

The PSA Journal's History Series

Celebrating 75 Years of PSA

Dedicated to the memory of longtime
PSA Historian, Tony Patti, Hon PSA, FPSA



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PSA's Charter Clubs

Jean Timmermeister, FPSA

The **Photographic Society of America (PSA)** has a history that is presently of high interest because it is the 75th anniversary year of the organization. Celebrating this milestone means looking back at the roots of the Society. Camera clubs and other photographic groups were the beginning of organized photography in North America, with individual members following in 1934 when the Photographic Society of America was established. The importance of camera clubs to the history of North American photography is well documented and a bit of the background is related here.

The early organization known as Associated Camera Clubs of America (ACCA), formed in 1919, had 22 charter member clubs:

- *Boston Y.M.C. U. Camera Club*, Massachusetts; *California Camera Club of San Francisco*, California; *Chicago Camera Club*, Illinois; *Cleveland Photographic Society*, Ohio; *Columbia Photographic Society*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; *Dartmouth Camera Club*, Hanover, New Hampshire; *Elysian Camera Club*, Hoboken, New Jersey; *Grand Rapids Camera Club*, Michigan; *Kansas City Camera Club*, Missouri; *Newark Camera Club*, New Jersey; *New Britain Camera Club*, Connecticut; *New Haven Camera Club*, Connecticut; *Orange Camera Club*; East Orange, New Jersey; *Oregon Camera Club*, Portland, Oregon; *Overseas Camera Club*, Detroit, Michigan; *Photographic Society of Philadelphia*, Pennsylvania; *Portland Camera Club*, Maine; *Southern California Camera Club*, Los Angeles, California; *St Louis Camera Club*, Missouri; *The Camera Club of Waterbury*, Connecticut; *The Photographic Club of Baltimore*, Maryland; *Yonkers Camera Club*, New York.

When, in 1933, the idea of a photo organization for both individuals and clubs in North America was born, the ACCA had grown to 51 affiliated amateur photographer clubs with professional organizations of about the same number. All member-clubs of the ACCA were encouraged to cast their votes for the *Photographic Society of America* name-change by December 31, 1933. **Early in 1934 the new Society was a reality and 50 clubs then on the rolls of ACCA became the Charter Member clubs of PSA.** Records in the *American Annual of Photography* show that there were about 85 amateur photographers' clubs listed in North America but not all had joined ACCA. The book yearly listed the most prolific printers of the times (the first "who's who" of printmakers) as well as giving readers information on camera clubs.

Today there are 11 of those original ACCA groups that are still member-clubs of PSA but virtually all appear to have allowed their memberships to lapse, at least briefly, at least once in the last 75 years but are on the PSA membership rolls at this time:

- *Cleveland Photo Society*, Ohio; *Delaware Camera Club*, Delaware; *Fort Dearborn-Chicago Photo Forum*, Illinois; *Oklahoma Camera Club*, Oklahoma; *Omaha Camera Club*, Nebraska; *Pictorial Photographers of America*, New York; *Photo Pictorialists of Milwaukee*, Wisconsin; *Photo Section of the Academy of Sciences and Art*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; *Portland Camera Club*, Maine; *St Paul Camera Club*, Minnesota and *Taft Camera Club*, Taft, California.

The Society is proud of these existing

Focus

The Delaware Photographic Society

The *Journal* occasionally features one of its many member-clubs or members and this month it is the Delaware Photographic Society, established in 1931 and identified as one of the original members of Photographic Society of America (PSA). When PSA was formed, the club was known as the Delaware Camera Club with Dr. Merlin C. Brubaker as its first president. *The American Annual of Photography* often listed the club as one of the charter members of PSA.

History of this well-known group shows that it was quite small in the early years with its focus on learning more about photography through sharing and they scheduled meetings and events in Wilmington with well-known photographers of the time including Ansel Adams (who offered a 5-day lecture series in 1941), Edward Steichen, John W. Doosher, Paul Yarows and Adolf Fassbender as presenters.

Perhaps what is most well known about the Delaware Photographic Society is its exhibition, The Wilmington International Exhibition of Photography (WIEP), which will celebrate its 75th in 2008. An impressive exhibition by any standard, the competition is held each winter with an array of fine judges from around the world.

A terrific 75th Anniversary party of the Delaware Photographic Society was held by the group in September to celebrate the many years of an active camera club with an impressive souvenir booklet giving the record of history with lots of photos.

A large club, the Society has approximately 200 members, aged 10 to 92. PSA Club Representative is Herb G. Sargeant, PPSA, of Newark, DE, a PSA member since 1983.

Perhaps the most unusual and interesting fact about the Delaware Photo Society is that it has competitive members as young as 10 years old!

A November issue of the *Delaware News Journal* covered the story of one such young member, 13-year old Jacob Pivonka who joined the club to be with his dad, Don Pivonka. The father-son duo often goes out shooting together. Jacob started his photography with his mother's 25-year old manual camera; he borrowed his grandfather's lenses to go along with Mom's camera. He has since graduated to a digital SLR camera which he uses manually. While he goes out shooting with his father, the two



Jacob Pivonka, a 13-year old member of The Delaware Photographic Society

of them shoot independently. But here is the thing: Jacob competes at the Delaware Photographic Society, especially on print competition night, against any and all members and in October he outscored his father and he earned the highest score of the night.

The Delaware Photographic Society has taken many "field trips" (perhaps outings might be closer to the truth) to such destinations as Bermuda, Vermont, Martha's Vineyard, Canaan Valley in West Virginia, Mexico, New Orleans and Baton Rouge, Louisiana—as well as Europe and the US Virgin Islands. Education seminars have been many as have competitions with other organizations. In the 1930s dues were just \$3 a year and today's club has even arranged for PayPal to handle payments to the club via the internet. In the last calendar year the group became a "sister club" to the Watford Camera Club.

A vital, very current photo group, PSA not only puts the *Journal* FOCUS on the Delaware Photographic Society, PSA congratulates this lively, active photo group for all of its accomplishments and for its vision for the future. ☺

Jan Timmermeister, FPPSA
Publications VP

Herb G. Sargeant, PPSA
PSA Club Representative
for The Delaware
Photographic Society

The Delaware Photographic Society was featured in the February 2007 PSA Journal.

Charter Clubs, which are as different one from the other as are photography groups organized in later years. Sometimes a club membership has fallen off to under 10 members, although that information is neither requested nor kept by the Society.

Have a brief look at today's charter member clubs (some have been featured in the *Journal* when celebrating a club anniversary):

- **Cleveland Photographic Society** meets in Broadview Heights, Ohio, and has come to be quite small. History reveals that the group was one of two Ohio organizations that traveled by train to the annual "salons" and early PSA meetings in Philadelphia.
- **Delaware Photographic Society** (originally known as "Delaware Camera Club") is a large organization—proud to be the sponsor of the long-successful Wilmington International Exhibition held annually in late January. **Herb G. Sargeant, PPSA**, serves as the PSA "rep" and has for many years. Check out the February 2007 issue of the *PSA Journal* for more about this large club.

- **Fort Dearborn Camera Club**
Jay Allison represents PSA to this charter club in the Chicago area.
- **Grand Rapids Camera Club** records **Diane Durand** as the clubs representative to PSA at this time.
- **Oklahoma Camera Club** has been featured in the *Journal* (November 2007) on the occasion of their club's anniversary. The group has varied in size from time to time and successfully handles projects it undertakes, including the Youth Showcase. The leadership of this club has made any undertaking a success. (**Tom and Carol McCreary, PPSAs**, share the PSA Representative title).

Focus

The Oklahoma Camera Club

The *Journal* continues its *Focus* series by featuring a premier camera club. This month we *Focus* on a club who has performed outstanding community service and whose members represent the best in service and dedication to photography. The Oklahoma Camera Club is a Charter Member of the Photographic Society of America. (PSA).



Jan and Wally Leo



"Spectacular" is how **Kathy Braun, APSA**, describes the efforts of the Oklahoma Camera Club (OCC) in sponsoring students to the 2007 PSA Youth Showcase. Since 2003, **Carol McCreary, PPSA**, assisted by **Tom McCreary, PPSA**, has chaired the Oklahoma Statewide Youth Photo Contest. After notifying teachers throughout Oklahoma, ninety-two students participated in the statewide contest. Three hundred-ninety-four prints were entered. Selecting the best entries, OCC sponsored seventy-eight prints to the PSA Youth Showcase and twenty-three were accepted for exhibition. Students sponsored by the club won first place in the Photojournalism category,

first place in Photographer's Choice, first and second Honorable Mentions (HM) in Architecture, second HM in Human Interest, and second HM in Photographer's Choice. Oklahomans are so proud of Carol's labors that the Oklahoman presented a gift of \$500, which Carol used to promote the statewide contest. In past years, OCC has given out as much as \$800 in student prizes. Founded by seven photographers in 1931, OCC celebrates its seventy-fifth anniversary this year. In 1934 the club helped establish PSA in Philadelphia, Oklahoma. Dr. **Ralph E. Venk, Hon. PPSA**, became President of PSA in 1987 and was instrumental in having PSA Headquarters moved to Oklahoma. Today, an astonishing forty percent of OCC members hold membership in PSA, and a number of members have been recognized for outstanding service and photographic excellence in addition to **Dr. Venk, Georgia Venk, FPPSA, Jacalyn Finch, APSA, Douglas Finch, APSA, Betty Patterson, APSA, PPSA, Charles Taylor, APSA, Carol McCreary, PPSA, Tom McCreary, PPSA and Dennis Corbin, FPPSA**—an impressive array of dedicated PSA Members.

The 45th Oklahoma International Exhibit of Photography "...received over 2000 outstanding images submitted by skilled photographers from 37 countries around the world," states Chairman **Douglas Finch**. The exhibit includes Pictorial Prints, Pictorial Color Slides, Nature and Photojournalism sections and this year added

Doug Finch, APSA

The Oklahoma Camera Club was featured in the November 2007 PSA Journal.

- **Omaha Camera Club** has **Susan Baxter** as representative for this PSA-member club.
- **Photo Pictorialists of Milwaukee** has celebrated its 100th anniversary as a club and was featured in the November 2004 *Journal* on pages 20 and 21. Long-time PSA representative for the group, **Ellen Worzala, FPPSA**, prepared the article. An active group and very successful with much going on.

- **Photo Section of Academy of Science and Art, Pittsburgh**
Robert Agnew is the contact person of this long-time group within the Academy.
- **Photo Society of Philadelphia**
Eileen Eckstein is presently shown at the representative to PSA for this fine old organization.
- **Portland Camera Club**
Speaking for this Maine club is **Dennis Marrotte**, the PSA representative, who tells of wonderful events and plans.
- **St. Paul Camera Club** of the St. Paul area of Minnesota is a well-organized group with an impressive club manual, which includes a roster of members. **Gene Schwope, FPSA**, the PSA Representative and his wife, Pat, are in charge of the club's manual, an 8 ½ X 11 inch loose leaf notebook which he updates annually.

Especially helpful is the members' directory with a photo of each person in the club as well as information on exhibitions, PSA, bylaws and competition rules.

- **Schenectady Photo Society** lists **Linda Heim** as its PSA representative.
- **Taft Camera Club** began as a company camera club in the town of Taft in the San Joaquin valley of California. Presently enjoying a very active life as a camera club, at times it has been very small and inactive. Presently speaking for the group is **Herb Spencer** of Bakersfield. At conference, attendees can expect to see prints from a member of bygone years.

PSA can look back at these long-time clubs of the Society and know that the 75th Anniversary of PSA means that all of the listed clubs are older than the Society itself! Thanks to these member-clubs for their faithfulness to PSA. ■

Historical Vignette:

The Photojournalism Division (PJD)

In 1944, photoflash expert, writer and lecturer, **Russ Arnold, APSA**, declared, "Press photographers belong in PSA." Shortly thereafter, the Press Division, mostly composed of press photographers and editors, was created. Up until 1944, the professional photojournalists were loosely organized into regional groups with no national organization. The new division got off to a shaky start with immediate friction between the pros and the amateurs. The pro's felt that the amateurs joined seeking official press credentials and "sudden acceptance from the *hardcore* press." Some members outside the division thought the press association was "degrading" and spoiled the purity of the Photographic Society of America. "If PSA's Press Division achieved little else in the early years, at least it was responsible for bringing the nation's news photographers to form their own National Press Photographers Association," and most of the professionals left PSA. (1969 Division history article by **Ray Good, APSA**, [later FPSA], the 9th chairman of PJD.)

Undeterred, the name of the Press Division was changed to the Photojournalism Division and in 1961 PJD was included for the first time in the PSA Annual Exhibition. Print and slide-makers were encouraged to compete. But it was not until the 1970's when PJD was permitted to establish star ratings and *Who's Who* credit that the PJ Salons became successful. In 1970 at the Los Angeles Convention the PJD star award program was announced.

PJD annually awards the prestigious *International Understanding Through Photography Award*. Originally sponsored by Nikon®, the recipients have included: Alfred Eisenstaedt, Ansel Adams, Gordon Parks, Walt Disney, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Margaret Bourke-White and Edward Steichen.

Elena McTighe
Publications Vice President