25 Years of memories...

1974 – 1999

Talk with any of the founding officers and members of the PHSC and they will tell you that the past twenty-five years have slipped by too fast; but that quarter century has left a trail of valuable memories as the Society has moved from project to project, from success to success.

It all started in the summer of 1974 when John Linsky, while strolling on Eglinton Ave. West, spotted a collection of old cameras displayed in the window of the Canadian School of Photography. Intrigued, he introduced himself to the proprietor, Larry Boccioletti and found they had a mutual interest in collecting photographic memorabilia and saw the need for a collectors society in Toronto. Weeks later, John brought fellow collector, Morris Fischtein, into the circle who offered to support the idea of forming a club.

As Larry recalls the events, "I had the experience of forming the *Photographic Historical Society of New York* in 1969 so could see the real benefits of pulling together a group of like-interested camera collectors here in Canada. As fate would have it, my school of photography "went down the tube" so I had a lot of free time on my hands. In discussions with Morris we laid down the basic plan of attack; Morris was too busy to offer time for the project but agreed to bank roll the initial expenses with a cheque for $100 – a tidy sum which I certainly wasn't capable of covering in my circumstances. I set to work each day, phoning people I thought might be interested in such a club, asking if they knew any others with similar interests. Pretty soon there was a list of some 150 names from which were selected 100 to receive a letter explaining our aims and inviting them to a meeting at the Constellation Hotel in Rexdale (northwest Toronto). Newspaper ads also promoted the founding meeting of October 23rd, 1974".

"I was quite delighted", recalls Larry, "when seventeen people showed up, including three women. The founding meeting of the PHS of New York only had 17 people to kick off its success, so I felt it was a good omen. Discussions were lively and constructive and we came to a concensus of what was needed. A collection was taken to defray the costs of the room at which John Linsky volunteered to take on the responsibility of holding follow-up meetings at his home. I then journeyed to Arkansas which became an extended visit of two years but sporadically was able to return and participate in some activities".

John Linsky remembers, "With Larry's departure I was propelled into the position of moving the society forward. At the initial meetings we agreed that we needed to organize. Some volunteers came forward and this group met in my home – Terry Wedge, Harold McNutt, Morris Fischtein and myself. We started out to create a National society with local chapters. We actually had two executive committees, one for the National and one for the Toronto Chapter which conducted monthly programmme

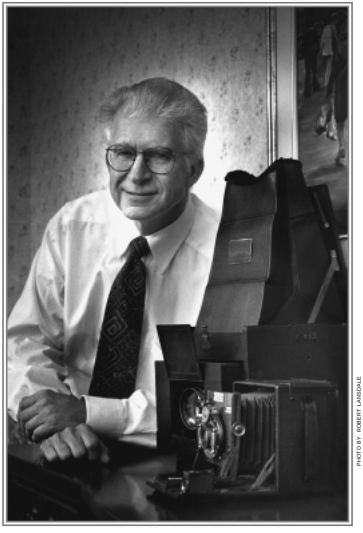


PHOTO BY ROBERT LANGDALE

John Linsky
Founding President of the PHSC

meetings. Several years later we merged the two groups. Meeting locations varied initially with a number of movies bolstering our speaker programs. In half a year we started a monthly newsletter – *Photographic Canadiana* which was widely circulated to promote membership. We arranged for a display of collectables at the C.N.E. to carry our message. We made a presentation to the Tariff Revisions board, initiated the Incorporation of the Society which required drafting bylaws and constitution, and laid plans for a "Swap-Meet" which became our first Canadian Photographica Fair at the (old) North York Memorial Hall on June 7th 1975. More volunteers joined in, including Gene Wasylciw, Jack Addison, John Alldredge, George Barton, Marjorie Addison, Robert Dynes, Ron Anger, Laura Jones and others. By March '75 we had attained 53 members, January '76 saw the total at 115. To encourage growth, dues were set at $10 for the National and Toronto society or $5 for the

National only. Not all projects proved a success as a planned trip to George Eastman House, Rochester, N.Y. brought little response, a hoped-for photographic museum proved not to be feasible and additional Chapters did not materialize".

"Looking through old photographs of PHSC events it is interesting to note how dark everyone's hair was in those early days. The youthful faces in our photo collection might explain our aggressiveness and daring to try anything. Profit for the 2nd Annual Fair of May 15, 1976 came to $91.01 and we were on a path for future stability".

"It would be impossible to note all the dedicated workers who have poured hours of work into mounting projects and administering the society. Much of our vitality in recent years can be attributed to the fresh ideas and energy of younger members. While membership has been steady in the 225 – 300 range, many members joined back in the 1970s and 1980s. As our average age increases, we need to focus more on attracting youthful members. We have accumulated a good financial buffer through profits from our Fairs and Auctions only because we had many volunteers. These events provide the funds necessary for our publications, meetings, Awards program, Website and other activities. Inevitably we must pass everything into the care of keen and younger capable hands".

Comments founding President John Linsky, "The end of our 25 years is the beginning of our next 25 years. I am pleased with all we have accomplished and hope the Society will florish in the next quarter century. My thanks to all the members who volunteered and contributed to one of the finest photographic historical societies in the world."

"For the future", says Larry Boccioletti, "ultimately flash bulbs will become as scarce and cherished as daguerreotypes. Digital photography will have replaced image creation as we know it today, but I am sure that the love for cameras of polished brass and varnished wood, or chrome and black-leather will be just as fervent. May our efforts initiated in 1974 bring happy benefits for the decades to come". ❧

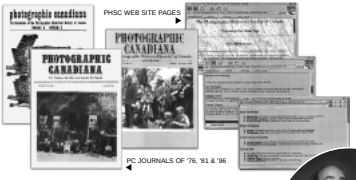
A trip back to the 1970's

FOUNDERS MORRIS FISCHTEIN AND LARRY BOCCIOLETTI PREPARE PUBLICITY IN 1974

PHOTO COURTESY OF NICK GRAVER

FIRST PHOTO SALE JUNE 7, 1975 IN NORTH YORK (OLD) MEMORIAL HALL –LINSKY, FISCHTEIN, MCNUTT AND WEDGE IN STEREO CARD MARJORIE ADDISON TENDS TABLE AT RIGHT

BOOTH DISPLAYS OF 1975 SAW JOE MILNER (leaning) top), NEIL FOX (with stereo viewer), JOHN LINSKY (at right)



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◀ PC JOURNALS OF '76, '81 & '96

1976 MEETINGS AT RUTHERFORD'S LAIRD DR. AND WILD LEITZ CANADA, RICHARD HUYDA –SPREAKER

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