



A PSA Charter Member Club Celebrates Its 125th Year!

**By Gene, FPSA, PPSA and Pat Schwope
Co-Historians, St. Paul Camera Club**

Camera Clubs usually have a fairly standard array of officers and committee people. You know, President, VP, Secretary, and Treasurer. My club, St. Paul Camera Club, also has a standard collection of officers, plus one which most clubs do not have.....a Historian. Keeping up with the history of a 125 year old camera club can be a big job.

The story of St. Paul Camera Club (SPCC) starts on a chilly Monday evening, March 6th, 1893. The St. Paul Globe newspaper had complained in an editorial that St. Paul badly needed some of the "Minor Arts", such as photography, which were flourishing on the East Coast.

After the Globe editorial, a newspaper article announced a general meeting of amateur photographers, and everyone was invited. The stated goal was to form a camera club in St. Paul; it became the first camera club in Minnesota. Within a week the club was formed, officers were chosen, and meeting rooms were established at the St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company. A second meeting was held on Tuesday, March 14th. Members were primed for this, and showed their photographs at this second meeting.

The club grew fast in the 1890's, but one thing it didn't do well was keep good records. Similar to camera clubs of today, if a committee member failed to pass on a box of records, valuable information could and would be lost. Most of whatever records the club kept from 1893 until the club newsletter was established have been lost to the mists of time.

We have, however, retained some interesting bits and details of early club life. We know the names of 82 people who were members and officers between 1893 and 1906; we know the address of the building where the club held early meetings; and we know that in 1901, the great Pictorial Photographer Alfred Stieglitz, was made an Honorary Member of the club. Before 1910, the club held evening smokers for men and socials for women. About 25% of the club's members were women.

We also know that as glass plates were phasing out, the more advanced members used 5x7 sheet film cameras, while the newer members shot smaller formats, such as 4x5 and 3¼ x 4¼. These negatives were printed onto Lantern Slide Material so they could be exchanged with other camera clubs in Chicago and the East Coast. Even in 1893, the shipping costs for large prints were an issue.

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SPCC President Ray Allen in 1934.

Other early highlights include a 1920's radio program about photography, and club outings, which were almost always held overnight because of slow travel on poor roads. On April 1, 1934, St. Paul Camera Club became a Charter Member of PSA. We are one of less than 15 PSA Charter Member clubs still operating today.

Today, travel is easier, and SPCC gets its members from throughout the seven-county Twin City Metro Area. We hold two meetings a month, on the first and third Tuesdays. Our first meeting is a Competition Salon and the second meeting is a program. We always use outside Judges for competition. The second meeting may be put on by a local or touring professional, someone from the local Adobe Office, talented members of other clubs, or talented members of our own club.



Photo outings remain an important of SPCC life. Members from teenagers to retirees attended this 2010 outing to the Pioneer Village Museum, in Cameron WI. Photo by Barry Mullin.

The idea for a 125th Anniversary Celebration was hatched in 2015, when Margaret Sprott, APSA, asked me to write a PSA "Focus Story" about St. Paul Camera Club and the fact that SPCC was a Charter Member of PSA. In the lead paragraph I mentioned that SPCC was 122 years old, and a light bulb went on. In three years, the club would be 125 years old, and we needed to do something to let people know about it!

In 2016 the Board of Directors asked for someone to chair the event. As the club's Historians, Pat and I were the logical choices. We know the club's history and story, and the archives of the club are in our basement. A committee was formed and we started to put things together.

We began by looking at what the club had done 25 years earlier for its 100th Anniversary. The archives contained examples of all the work and prep the committee had done in 1993. Some of it we rejected, some we wanted to do again. The idea of an Anniversary Dinner was readily accepted, but t-shirts and sweatshirts not so much.

There is more minutia in a project like this than you can imagine. The color, size and number of all items have to be worked out, and in most cases voted on. We started working three years before the big day, and because we had so much time, things were relaxed and leisurely. There never seemed to be a lot of pressure, but everything moved along.

SPCC 125th Celebration *continued*

SPCC had held previous Gallery Photo Displays at Landmark Center in downtown St. Paul. Landmark is the former Federal Court House and a place rich in history. I approached Judy Brooks, the Director of Events for Landmark, about the idea of a 125th Anniversary Photo Display and holding our annual Awards Dinner in Landmark's Cortile area. Everyone accepted, and we soon had a location, a program and a time: June 5th, 2018.

The committee kept moving along, and questions kept getting answered. Judy Brooks brought up the idea of SPCC putting on a series of Public Photo Programs, and we had volunteers who accepted the challenge. Peggy Boike, APSA, MPSA, Bob Lundquist and Terry Butler presented the public programs over two Saturdays and a Thursday lunch hour.

As 2018 dawned, club members started submitting framed 11x14 and 16x20 images for the Gallery Photo Display, now titled "Our St. Paul". Landmark used our photos as the cornerstone for a summer-long art series called "St. Paul Re-Viewed". SPCC's "Our St. Paul" Gallery Show will be followed by two architectural photographers with their "Two Artist's Views of St. Paul", and a water color artist and her views of "All About St. Paul: A City in Watercolors". The final artist will be a sculptor, who makes models of St. Paul Buildings.

In the last month: We picked up door prizes, Dave Johnson from National Camera Exchange offered to photograph our event, and dinner tickets at Landmark Center became the hottest item in town. Members from other Twin Cities camera clubs asked to attend our 125th Anniversary Dinner, and the large parking ramp near Landmark Center closed for reconstruction.

We survived it all.



Member Roy Hakala and his wife, Leslie, look over several tables of SPCC scrapbooks, old photos, and memorabilia from the St. Paul Camera Club archives.



SPCC members Lane Phillips and Cindy Nelson looking over some of the best prints of the year just before the Awards Dinner.

Photos by Dave Johnson

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SPCC 125th Celebration *continued*

On Tuesday, June 5th, it all came together. A gathering of 102 club members, their families, and various friends of the SPCC gathered at Landmark Center for a wine and cheese reception to open the Gallery Show of "Our St. Paul" images, followed by our Annual Awards Dinner. Everything was close to perfect, all of the events happened as they were supposed to, all awards were presented, and the evening closed the same way SPCC used to close its most important meetings....with the singing of TAPS, just like the Boy Scouts used to do.



One of the evening's judges, Leo Pritschet, and his wife Leili, discuss the opening of the "Our St. Paul" Gallery Display with member Steve Simmer and his wife Helen.

Photo by Dave Johnson



SPCC 125th Anniversary committee members Peggy Boike, APSA, MPSA, and Ingrid Bloom enjoy the "Our St. Paul" wine and cheese party before the Awards Dinner.

Photo by Dave Johnson

Gene Schwope, FPSA, PPSA, at the podium during the Portfolio Competition of the Awards Dinner in the spacious surroundings of the Landmark Center Cortile area.

Photo by Dave Johnson



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SPCC 125th Celebration *continued*



*For all of her help and assistance, SPCC President Paul Rogne presents Landmark Center's Judy Brooks with an Honorary Membership in the SPCC.
Photo by Dave Johnson.*



SPCC 125th committee member Jenny Noecker discusses the finer points of Gallery Displays with PSA member Lu Ann Thatcher and her husband Jerry. Photo by Dave Johnson.

One Honorary Member, Dick Kain who arrived in a wheelchair, had not even been released from the hospital. Not willing to miss the event, he had his wife drive him from a rehab session, directly to Landmark Center. He is seen having a great time in the front row of the group (below). His doctor's comments were not available.

When the evening was over, there were quite a few teary eyes from the memories that the singing of TAPS initiated. People were celebrating the winning of Annual Awards, the 125th Anniversary of the club, and taking one last opportunity to look through the tables of memorabilia from the club archives. Former members talked to current members, and people from other Twin Cities clubs, who do not have such long histories, just took it all in.

One thing everyone agreed on, we all wanted to come back in 25 years for SPCC's 150th Anniversary.



In the Cortile Area, before the Awards Dinner, 102 members and friends of the St. Paul Camera Club celebrate for the photographer, Dave Johnson, who is shooting from the second floor.