



The Transatlantic Trade in Photographic Materials during the 19th Century
Sunday, November 2nd, 7:30 P.M. EST (note: clocks change that day)



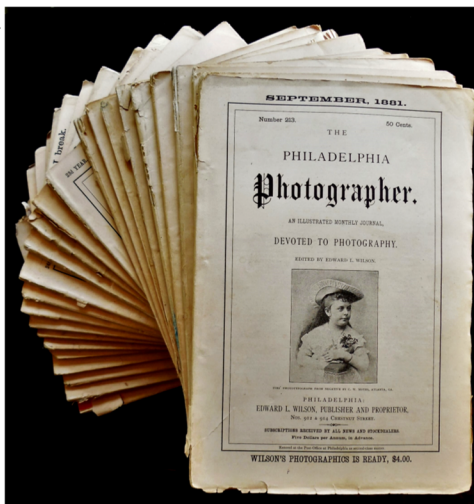
The work of art historian and museum professional Katherine (Kappy) Mintie focuses on exploring the material history of photography during the 19th and 20th centuries. Mintie is currently Head of Collections at the Center for Creative Photography in Tucson (<https://ccp.arizona.edu/>).

Her presentation at the November 2nd PHSNE meeting, *The Transatlantic Trade in Photographic Materials during the 19th Century*, builds on her article *Material Matters*.

Photographs are and always have been composite objects made from materials and tools often sourced from distant locations; however, photo historians often overlook these complex networks of labor and commerce that enable the creation of a photograph. This talk will explore these essential trade relations through an examination of the transatlantic trade in photographic materials during the nineteenth century and the impact these exchanges had on photography in the United States. While most nineteenth-century photographs do not readily reveal their material composition, early photography journals, such as *The Philadelphia Photographer* and *Anthony's Photographic Bulletin*, offer insight into the array of imported products available to and adopted by photographers in the United

States. By looking at advertisements, for sale ads, and tipped-in photographic prints featured in these journals, this talk will highlight how imported photographic goods both formed and informed photography in the nineteenth-century United States.

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New Stereoscopic Tube and Lens, made expressly for us, marked with our name (imitation Dallmeyer), with rack and pinion, central stops, for portraits or views. Will work in or out of doors. Also, for instantaneous pictures. Four inch focus, **price per pair, \$21.00.** By taking out back lens, and using only front lens in place of back, you get six inch focus. The great and increasing demand for all these lenses, is sure guarantee that they are the best. Read the following

Testimonials.

"I have tried the Mammoth Voigtländer you sent me, and I consider it the best large instrument I have ever seen, and I have tried those made by other makers, Dallmeyer's included, and they do not compare with the Voigtländer. All my baby pictures were made with half-size Voigtländer lenses."—J. LADDY, 208 W. Fourth St., Cincinnati, Feb. 25, 1874.

"The Voigtländer lenses have always been favorites with me. My first experience, in the days of daguerreotype, was with one, since which I have owned and tried many of the different sizes and never saw one but was an excellent instrument. Lately again trying some for my own use and for a friend, I found them to be superior to other eminent makers, particularly in the large sizes."—W. J. BAKER, Buffalo, N. Y.

"Twenty-four years ago I bought and commenced using my first Voigtländer lens. It was a good one. Since then I have owned and used a good many of the same brand, of various sizes. They were all and always good. Some of the larger sizes that I have recently bought seem to me better than any I have ever had or seen before."—J. F. KYDER, Cleveland, Ohio, Dec. 18, 1872.

"About a year ago I bought a Voigtländer & Son No. 3-4 size lens. Said instrument gives me great satisfaction, being very quick, at the same time has great depth of focus."—E. G. MAINE, Columbus, Miss.

"Have never seen anything equal to the Voigtländer & Son Lens. The No. 5, Ex. 4-4 is the best instrument I ever used. I cannot keep house without it."—D. B. VICKERY, Haverhill, Mass.

"The pair of imitation Dallmeyer Stereoscopic Lenses you sent me are very much pleased with; they work finely."—GROESBECK BROS., East Saginaw, Mich.

"After a trial of your imitation Dallmeyer in the field with those of the Dallmeyer Rapid Rectilinear, side by side, I can say that for general views I like yours as well, for some objects far better, on account of their short focal length."—D. H. CROSS, Mosher's Gal., Chicago.

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Before moving to her current position, Mintie was the Senior Researcher in Art History at the Lens Media Lab at Yale University and the Robinson Family Curatorial Fellow in Photography at the Harvard Art Museums. She received her Ph.D. from the History of Art Department at the University of California Berkeley.

No Longer Invisible

Illuminate: Contextualizing Asian American Stories Through the Archives, an exhibit now on display at Radcliffe's Schlesinger Library, features portraits of Asian Women, once viewed as curiosities and often unnamed. "The exhibition, on display through January, presents materials spanning 150 years and asks viewers to examine their own assumptions about Asian and Asian American women's roles in history" (<https://tinyurl.com/3ejdzxhf>).

Created for a course about the history of Asian women, "Students used the archival material to consider the ways Asian and Asian American women



Denison House Chinese girls basketball team, 1931, O.H. Steir

(1870—1942), an early female photojournalist, possibly the first. The women's identities are unknown, the images taken to study and present Asian women as oddities.

have been forgotten, made hypervisible, or both, as were the women displayed (as curiosities) at the (1904) World's Fair."

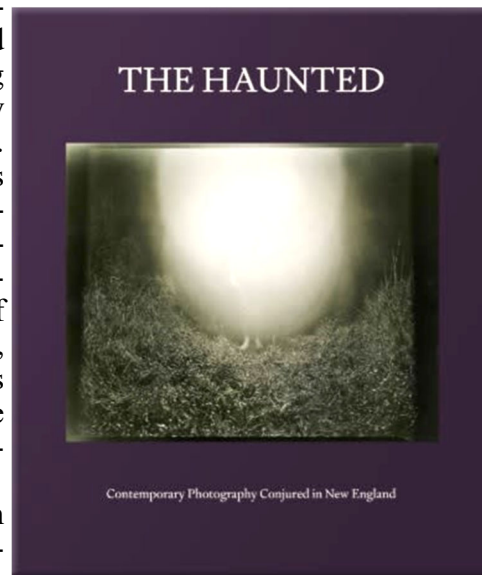
Many of the images survived in the archives of Jessie Tarbox Bealsan,

The Haunted . . . A New Book Release

The Haunted—Contemporary Photography Conjured in New England, a limited edition artist's book, combines contemporary photography with historical New England poetry. Published by SPEEDWELL Contemporary (<https://www.speedwellprojects.com/the-haunted>), the book examines the relationship between creativity, nature, and history going back to early Puritan days. The book is edited by Jocelyn Lee, designed by Emily Sheffer of Post Collective, and the essay is by Jocelyn Lee and Brian Urquhart.

More than twenty photographers are featured along with eleven New England poets including Emily Dickinson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Robert Frost. Book launch activities include events and exhibitions at the Portland Museum of Art (<https://tinyurl.com/y39cvt7f>) and other venues in fall 2025.

Timed to coincide with Halloween, the 159 page volume explores Puritan ideas about witchcraft and the supernatural. Besides the activities at the Portland Museum of Art, an exhibition will take place at the Moss Galleries (October 7—29) and Light and Manufacturing (October 24—Dec 1), both also in Portland (that's Portland ME).



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.

Articles and exhibition/book reviews are always welcome. Send to snapshots@phsne.org. Authors retain copyright to their original articles; however upon written application to the *snap shots* editor, PHSNE may grant non-profit societies with similar aims and interests a one-time right to reproduce a *snap shots* article as long as the author and source are credited and a complimentary copy of the publication is sent to PHSNE.

Photo History Today

A monthly feature, *Photo History Today*, will appear on the front page of phsne's website <https://phsne.org/>.

Corrections

Two errors appeared on the front page of the October issue of *snap shots*. Dr. Nagel was born in Pfeonsoed, Germany, and he was a master of optics and engineering. The errors were corrected on the PHSNE website.

Polaroid Big Shot



Photo by Sid Chatterjee

The Polaroid Big Shot is a single-purpose camera designed to take only one type of picture, a head and shoulder portrait of a person. Neither the film or flashbulb it uses is still manufactured. However, it was famously used by Andy Warhol, and because of that, the Big Shot is still well known, and used cameras sell on eBay for five or ten times its original price. It can only use only one type of film - Type 108 (and 669) Polaroid Color ISO 75 peel-apart film or the Fuji FP-100C equivalent. It also uses a Magic Cube flash, and, in fact, needs to use a flash for each picture.

The camera has a rigid plastic body 10-1/4 inches long with a 220mm f/29 single element plastic lens permanently set to focus at 38 inches. F/29 is not a typo, and explains why you need a flash for each shot. There is no exposure adjustment, except for the standard Polaroid “lighten-darken” adjustment that allows you to vary the exposure up or down by two stops. The shutter has only one speed.

There is also a split image rangefinder set to 38 inches with no moving parts. To focus the camera, you look through the viewfinder, and then do what is called the “Big Shot Shuffle” – you walk backwards and forwards until you see a single image in the rangefinder, then shoot.

In his 12-page article in the 2016 PHSNE *Journal*, (#174), Dave DeJean noted that “mad genius” Bill Shelton, with help from fellow Data Processing colleague Bruce Abele, took the concept to prototype state. Bruce Johnson from Design and Manufacturing helped turn the “duct tape” photo into the Big Shot. Professional designers worked on the project for two years, keeping the 220mm lens at the original designer’s insistence, until the Big Shot was released

in 1971. It stayed on the market for only two years, though because of Andy Warhol’s involvement, Polaroid apparently arranged to supply or repair cameras for him for several years beyond that.

This was a low-cost camera that came out toward the end of the peel apart pack-film camera era. (The SX-70 came out in 1972.) Besides the single element lens, it has a single speed shutter and cheap spreader bars – the things that squeeze the chemical pods and spread the chemicals on the film. Pulling the film out of the camera straight allowing the chemicals to spread evenly is evidently difficult. To aid in pulling the film out, there is a “whale tail” T-handle attached to the back of the camera. You hold the handle instead of the camera when pulling the film out. Unfortunately, on many cameras today the T-handle has broken off. It turns out that the spreader bars can easily be replaced with spreader rollers from a more expensive pack-film camera. This will help the chemicals spread more evenly.

The camera has one other feature. There is a 60-second timer on the back of the camera. After you pull the film out of the camera, you set the timer, wait for the timer to go off, and then peel the picture from the negative.



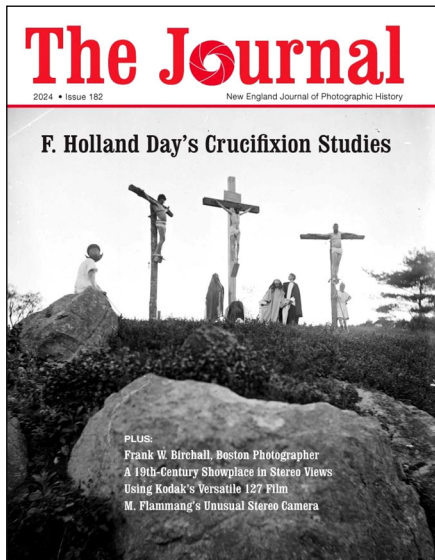
Bruce Abele and Bill Shelton and prototype camera put together in Abele’s basement.

The camera is still usable today. The film (Polaroid 108, Polaroid 669 or Fuji FP-100C), decades past its expiration date, and Magic Cubes (not “Flash Cubes” which require a battery in the camera) can be found on eBay, though at high prices. Check that the spreader bars or rollers are clean, load the film, install a Magic Cube, do the Big Shot Shuffle to focus, and press the shutter. Pull a film tab, then pull the film itself out of the camera, set the timer, and when the timer goes off, peel the film apart. It’s easier than it sounds.

Andy Warhol would do this up to hundreds of times with someone who commissioned him to do a silk screen portrait. He would then pick out one print, send it to a silk screen printer to create the enlarged portrait, which he would then add paint to.

~PHSNE Board Secretary Larry Woods

Journal: Call for Papers



The *New England Journal of Photographic History*, an annual publication of the Photographic Historical Society of New England is currently seeking articles with a focus on New England photographic history. We are interested in writings that have not been previously published and offer an honorarium of up to a \$500 for each article. We are inter-

ested in but not limited to writings completed within past five years, including high quality student writing.

Additional information about the Society, a non-profit 503 (c) (3) organization, and its publications will be found at <https://phsne.org> and <https://phsne.magcloud.com>.

If you have an article you would like considered for publication, please send a brief description to journal@phnse.org.

~Journal Editorial Committee

7,000 Cameras Under One Roof

The Camera Heritage Museum in Staunton, VA houses about 7,000 cameras and accessories manufactured over almost two centuries. Collector David Schwartz amassed the vast collection over a period extending more than fifty years. Every type of camera, manufacturer, and era are represented.



For more information, and a sampling of the items on display, visit <https://rogersmovienation.com/2025/09/20/camera-museum-staunton-va/>

PHSNE Meetings

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

Upcoming meetings:

December 7—Annual Membership Meeting, Election for Board of Directors, Holiday Show-and-Tell

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>.

snap shots Seeking Proofreaders

Each issue of *snap shots* is reviewed by several PHSNE members for accuracy in historical content, technical information, and spelling and grammar. We are looking for members with expertise in any or all of those areas to help proofread the pdf drafts before they are sent to the printer.

Please reply to snapshots@PHSNE.org if you are interested and have the necessary skills.

eBay Auctions Continue

PHSNE continues its eBay auctions at *phsneusa* which is the username for the Photographic Historical Society of New England on eBay (<https://charity.ebay.com/charity/i/Photographic-Historical-Society-of-New-England,-Inc./347360>).

Camera Under Development

Co-founded by photographer Come Courteault, Esquisse Camera is developing a Micro Four Thirds camera "that channels the spirit of popular compact cameras of the past while delivering the performance that demanding modern photographers expect." You can view the petapixel write-up at <https://petapixel.com/2025/09/25/a-brand-new-camera-company-is-making-a-spiritual-successor-to-the-lumix-gm5/>.

