

# OUR STORY

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## Cameracraftsmen of America 1905-2005



*Two Horse "Tally Ho" buggy – Fort Madison, Iowa*

*Taken after one of the 1905–1908 meetings (photo not dated) on the brick road fronting the Mississippi River by Mr. Courtwright's assistant from the porch of the Courtwright Studio. L to R: George Fabr, Harvey Voiland, Jack Browning, Guy Reid, A.C. Eckerman, Charles Townsend, (Driver with reins), J.C. Scoles, O.C. Courtwright, and Herman Anschutz. Will Dunlap was ill and not present.*



Published by

**CAMERACRAFTSMEN OF AMERICA**

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CAMERACRAFTSMEN OF AMERICA

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## Cameracraftsmen of America 1905-2005

THE STORY OF CAMERACRAFTSMEN OF AMERICA

by Russ Clift

Co-Author/Editor: Jason Hailey

Mr. Russ Clift, a member of Cameracraftsmen in 1969 and club historian 1976–1999,  
researched and prepared the history of the organization 1905–1995.

Meeting chapters 1996–2005 and Milestones in Photographic Science by Jason Hailey.

History Book Committee

Ken Whitmire, *Chairman and Historian*

Bill Carrier III   Gene Claseman

Andy Foster   Jason Hailey

David LaClaire   Dimitri LaZaroff

True Redd   Steve Sheanin

DEDICATED TO:

“The Immortal Ten” Founders: Jack Browning, H.M. Anschutz, A.C. Eckerman, J.C. Scoles, O.C. Courtwright, George Fahr, Guy N. Reid,  
Charles Townsend, Will Dunlap, and Harvey E. Voiland

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This year marks the centennial of Cameracraftsmen of America, founded in 1905 by ten professional photographers willing to share knowledge and work for the betterment of photography. These inspired figures of the day met through fellowship learning sessions to exchange artistic, technical, and business methods. Regarded as one of the oldest photographic organizations in America, its traditional ideals, aspirations and vision continues today. This unique group of talented photographers has, over the years, played an important role in the evolution of professional photography and is generally credited with being the inspiring force in shaping the Professional Photographers of America.

OUR STORY is an historical account of Cameracraftsmen members who have played an integral part in the transition of photography from dry plates to film to pixels to art dimensions. This illuminating 100-year journey has, since the founding inspiration of Jack Browning, involved courageous ideas, unpredictable conflicts and notable achievements.

Though it began in Iowa, Cameracraftsmen has expanded nationally and internationally. Membership is by invitation only and since 1947 has been limited to forty active members. Member True Redd describes desirable members as “those that want to expand their horizons artistically and intellectually as image makers... attend meetings and participate fully.. .those who are never satisfied with what they do.”

Cameracraftsmen of America members are accomplished men and women. The diversity of talent today can be seen in studios across the gamut of photography: portraiture, weddings, commercial, advertising, travel, editorial, experimental, film, video and fine art. Members' photographic work is showcased in the CCA picture books, published every 5 years from 1985 through 2005. Members have received recognition and notable honors for exhibited and published work. They have authored articles and served as program speakers, competition judges, instructors and mentors. Photography by Cameracraftsmen is represented in various museum, gallery, institutional and private collections, as well as numerous books and publications. Most have earned the Master of Photography, Photographic Craftsmen and Fellowship degrees and many hold active leadership roles in prominent photography associations.

In service art and fine art, Cameracraftsmen are passionate about their chosen lifework and challenging careers. In the forefront of everyday photography, they respect the traditional ideals and work to perpetuate their craft through ardent personal vision and expression. This zealous group meets annually in various geographical locations to share their artistic accomplishments, technical expertise and fellowship. Members produce books, host guest speakers, exchange prints, conduct seminars and plan exhibits primarily for the benefit of the organization. Each member takes solace in contributing to the group toward the goal of extending and enriching each other's creative possibilities.

In 1928, CCA programs included “Plates Versus Film.” In 2005, in the nascent digital world, the issue is not so much film versus pixels but how to apply these new technological gifts. Photographers learn to adapt the craft with innovative wonders not only for artistic expression, but also to meet the client needs and succeed financially. Members cherish artistic idealism and in service art fashion it for the real world. Techno-wizardry plagues us evermore in the computer age of electronic imaging and image permanency remains a constant concern in preserving the works we create. Whatever the digital storage technology, prints are not going away; they are enduring and desired for showcasing our memories, whether analog photographs of fiber-based silver or images of digital ink jet pigments or other innovative media. Even collodion, platinum and palladium of the early century are enjoying a modest revival.

A romantic calling, photography remains a magical process and inexplicable mystery. Wondrous devices and “going digital” with infinite camera permutations and photo-technology metamorphosis do not, however, change the essence of art. Creatively, it is the conceptual image with artistic expression and layers of interpretation that moves us ahead in our art and visual heritage.

An admirer once said to a mother, “That’s a beautiful baby.” The mother replied, “That’s nothing - you should see his photograph.” Photographers know the satisfaction of creating pictures that bring special joy and insight to others. What defines a good photograph? How do we say something special? How do we create images of enduring value? “When does a photograph become a portrait?” as esteemed long time member David LaClaire asks. Photographers ponder a myriad of possibilities.

Sometimes we photograph not for others but to find out what we are thinking: a transformation of life into art and art into life. Our creative possibilities increase through transdisciplinary experiences with cultural, social, environmental and internationalism; and by synthesis with other allied arts as painting, architecture, sculpture, design and film. The key to our creative options is to work-as-an-artist and learn from the spectrum of other artists. The art spirit of passion, energy and integrity drives creativity. Let us strive for photographs that are more than just “of” someone or something, but rather a photographic expression that becomes “something in itself.” Such a meaning, below the print surface, can be a silent poem and a graceful voice.

Cameracraftsmen can be proud of their ventures and significant accomplishments.

OUR STORY chronicles a pivotal period in our legacy, celebrating 100 years and beginning a new century of club experiences. The massive collection of meeting records, memorabilia, photographs and correspondence, much compiled by Russ Clift, will be archived for future reference. The illuminating material was a daunting task to assemble, edit, write and publish. I wish to thank the many members who contributed through e-mails, phone calls, faxes, letters, photographs and insightful information to help complete this story and make this fascinating history of our club and book possible. Ken Whitmire’s love of photographic history, passionate energy and no compromise credo along with his 4-day visit to my studio were the right collaborating ingredients to help bring this 5-year project to completion. OUR STORY is an enlightening and everlasting historical resource for researchers, as well as for existing and future members.

It’s rather amazing, you start out taking pictures, seek good training and it charts your career. Then the camera takes you on a fascinating professional journey and the creative spirit never leaves you. Your work becomes a life of joy and a life of meaning.

Enjoy our story and envision the future.

*Jason Hailey*

## FOREWORD

At the Taos, New Mexico Cameracraftsmen meeting in 1976, long time members, Lawrence Blaker and Frank Pechman met with newly elected club secretary, Russ Clift, to discuss a perceived slump in club spirit. Blaker and Pechman suggested that Clift try to revive a regular Newsletter, published at least twice per year. This might increase enthusiasm.

At a second informal Taos meeting, Russ offered to produce four journals annually, with each containing one or more historical remembrances to be submitted by veteran Cameracraftsmen members. Blaker, who had been serving as club historian, would forward his collected memorabilia to Russ, and Pechman a past secretary would send his records, which, along with records of other past secretaries and members, formed a nucleus of historical data, for Russ to research. I doubt that these three members realized, at the time, that they had just planted the seed for this Cameracraftsmen history book.

Virtually all past secretaries, listed elsewhere in this book, or their heirs, co-operated. Alvin Duis' widow, in particular, was helpful. Alvin had kept bound copies of correspondence, and along with Blaker's collection, Clift was off to a good start.

Although there is a scarcity of written data from the earliest years when the club had no secretary and no minutes were kept, the carbon paper era of the 30's, 40's, and 50's has aided greatly in preserving our heritage. One can't help but wonder if today's discs and tapes will do the same for researchers another century in the future.

Russ first wrote a series of historical chapters, published one at a time in the club newsletters. How well I remember reading those articles! Upon my induction in 1979, I asked Russ to send me all the past issues containing those articles. Reading through them gave me valuable insight into the club's purpose and original goals. At four per year he had published sixteen chapters by June 1980, covering our history through 1947. He also produced an impressive historical program for the 75th anniversary meeting in Scottsdale, Arizona in 1980. Retiring as secretary in 1980 he continued research and wrote a manuscript of Cameracraftsmen's history 1905 - 1995, covering our first 90 years.

Russ made an enduring contribution in compiling the background material of our organization and its membership. Through his years of devotion, much during his retirement years, this story is possible. We express our profound gratitude.

Several copies of various early manuscripts, produced by Russ, were distributed to some of our members for proofreading. Upon his death in 1999, further publication was discontinued in order to add the years 1996-2005 for a complete 100-year history. The club membership mandated the manuscript be edited and rewritten for an Anniversary publication in 2005.

As current historian with the responsibility of spearheading the completion of this project, I recommended and the membership approved, for member Jason Hailey to edit, rewrite, design and produce this history book. During the last five years, Jason and I have collaborated in forming a cohesive team and working formula, sharing, verifying data, and revising manuscripts in producing an illuminating story chronicling this remarkable period in the history of Cameracraftsmen. At one stage, I packed two bags of historical papers and photographs, totaling 100 pounds (to meet airline weight rules) and flew to Los Angeles to work with Jason for four days. We are all aware of Jason's talent, but my lasting impression is the dedication and time he has applied to this project. Just as Russ Clift's research and manuscripts set the stage for a book, the rewrite and final design of OUR STORY bear the mark of Jason Hailey.

We extend a special thanks to the History Book Committee (see title page), along with the other individual members who contributed to this project. Thanks to all who were called on by either Jason or myself for clarification and images. Preliminary copies of the updated manuscript were forwarded to committee members, Dimitri Lazoroff, David LaClaire, and Andy Foster for advance proofreading, input and suggestions. Previous manuscripts by Russ Clift had also been read by Joel Strasser and long time members: Gene Botsford, Fred Schmidt, William Miller, Frank Pechman and Fred Schiffer, all now deceased.

I encourage the reader to progress through these pages with perception and insight of our organization, its aspirations, disappointments and accomplishments. We have had twists and turns, and ups and downs through our 100 years of existence. Meetings were suspended during some depression years, and postponed during part of World War II. Conflicts and controversies occasionally beset the club.

There were also great learning experiences, wonderful transfers of information, and many displays of love and compassion. Great friendships were formed along the way. It was a credit to our club, and to the profession, when we elected our first female member in 1931, because she was qualified, and brought value to the club. As I helped with research and sorted through documents, I was continually impressed with three facts.

First, Cameracraftsmen has been an active group throughout nearly two-thirds the existence of photography, itself. Second, perhaps because of the need, during those times, our members were involved in prime leadership roles in the early stages of the National Photographers Association, forerunner to the Professional Photographers of America, the American Society of Photographers, the Photographic Arts and Science Foundation, and the Photography Hall of Fame, which established a potentially great historical archive in our country. Third, the heavy emphasis on the study group concept.

The basic ideals among the founding group is evident in the first meeting comments of Guy Reid, "Everyone willingly participated and demonstrated his ideas. We learned many things. Courtright (another original immortal ten member) showed us some gadgets he had invented. We were excited."

These ideals, inspired by the early years, continue today, as does the mood set by Jack Browning, whose original list of governing rules has survived almost intact. As we grow, and evolve, perhaps we should always consider a strong emphasis on the study group concept along with the social events and travel plans.

Our objective to share and learn without becoming complacent seems vital to our continued involvement as "one of the most respected independent organizations in the profession." Through our historical experience we have inherited the opportunity to enlarge on an artistic legacy.

Now, as Jason and I would often comment to each other over the past few years, "Have a good read." The 100-year history of Cameracraftsmen is in your hands.

*Ken Whitmire*



*It seems to me that the only way in which an artist can make his work durable and great is by seeking to arrive at the most direct expression of something actually felt by himself as part of his own, and so part of all human experiences. He must go to the root of all Art, namely the conveyance of an emotion or impression with the utmost force and directness from himself to another person.*

*Angel's Wings*

*Essays on Arts and Its Relation to Life*

*Edward Carpenter*