition of the barn and to help raise funds for the restoration.

PHSNE Meetings

Meetings are usually held online on the first Sunday of each month, September to June.

Upcoming meetings:

June 8—TBD. Visit website <https://phsne.org> for update.

PHSNE does not meet in July or August.

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 Volume 11 (Sept 2005) to Volume 29 (June 2024).

Stay connected to PHSNE via our emails and show announcements. Sign up at <https://phsne.org/emails>.

For information on all available PHSNE publications, see <https://phsne.magcloud.com>.

Many Shows, Many Venues

No matter where you live or travel, you can find convenient camera shows to attend. PHSNE's own *Photographica 92* is among the dozens of shows listed in PHSNE member Rob Niederman's annual roster which includes international as well as national venues.

Niederman writes in the new year introduction, "The number of shows each year is declining but it's early and I expect more will be announced. I will update this webpage throughout the year as they are confirmed. Before committing to travel and attendance, I strongly suggest checking show websites links and contacting organizers for their latest information. .

When I first started this list, there were 180+ shows and this webpage became the most comprehensive listing of international camera shows on the Internet! If you know of a show that is not listed here, e-mail to me the usual information and I'll post. Be sure to include the name of the show or fair, venue address, sponsor, website URL, and contact info (e-mail and phone #)."

Visit <https://www.antiquewoodcameras.com/shows.html> to check out the full list. And don't miss the reminder that *Photographica 92* takes place on Saturday, April 26th at Newton North High School, 457 Walnut Street, Newton, MA. We hope to see you there.