

# Focus on St. Paul Camera Club

Keeping up with the history of a 123-year-old camera club can be a big job. Because of this, the St. Paul Camera Club (SPCC) has an established Board position called Historian. We are honored to be the club's Historians. SPCC can trace its founding to the evening when the first meeting was held, March 6, 1893. Most of whatever records the club kept from 1893 until the mid 1940's have disappeared into the mists of time, but some interesting details do remain.

For example: We know the names of 82 people who were club members between 1893 and 1906; we know the club's meeting space occupied an entire floor of a building in downtown St. Paul. In 1901, photographer Alfred Stieglitz was made an Honorary Member; the club held evening smokers for the men; socials for the women; and the more advanced members shot with 5x7 cameras, and not those small 4x5 outfits. Photo outings and excursions that are easy and rapid today were all-day travel events in the early 1900's. One highlight of the 1920's was the club being invited to start a weekly evening radio program on the subject of photography. Photography is difficult to explain over the radio, and the program lasted only six months. In 1932 we designed our first letterhead stationery, specifically because we were being invited to join a new photographic organization that was forming. That organization was the Photographic Society of America (PSA).

On April 1, 1934, St. Paul Camera Club became a Charter Member of PSA. We were then a member of the Associated Camera Clubs of America (ACCA), and we voted to approve ACCA's name change to the Photographic Society of America. The new PSA organization would, of course, have a broader vision of photography, and it would include both clubs and individuals as members.

SPCC draws its members from throughout the seven-county Twin Cities Metro Area, and holds two meetings a month; first and third Tuesdays, October thru May, with an Annual Awards Dinner in June. The first Tuesday meetings are competition events, where Open Category B/W or Color prints are critiqued along with Category Projected Digital Images. The top scoring images from these competitions advance to our year-end Annual Awards. Judges for our salons are always from outside of the club, and may be

local professionals, print or electronic media members, or established exhibitors from other local clubs. The second Tuesday meeting is always a program meeting put on by a local professional, someone from the local Adobe office, talented members of other clubs, or talented SPCC members. The program topics are often chosen to match the category of an upcoming salon, reflect members' interests in new techniques or software, or relate to new products such as lenses, strobes, inks, or paper.

Generally, in months when there are five Tuesdays, SPCC holds a New Member meeting. This meeting, usually held in our home, invites all newly-joined members to a serious, but friendly, explanation of everything that is in the Annual Yearbook. The explanation includes club rules, categories, image sizes, a general overview of the way the club operates, and what all of the letters such as PSA, N4C and

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*Ray Allen, then the President of St. Paul Camera Club, shoots a group photo and entertains members during a photo outing to St. Croix Falls, MN, in 1937.*

TCACCC stand for. Questions are encouraged, and the meeting is followed by refreshments.

SPCC belongs to two PSA Councils. This gives our members extra opportunities to participate in competition beyond the club level. Our members are active in local, regional and national competitions, provided by our local Twin Cities Area Council of Camera Clubs ((TCACCC); the North Central Camera Club Council (N4C); PSA; and International Exhibitions, which are held in the Twin Cities. For many years, SPCC sponsored one of the circuit judgments for the Minneapolis-St. Paul Digital Circuit and the Minneapolis-St. Paul Print Circuit. Many of our members also judge for these and other Exhibitions.

We all know that promoting camera clubs is difficult, but SPCC works hard to keep its members, and the public, informed of activities, meetings, programs, and salons. This is done through a club newspaper, website, yearbook, Facebook, Twitter, and Print Shows at selected Twin City locations. Our PSA award-winning newsletter, *SPCC News*, has been keeping our members informed monthly since 1946. Many members didn't have computers yet, when in 1998, our president, who was an engineer at Remington Rand, built our first PSA award-winning website. The SPCC Annual Yearbook has been given to all members since 1951. Beginning this year, our Yearbook has gone electronic, and is emailed to all members.

The Yearbook can now be viewed on all electronic devices, including smart phones. The membership section includes photos of members and contact information. Facebook and Twitter are completely new ideas for many of our members, but we are all stepping-up, opening accounts, and getting involved with social media.

Public print displays are a great way to show-off the quality of work that our members produce, to attract new members, and also to allow our members to sell images directly to the public. SPCC has had great responses to print displays in restaurants, local colleges, churches, banks, libraries, municipal buildings, and coffee shops. We have an unofficial committee that is constantly on the lookout for new print show opportunities. A typical show will be between 25 and 40 prints, framed with glass. A great show will be one that brings us a new member or two, plus the possibility of cash sales for some hard-working members. Our most unique print show was arranged for us by **Jessica Yasuko Hashizume**, a PSA member from Japan, and international travel writer, who owns the Galerie Salon de Fleur in downtown Tokyo. Jessica filled the entire gallery with SPCC prints for two weeks.

Today, a club has to be flexible enough to take advantage of promotional opportunities as they come along. SPCC has had success being invited



*SPCC meetings and outings include members from teenagers to grandparents. This photo, taken at the 1931 Gas Station at the Pioneer Village Museum, in Cameron, WI, shows the range of our members. Photo © Barry Mullin*





*SPCC members celebrate moving into their new meeting facilities with a special club judging, on Sept. 15, 2015. Everyone was in agreement that we will enjoy the new meeting location. Photo © Gene Schwope, FPSA, PPSA*

to participate in programs on local cable TV channels, staffing displays for Ramsey County and the Minnesota Historical Society, and just last Fall, we had a staffed Information Table at a Rocky Mountain School of Photography weekend event. For events where we have our people available, we also display banners, distribute handouts, and give business cards so people can easily contact us later.

With 20 percent of our membership belonging to PSA, SPCC is a regular participant in PSA events and competitions. A number of our members regularly attend the Annual PSA Conference, and several have presented programs and special awards there. Two PSA Regional Conferences, and one International Conference, have been held in the Twin Cities Area; SPCC members were involved in the operation of all three. We have consistent participation by our members in PSA-recognized International Exhibitions; we have members who have PSA Honors and have been awarded PSA Stars and ROPA distinctions; members who write for the *PSA Journal* on a regular basis; and many members who are entered every year in the PSA Council's Challenge. Last August, three of our members who regularly enter International Exhibitions, judged the PJ section of the PSA International.

The PSA Youth Showcase is a PSA Competition that has captured the attention of several of our younger members. The **Stocking** sisters, **Anika**, Maddy and Kysa, each began club competition when they were between 11 and 15 years old. With their grandmother, SPCC member Phyllis Kedi, handling their application paperwork, from 2011 to 2014 the Stockings had four First-Place images, two Honorable

Mention Choices and 10 Acceptances in Prints and Digital, in various categories. The Stocking sisters have all moved on to college now, but the legacy lives on, as their 15 year-old cousin, Lillie Loll, became a club member last September, and has already won two third place Youth Showcase awards.

SPCC photo outings and field trips are a popular way for members to socialize and take pictures at the same time. The outings chair attempts to schedule specific outings to tie into upcoming competition categories. Having an appropriate category on the horizon makes our outings even more effective. Departing from the Twin Cities, popular outings include trips up and down the Mississippi and St. Croix River valleys, Duluth, and the North and South Shores of Lake Superior. Longer, multi-day outings might include the Dakota Badlands, the Black Hills, and Door County, Wisconsin. The Black Hills Shootout, held every September, is a popular action destination for many SPCC photographers.

From a photographic standpoint, St. Paul Camera Club has always kept up with the times. Starting with black and white printmaking, we have gone on to Kodachrome and other color slide films, then to color printmaking, and now digital imaging and inkjet prints. Keeping St. Paul Camera Club a viable organization for 123 years has required looking forward and backward at the same time. We must always remember who we are and how we got here; while looking forward is something we must do to keep SPCC balanced on the leading edge of photographic technology and the needs of our future members. Our goal is for St. Paul Camera Club to remain vital for another 100 plus years. ■

**If you have questions  
or would like additional  
information contact  
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