PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ENGLAND, INC.

snap shots

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Vladimir Khazan Introduces Dr. August Nagel: Inventor, Innovator
Sunday, October 5th, 7:30 P.M. EDT, via Zoom

With the help of AI, PHSNE member Vladimir Khazan offers an overview of his presentation at the October meeting.

Dr. August Nagel
https://kodak.3106.net/index.php?p=302&cam=914

In a world where visual storytelling has become the heart of human connection, few figures have shaped the course of photography as profoundly as Dr. August Nagel, a visionary engineer and inventor. Nagel's legacy is not just etched into the history of camera innovation—it continues to define how we see, remember, and share our world.

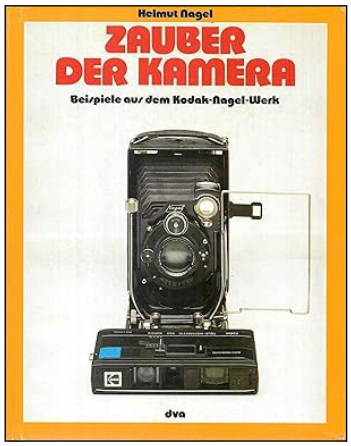
Born in 1882 in Stuttgart, Germany, Dr. Nagel possessed a rare fusion of technical genius and creative foresight. His career began not with the shutter of a camera but with the gears of mechanical precision. As a master of optics and engineering, Nagel understood that the future of photography was not merely about capturing images—it was about making the technology accessible, portable, and profoundly personal.

At the helm of Contessa-Nettel, and later within the folds of Zeiss Ikon, Nagel revolutionized the mechanics of photography. But it was his founding of the Dr. August Nagel Camerawerk and his crowning achievement—the development of the Kodak Retina camera—that changed photography forever. Compact, innovative, and affordable, the Retina introduced the world to 35mm photography, democratizing image-making, laying the foundation for modern visual culture.

Nagel's vision extended to believing that everyone, from professionals to amateurs, deserved access to powerful photographic tools. His innovations in camera design made photography more portable and practical than ever before. With every Retina camera sold, Nagel helped spark a global movement where moments could be immortalized with the click of a button. Today, when digital photography dominates by immediacy, Nagel's legacy reminds us of the artistry in mechanics and the soul in analog storytelling.

Nagel Pupille camera from early 1930s

This presentation is a celebration of a man who turned complex optics into personal expression. Dr. August Nagel's legacy inspires camera designers, photographers, and storytellers across generations.



He passed away in 1943, and his son Helmut guided Kodak Germany through years of growth and technological evolution. Their combined contributions profoundly impacted how the world captured and preserved images.

As we look through today's lenses—digital or analog—we owe a moment of focus to Dr. Nagel. He didn't just help us take better pictures; he helped us see the world with precision, clarity, and purpose.

Interesting DIY Project!

"If you're looking for a fun project to try at home, the George Eastman Museum just published this short 5-minute video that explains how to make a 35mm Daguerreotype without expensive equipment." (Caution: this process involved chemicals that should be used carefully and in safely ventilated spaces.) If you want to try this do-it-yourself project, view the video *How to Easily (and Safely) Make a 35mm Daguerreotype at Home* at *https://petapixel.com/2020/12/03/how-to-easily-and-safely-make-a-35mm-daguerreotype-at-home/*.

The Daguerreotype is created using a 35mm camera . "From start to finish, creating a single frame is a process that will likely take well over an hour to produce, but the result is a tiny 35mm Daguerreotype made thanks to a fun exercise in chemistry."

https://petapixel.com/2020/12/03/how-to-easily-and-safely-make-a-35mm-daguerreotype-at-home/.

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*.

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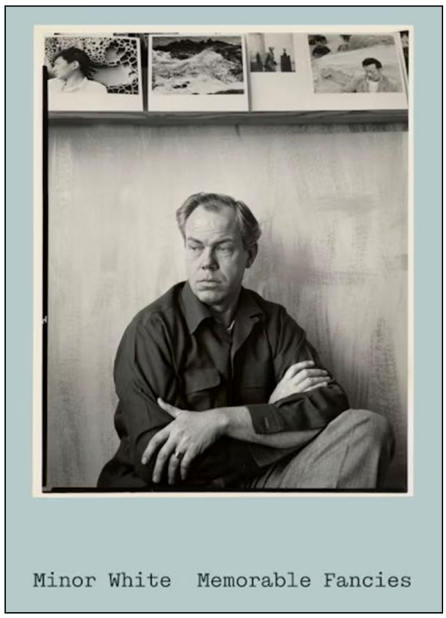
Book Review: *Memorable Fancies*



Minor White (1908-1976) was an important post WW II photographer. His personal journal was published, by Princeton University Press in 2025. Calling it "one of the most significant unpublished texts in the history of photography, the Getty Museum reports, "*Memorable Fancies* is the daybooks of Minor White, an artist who played a leading role in shaping the practice of photography in postwar America." He wrote a series of essays, published recently (March, 2025) in a single volume for the first time. "In this beautifully illustrated volume, art historian Todd Cronan sheds light on White's guiding concerns and the connections between White's writings and his public practice as a photographer and influential publisher and teacher. White's journal is accompanied by an array of photographs by White as well as annotations that provide background and context, illuminating White's life and career while capturing a vibrant and inventive moment in the history of modern photography" (*https://tinyurl.com/4ymxn79e*).

Artsfuse, however, in its review, comments that "Minor White's autobiographical undertaking lacks diaristic narrative. There's too much neurotic navel-gazing too much of the time. Yet it is very appealing as a twisted personal miscellany whose contents range from summaries of sex dreams to snarky letters that were never sent." Reviewer Trevor Fairbrother offers detailed background information about White, including his association with Alfred Stieglitz. White co-founded *Aperture, "*a magazine to commend and promote photography's achievements in the realm of fine art. His work explored many subjects: landscapes, architecture, portraits, street scenes, nudes, and abstractions aesthetically crafted as emotional responses to the external realm" (*https://artsfuse.org/306332/book-review-catching-up-with-minor-whites-off-beat-journal/*).

The 544 page paperback book contains 100 high-quality illustrations.

Mercury Camera Battery issues and solutions

Most cameras with a battery-powered meter built or designed before 1975 had a common problem: they used a mercury battery. Mercury batteries supplied a very consistent voltage, which made the meter easier to design. The problem is that mercury batteries are now recognized as environmentally toxic. Their manufacture has been discontinued, and they are not available.

Most metered cameras of the era (most compact rangefinders, Canon FTb, Olympus OM-1, Nikon Photomic, Minolta SRT) used PX-13/PX625 mercury batteries. Pentax Spotmatics (except the F) used a PX400 battery. There are a few other mercury battery sizes less commonly used that are harder to find a modern substitute for.

Modern silver/alkaline button cells produce a nominal 1.5 volts. Mercury batteries produced 1.35 volts. Although a small difference, it is enough to alter the exposure indicated by a meter. Furthermore, in most meters, the exposure difference is not linear – indicated exposure varies from the correct exposure by different amounts whether in bright or dim light, so you can't simply adjust the ISO speed to compensate.

There are four solutions: all involve supplying a reduced voltage for the meter. 1) Using a zinc-air technology hearing aid battery, which produces 1.4 volts, 2) using a Wein (brand name) battery, a modified zinc-air battery, 3) using a battery adapter with a diode built in that reduces the 1.5 volts put out by a modern battery to 1.35 volts, and 4) having a camera repair person install the proper diode into the camera's circuit.

The last option is the most expensive, won't necessarily work on a specific camera model, and most camera repair people don't do it. If you find a repair person who can do this on the camera you want, and you plan to use that camera well into the future, consider it. The other options are transferable between cameras – just move the battery/adapter.

The main problem with zinc-air batteries is that they last a short time – a couple weeks to a couple months for a hearing aid battery, a couple months to maybe 6 months for the Wein battery. You may need an O ring or other spacer to fit a small hearing aid battery into the camera's battery compartment. Also note the last paragraph of this article, which talks about 1.4 volt batteries in brass adapters. These are the cheaper short-term solutions. The Wein battery is the simplest solution. You just put the battery in the camera. It fits without fiddling around with spacers. It comes in both 625 and 400 versions.

A battery adapter with a diode is a more expensive solution, but better for the long term. An MR-9 adapter replaces the PX-13/PX625 battery, typically takes a 1.5V 386 battery and puts out 1.35V. A camera using multiple batteries like a Nikon F, would need one adapter for each battery, which gets more expensive.

MR-9 Adapter, SR43 and Battery Case Cap
https://tinyurl.com/44crrnxa

Three companies appear to make MR-9 adapters: *https://www.smallbattery.company.org.uk/* in England shows an MR-9 adapter for about 30 pounds. They also have an "H-B" adapter for Spotmatic cameras.

https://www.criscam.com/ in Arizona. Their MR-9 adapter is about $40. I bought a Criscam adapter about 20 years ago, and have been happy with it.

https://www.kantocamera.com/english/index_english.html The web site is in Japanese and English, but the prices are all in Yen. Their MR-9 is 3,300 Yen plus shipping. The site also shows adapters for other batteries. You can find the Kanto adapter MR-9 on eBay at prices from about $38 and up. Search eBay for "Kanto MR-9 adapter".

Note that there are also other "MR-9" adapters on eBay that cost less, starting at about $10 for two, but these appear to be solid metal (brass?) with no voltage adapter. I have no experience with these. They typically take a 675 1.4 volt zinc-air hearing aid battery. Beware of any brass adapters that take a silver or alkaline 1.5V battery. Confirm what hearing aid batteries they take, and try them. They should produce the same results as a hearing aid battery by itself without having to deal with O rings.

~Story by PHSNE Board Secretary Larry Woods

Unwelcome Business News?

Some readers may have seen a CNN news report bearing a sad note for Kodak collectors and enthusiasts. It noted that, the company recently announced it "might have to cease operation" in the near future because it lacked "committed financing or available liquidity" to meet its debt obligations (approximately $500 million). "These conditions raise substantial doubt about the company's ability to continue as a going concern" (*https://tinyurl.com/nhfxtfna*). The article acknowledged that Kodak had a successful second quarter; despite the gloomy forecast. Following its announcement, shares in the company stock dropped sharply.

Kodak responded that the report is inaccurate and misleading . It claims that the report was based on a "fundamental misunderstanding of a recent technical disclosure the Company made to the SEC in its recently filed second quarter earnings report." It stated there are no plans to cease operations or file for bankruptcy protection (*https://www.kodak.com/en/company/blog-post/statement-regarding-misleading-media-reports/*).

Kodak Film sign, Sedona Arizona
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"Kodak had a century of success producing cameras and film. At one point in the 1970s, it was responsible for 90% of film and 85% of camera sales in the United States, according to *The Economist*. Paul Simon's hit song *Kodachrome* topped the charts in 1973." That success came to a screeching halt with the ascendance of digital photography. Kodak actually introduced the first digital camera, but in a short-sighted move to protect its film business, it sold the rights to the technology. The result was a Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing in 2012 at which time its debts were almost $7 billion.

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

Upcoming meetings:
November 2—Katherine "Kappy" Minty, *The Transatlantic Trade in Photographic Materials during the 19th Century.*

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.*

PHSNE in Gloucester

In the September issue of *snap shots,* we invited members to join us for a Gloucester, MA Block Party where PHSNE had several tables of camera equipment for sale along with publicity materials to acquaint people with the society. The event, located on Main Street near the harbor, drew a large crowd.

PHSNE's participation was initiated by board member Sabine Ocker.

PHSNE member Vladimir Khazan explains the workings of a folding camera.
Vladimir is our October Zoom speaker—see page 1.
Photo by Sid Chatterjee