

Kansas Memory



Robert Taft photography correspondence

Section 36, Pages 1051 - 1080

This correspondence documents the research Robert Taft undertook in writing his works on the history of American photography. It includes letters he wrote and responses. Correspondents include staff in historical and other collecting institutions, family members of early photographers and expedition members, publishers, and other people researching early U. S. photographers. It also documents some preservation work he did on early photographs. See Taft's photography research notes as Kansas Memory unit 228066.

Creator: Taft, Robert, 1894-1955

Date: 1926-1955

Callnumber: Robert Taft Coll. #172, Box 11-12, Photography-Correspondence

KSHS Identifier: DaRT ID: 221204

Item Identifier: 221204

www.kansasmemory.org/item/221204

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Robert Taft photography correspondence

May 2, 1941

The Reverend Mr. Paul B. Freeland
Covington Presbyterian Church
Covington, Louisiana

Dear Mr. Freeland:

Thank you for your kind letter of April 28th. I am glad that you enjoyed Photography and the American Scene.

I do not recall that I have ever tried the cyanide process on colored daguerrectypes. I see no reason why the process should not work on such daguerrectypes. There is the possibility, of course, that the alkaline cyanide solution would remove the color; but, unfortunately, the only way of determining this effect is to try it.

The cyanide process will produce no eventual deterioration of the image if the daguerrectype is thoroughly washed after removal from the cyanide bath. I have several daguerrectypes that were treated ten years ago and they look as bright as the day they were removed from the bath. If you can secure a copy of Dr. J. Towler's Silver Sunbeam published in 1864, you will have a very good manual and reference work on daguerrectypes, ambrotypes, and tintypes. One can find copies of this work occasionally in a second hand book store. If you do not have any success locally, you might try Richard S. Wormser, 22 West 48th Street, New York City, a specialist in second-hand technical books.

Sincerely yours,

RT/cdo

Robert Taft.

Kansas Memory



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Robert Taft photography correspondence

National Educational Alliance

INCORPORATED

37 WEST 47TH STREET
NEW YORK, N. Y.

PHOTOGRAPHY
DIVISION

OFFICE OF THE
GENERAL EDITOR

WILLARD D. MORGAN

May 15, 1941.

Robert Taft,
Prof. of Chemistry,
University of Kansas,
Lawrence, Kansas.

Dear Prof. Taft:

I was wondering if you would be interested in editing and re-writing articles on the following subjects:

1. Intensification and Intensifiers
2. Reduction and Reducers

I am not certain that you are familiar with this angle of photography but I imagine with all your extensive research work that you surely must have gone into this field quite thoroughly. I would like to give a very complete description on the use of Intensification and Reduction.

I am enclosing clippings of similar articles which appeared in an English publication. However, I believe that there will be many changes and a different arrangement of materials applicable to this country. Each article would appear under your own name.

Payment for each article would amount to at least \$50.00 or \$100.00 for both articles. In case you cannot cover these subjects, will you kindly return the clipping material.

Looking forward to hearing from you, I remain

Cordially yours,

Willard D. Morgan
Willard D. Morgan

Encl.
WDM/MT

Kansas Memory



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Robert Taft photography correspondence

May 20, 1941

Mr. Willard D. Morgan
National Educational Alliance
37 West 47th Street
New York City

Dear Mr. Morgan:

I shall be glad to write the articles on Reduction and Intensification as described in your letter of May 15th. They happen to be topics upon which I have spent considerable study. How soon do you want the articles, how long should they be, and in what style do you want them written, i.e., for the beginner who knows nothing about the subject or for the advanced amateur, or professional?

I have never received payment for the three articles on Morse, Brady and Plumbe. Will you see that an order is put through for them? Many thanks.

Sincerely,

RT/cdo

Robert Taft.

Kansas Memory



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OFFICE OF THE
GENERAL EDITOR

WILLARD D. MORGAN

May 29, 1941.

Prof. Robert Taft,
Dept. of Chemistry,
University of Kansas,
Lawrence, Kansas.

Dear Prof. Taft:

I am pleased to learn from your letter that you will go right ahead and prepare the articles on Intensification and Reduction. I would like to have these articles as complete as possible and include the current information which will be of value to all photographers. The article should be illustrated. If you feel that you will need a little more than the average allowance of \$50.00 per article, let me know. I will wait a few weeks before sending you a contract so that you can tell me approximately the word length and scope of the articles.

I would like to have the article on Intensification first. If this could be completed toward the end of August or the beginning of September, it would be fine. Then the article on Reduction could come later.

I would like to have you write the article so that the average amateur photographer will be able to follow the story and be able to carry out the procedures. I think photographic writing is of much more value when it can be simplified and made available to several hundred thousand readers rather than to just 1000 advanced experts. However, there can be a section in the article possibly toward the end where you could include more of the advance material. In this way you would appeal to both classes.

It seems like all the payments for over 200 contributors came due about the same time. For this reason the Accounting Department is a little slow in clearing them up. However, I have your contracts on the list and I will push along payment as rapidly as possible on your previous three articles.

With all good wishes.

Cordially yours,

Willard D. Morgan
Willard D. Morgan

WDM/MT

Kansas Memory

Robert Taft photography correspondence



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June 14, 1941

Mr. Willard D. Morgan
National Educational Alliance
37 West 47th Street
New York City

Dear Mr. Morgan:

I shall follow your suggestions concerning the two articles on Intensification and Reduction as outlined in your letter of May 29th. The article on Intensification will probably be about two thousand words in length and the one on Reduction slightly longer. Suitable and special illustrations for each of the articles could be supplied at a cost of \$15.00 for each article. The articles could both be ready for your use by August 15th.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Taft.

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GENERAL EDITOR

WILLARD D. MORGAN

June 19, 1941.

Robert Taft,
University of Kansas,
Dept. of Chemistry,
Lawrence, Kansas.

Dear Mr. Taft:

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter
of June 14th regarding the articles on Intensification
and Reduction.

I note that there will be an extra charge
of \$15.00 for each article to cover the illustrations.
I will add this amount to each of the two contracts.
This will make the final amount for each contract \$65.00.

I understand that the articles will be ready
sometime around the middle of August. This will be fine.

With best wishes.

Cordially yours,

Willard D. Morgan
Willard D. Morgan

Encl. 2C
WDM/MT

P.S.

The two contracts mentioned above are being enclosed
herewith which we ask you to kindly sign and return to us
as soon as possible.

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Robert Taft photography correspondence

AGFA ANSCO

PHOTOGRAPHIC MATERIALS SINCE 1842

A DIVISION OF GENERAL ANILINE & FILM CORPORATION



BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK

July 3, 1941

Prof. Robert Taft
Chemistry Department
University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas

Dear Professor Taft

In going over some old copies of Anthony's Photographic Bulletin, in preparation for Agfa Anasco's centennial commemoration booklet to be published next year, I came across an account concerning the claimants for producing the first daguerreotype portrait. Since a portion of the second chapter in your fine book, which, incidentally, has aided in the preparation for our centennial, is given to this controversial question I thought perhaps you would be interested to hear of an additional claim.

The account was presented in the form of a paper read before the photographic section of the American Institute by J. B. Gardener and can be found on page 250 of Anthony's Photographic Bulletin for the year 1886. Professor Morse had an instrument maker, named Prosch, who made America's first daguerrian camera for him. After this camera had been completed and before Morse had come to call for it, Prosch was anxious to see if it really would take pictures and actually made and developed an exposure taken from his shop window. The image thus obtained was of a carriage and its driver, who was fast asleep and remained practically motionless for the duration of the exposure. This was during the latter part of August, 1839. Professor Morse did not take his first picture until September, 1839, and accounts of Draper and Cornelius would indicate they did not take a portrait until some time in 1840. Of course, much depends on the definition of a portrait, but if the image of a recognizable human face is the important fact then evidently there is a good basis to the claim made by Prosch.

If you were not already aware of this additional claim, I hope you will find it interesting, and I shall be glad to hear from you if I can be of further service.

Very truly yours

Robert M. Dunn
Advertising Department

DDN:w

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Robert Taft photography correspondence

July 9, 1941

Mr. Robert M. Dunn
Advertising Department
Agfa Ansco Corporation
Binghamton, New York

Dear Mr. Dunn:

Thank you for your kind letter of July 3rd. I am glad that you liked my book and have found it of value.

I am interested in your statement concerning Prosch and the first daguerreotype portrait. I do not believe that very much weight is to be attached to the Gardiner paper in the Anthony Bulletin for 1886. In the first place, Gardiner gives no contemporary evidence (i.e., authentic evidence available in 1839) supporting his point. As Gardiner's statement was made nearly half a century after the reputed event transpired, exceedingly good contemporary proof would have to be advanced to convince me of his claim. In the second place, as I have shown in my book (p. 14), the first written description which made daguerreotypy possible did not reach this country until September 20, 1839. (In fact, the original announcement of Daguerre's process was not made in Paris until August 19, 1839.) These facts alone would cloud any claim that Prosch might have advanced for daguerreotype portraiture "late in August, 1839." In the last place, a brother of Prosch, discussed in the New York Times for February 19, 1883, the history of early daguerreotypy in this country and makes, as I recall it now, no such claim for his brother. In the light of all these facts, I believe the Gardiner account should be discredited. If you do run across further evidence on these points, I would greatly appreciate your writing me.

Sincerely yours,

RT/edo

Robert Taft.

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August 15, 1941

Mr. Willard D. Morgan
National Educational Alliance
37 W. 47th Street
New York City

Dear Mr. Morgan:

I am enclosing the article on "Intensification" with illustrations. The article on "Reduction" has been written and the illustrations are being prepared. Will you please see that payment for my original three articles (sent last March) and the one on "Intensification" (\$120.00 total) is forwarded promptly.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Taft

RT:ft

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37 WEST 47TH STREET
NEW YORK, N. Y.

PHOTOGRAPHY
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OFFICE OF THE
GENERAL EDITOR

WILLARD D. MORGAN

October 3, 1941.

Prof. Robert Taft,
Chemistry Department,
University of Kansas,
Lawrence, Kansas.

Dear Prof. Taft:

This will acknowledge receipt of your article, Reduction and Reducers. Thanks very much for getting this in ahead of schedule.

By this time you have undoubtedly received the first issue of THE COMPLETE PHOTOGRAPHER. When you get time I wish that you would send along any comments or suggestions which may occur to you. The first issue is in the mails now. It will take a few issues before you can really see how the various subjects have been balanced.

I hope to get our Accounting Department in action with a few checks now that the publication is started.

With all good wishes, I remain

Cordially yours,

W. D. Morgan

Willard D. Morgan

wdm/mrt

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Hotel Imperial, Broadway and 32 Street, New York City.
January 27, 1942.

General Manager,
Cushman & Wakefield, Inc.
30 East 42 Street, City.

Dear Sir:

I have rare photos of "Old New York" including the sites of your offices, etc. From my celebrated private collection of 10,500 photos, covering the 1860s, 70s, 80s, 90s and early 1900s, my personal hobby since 1900. I have never been "in the photo business", but I have been seriously ill for years past, and have now become very hard-pressed financially. So, having given more than 1400 to museums, libraries and government institutions, I want to sell some (to defray vital expenses), and will then send the rest to storage. Any of these photos at \$5 each. I will only sell outright, as I cannot "submit" photos for "consideration". People have retained them many weeks, even several months, and then have either lost them, or have returned them bent and broken.

From the era of horsebuses, horse-cars, telegraph-poles, gas-lamps, the Battery, Bowling Green, Wall Street, Broadway, 5th Avenue, 14th Street, 23d, 34th, 42d. Old hotels, theatres, landmarks. First Stock Exchange; when the Aquarium was "Castle Garden"; First Madison Square Garden; first Grand Central Station; first Grant's Tomb; Building Brooklyn Bridge, etc.

Thousands of old photos of stage and opera stars, authors, musicians, painters, statesmen, athletes (including pugilists) etc. I bought all of these. The latter, however, were all given to me by members of the respective families: Almost 1000, showing Astor, Vanderbilt, Belmont, Gerry, Goelet, Gallatin, Gould, Remsen, Roosevelt, Jay, Kane, Kean, Fish, Iselin, Wetmore, Wilmerding, etc. "as they were." Every spring, for 19 years, I privately showed old photos in the fashionable "American colonies" in London, Paris and Monte Carlo, and was always given hundreds more. Every summer, for 30 years, I privately showed old photos at Newport, at the various estates, and was again given additional hundreds.

Recently I presented rare photos to the following, each of whom wrote most graciously in reply: President Roosevelt, Secretary of the Interior Ickes, Secretary of the Navy Knox, Under-Secretary of State Welles, General Marshall (Chief-of-Staff), etc. Also Winston Churchill, to whom I presented rare photos of his mother, which she gave me in London, when she entertained me there. (She was Jenny Jerome, of New York.)

I have been a member of the N.Y. Historical Society since 1927, and six times they have displayed selections from my gift of 450 rare portraits. Recently I increased to 325 my gift to the Museum of the City of N.Y., and to 100 my gift to the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington. I recently added to my "Generals of the Past" to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and to my "Admirals of the Past" to the Naval War College at Newport, etc., etc.

Because I am so very ill, I can only receive visitors here by appointment, at a time mutually convenient, and I dislike having to discuss personal matters over the phone from here. If you would consider buying any "Old New York" photos at \$5 each, please WRITE to me, and I would get in touch with you, and manage to BRING some, for your inspection.

Yours sincerely,

Harold Seton

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Robert Taft photography correspondence

BOYER — 2700 Wabash Ave., Chicago, U. S. A.

Feb 14 1942



My Dear Mr Taft -

I am not a collector of Photographs or Photo history,
but in my gathering of items on "Early Chicago"
I bumped upon the facts as follows:-

* Sigmund Krausz was a friend of mine +
was a member of the Chicago Coin Club
for ^{the} years while I was President - (He was a rich man)

* I never knew that he was ever a ^{Chgo} photograph-
er but I did know of his fine coin
collection bearing Beautiful Profiles (Ancients).

Which seemed to be his hobby -

* Later he became President of the Business
Men's Art League here in town (Painters)
He is now dead.

* I recently discovered that in 1891- that he
was a Photographer at 2930 Cottage
Grove Ave. (The Gallery is now gone)

* Left behind him is a collection of
36 Candid Shots of "The Street Types"

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- 2
- of Chicago - about 5 x 5 inches (?)
- x These are The Newsboys, Street Sweepers, Boot Blacks, Beer men, Street Takers, Stenographers & so on - 36 in all + Very Fine.
 - x There were taken in 1891 -
 - x In 1892 he published them in Photogravure, found into a Book -
 - x Have you any record of his work as a Candid Photographer?
-
- x Who do you consider the Early Candid Shot Photographers?
 - x Do you suppose this work of his was an original idea - or was the idea old?
-
- x Feb 22 - I am Exhibiting at the Chicago Public Library this Collection -
 - x Each Photo has been written up + described by a great writer of that Epoch - Opie Read + such like -
 - x Are you familiar with the set?

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Robert Taft photography correspondence

BOYER — 2700 Wabash Ave., Chicago, U. S. A.



3

x We have discovered that 1 person in
the pictures is still alive ^{here} + there no doubt
are others - which ^{may} come out after
the exhibition.



x Where can I find a "See the little Birdie"
Baby Charmer - ? To exhibit with this set?

x I have Thayers (^{chgo} Anthony) Photo supply
catalogue of 1886 + I note they were
then a stock in trade; then but now
today, Eastmans Mgr. here ^{told me that} said they are
not in their stock for 25 years -



I think your book is a masterpiece - Yes it is.
Wow! ^{but you sure did something & how.} From it

I learn; now that Fitzgibbon was an ^{Early}
St Louis Photographer - I could never
figure who Mrs Fitzgibbon-Clark, of
"the St Louis Canadian Photographer was
(magazine)" ^{former & Publisher}

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Recently I tumbled into a hoard of Photo
Magazines of the 1886 - 1900 Epoch
in the Schneider Gallery here -

I would like to find out more about
~~Steppens the Chgo Photographer, who made the Ladies~~
~~thin at the waist line - & thus became famous~~

In a series of Photograph "Fault finds"
by ^{Leading} 5 Chgo Photographers in The Photo
Beacon of 1897 — I find Steppens
seemed to know his "posing". tech-nique"
to good advantage.

This fellow invented & ran on the
streets of Chgo one of the 1st
Horseless Carriages in 1878 - 1879
I have the Photo —

I will be glad to reciprocate
on any inf that I have
Cordially

Aeden Scott Boyer

I am very interested in Early Bicycle History —
Having perhaps as fine a collection of Printed Bike
history as exists — but still searching for more

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BOYER — 2700 Wabash Ave., Chicago, U. S. A.

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In 1911 — The Everleigh Club, Chgo

Most Notorious Maisonde Dames issued a
Photographic Booklet with 32 pictures of the
Palace — \$100.000 in Furnishings with \$600 Gold
Cupidors of 18 Karat — etc —

Well after many years we Chgo Collectors
have unearthed 1 copy (I found it) + I
have photographed (copied it) —

The ~~sure~~ Most notorious place ^{of its kind} just foederal
^{"Pic Shaw"} up here, + I got 2 of Jack Johnson's ^{Gold} Cupidors
from his "Cafe de Champion" there +
several other items of that old day
Epoch of splendor —

B

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Robert Taft photography correspondence

February 20, 1942

Mr. Alden Scott Boyer
2700 Wabash Avenue
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Mr. Boyer:

Thank you for your letter of February 14th and for your kind words concerning Photography and the American Scene. I am interested in the questions you raise but unfortunately I cannot be of any great help because they deal with a period (i.e. after 1889) in which I have made no extended study. Candid photography began quite early. Nadar, in Paris, as early as 1866 has some remarkably fine examples of what we now call candid photography. Some of the Brady, Gardner, Sullivan photographs of the Civil War period and after could be classed as candid photography. Even at that, the fact that candid photography was practiced to some extent does not detract from the interest and value that attaches to the Chicago photographs of Sigmund Krausz. I think you have made a valuable and important find - as far as social history goes. My friend, Beaumont Newhall, of the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York City, has been particularly interested in this phase of photography. I know he would appreciate it if you wrote to him and described the Kransz photographs.

Mrs. Fitzgibbon Clark, the owner and publisher of the St. Louis and Canadian photographs was the widow of Fitzgibbon of St. Louis. After Fitzgibbon's death she married a Mr. Clark.

I cannot help you at all with any information on "See the little Birdie" baby charmer. I don't think I have ever seen one, although I have seen pictures of them.

I had a little correspondence with Steffen, the Chicago photographer, some years ago but the information I got from him was of little value. The Chicago Historical Society in Lincoln Park and the Newberry Library, also of Chicago, are particularly strong on biographical records. They might be able to help you out. One of the best methods of locating biographical records and data is to determine the names and addresses of members of the immediate family of the person in whom you are interested. If you can find an obituary of Steffens (I am assuming that he is now dead, as I have no way of checking my memory at the moment) it would undoubtedly state his survivors. Either of the above libraries should be able to help you locate such an obituary.

Many thanks again for writing.

Sincerely yours,

RT/cdo

Robert Taft.

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BOYER — 2700 Wabash Ave., Chicago, U. S. A.



Feb 24 42

My dear Mr. Taft.

Quite by accident I discovered -

Jan 1- 1851

Appleton's Mechanics Mag - Vol 1 - N^o 1. Page 46

Photography on ^{sheet} Gelatine - means of obtaining very clear + very transparent negative prints, capable of being transferred a great many times on Photographic paper - by M.A. Poitevin - * Comptes Rendus

No 21- 27- May 1850 - Chemist July 1850

Page 48. Photography on Paper - means of obtaining the image in the Camera obscura on dry Paper by - M. Blanquart - Evard - * same reference as above -

P. 50. On Images of the sun + moon obtained on glass by Photography by M Niepce de St Victor - * * Comptes Rendus No 22 - June 3- 1850 -

Photography on Glass Page 296 same magazine from London Athenaeum -

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These articles seem very well done to me -

If the volume is not available; any time I can
loan you my copy. - Should the above be of
interest.

Boggs

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Robert Taft photography correspondence

BOYER — 2700 Wabash Ave., Chicago, U. S. A.

Feb 25-42



My dear Mr Taft —

Today a fellow in Schenectady, N.Y. state writes & asks me for

Brady's Birthdate - I ^{easily} dug it out of your Reference Division

in your book - He says he is writing a history of Brady.
(Hallibucks Book Shop 751 State St Schenectady N.Y.) I told him
to order your book at once - The large amount of Research you must have done
on your fine book;

reminds me of "Karl Kron" - who left us the
only history we have of the Early Bicycle ⁽¹⁸⁷⁸⁻¹⁸⁸⁶⁾

Boneshaker days - (1868-9) This fellow

left us in his "10,000 miles on a Bicycle"
600,000 words - Indexed + cross
Indexed like no ones business; ^{real History} I have never
looked for a fact in these epochs that I
have not found - along the Bicycle lines -

If you are interested in seeing a copy
I can loan you one - It is common.
& most every Library has it.

I am sending you a couple of reproductions of
"finds" I have made - The Great Diderot's
Dictionary of Science 30 Volumes Folio 1751-1780

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is the most monumental work of the 18th Century —
Spiced it up here in an auction for \$110 — complete
(30 vols)

In Paris I never saw a set offered — not one + I
lived there 14 years —

It is from the above that the Chemical symbols
are taken

I paid \$50 for the small ^{Cut out} section on "Chemistry"
alone in Paris years ago + patted myself
on finding even this section ^{two years later} ~~that~~ found the set

I saw today; (finally) the 1819 issue of the
Analectic Magazine that contains the 1st Lithograph
printed in America — It's not much to see
when it is before you —

I got 2 photostats today of M J Steffens home +
Photo Gallery here — I discover Leo Steffens is still
alive ^{was} & active ~~at~~ at Wallinger's Gallery here:
but now in Michigan they tell me
When 20 yrs of age in 1895 (?) he ran his
father's Daguerreotype Gallery ~~at~~ here. + did
nice work. in taking & restoring.

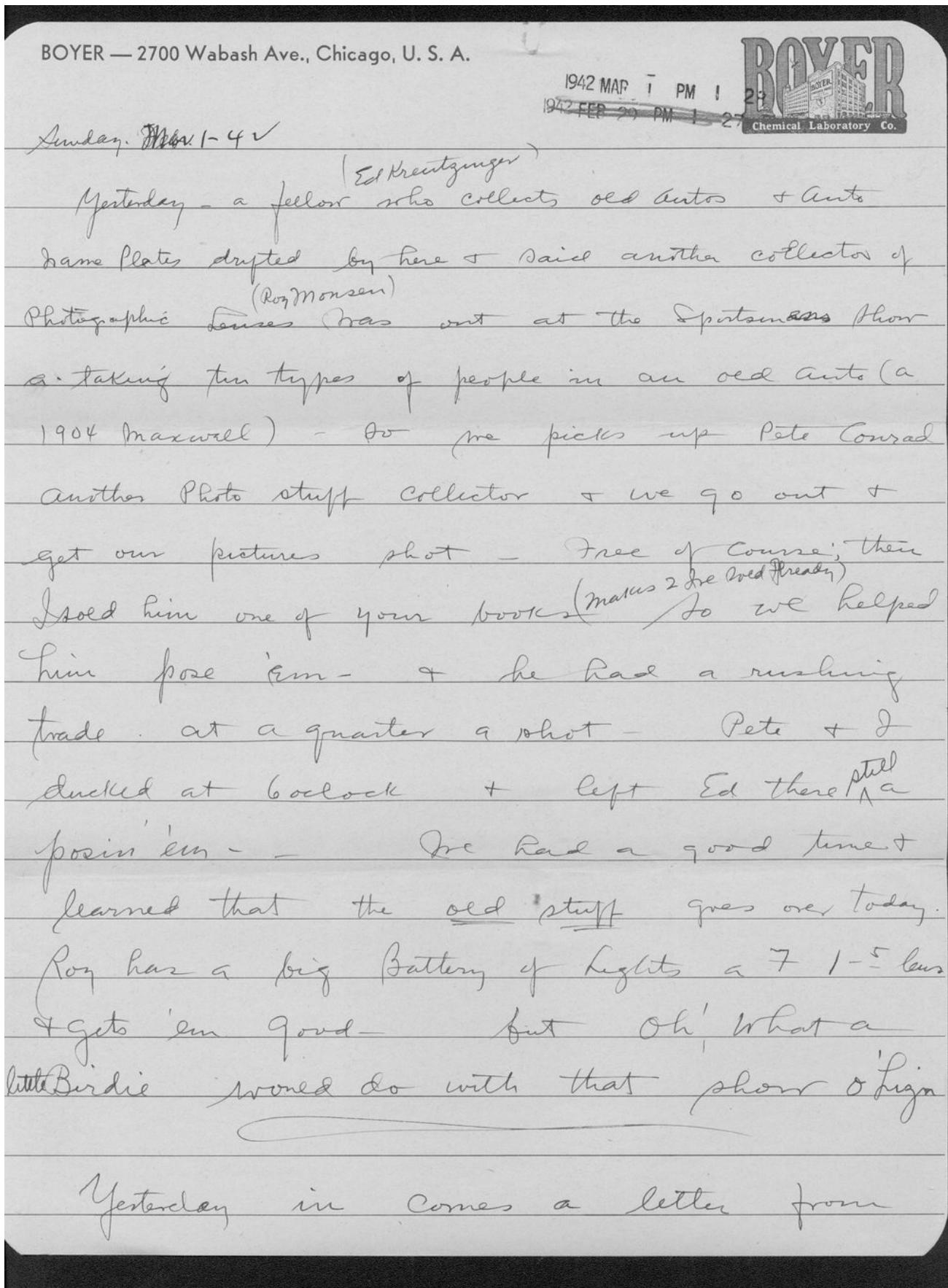
Did you ever hear of the Gallery with
a skylight large enough so that a
Tally Ho + a 6 hours team could be
driven in + shot on a 36 x 36 Plate
here on Monroe St in Chgo I have the
story + a picture of the Sayord ^{but don't recall} ~~Sayord~~ ^{Name 1895}

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a fellow in the East who has a
little Birdie in a slot machine

"How long can you make the Little
Birdie sing? for 1¢" a line of Tarter
of the old days - Well it didn't
take me long to get that thing ordered &
I now await its arrival Maybe I
will get a little Birdie if the old
Gallery days + maybe not - I've
never even heard of this slot machine
But wonders never cease

and cordial

B

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March 9, 1942

Mr. M. H. Briggs
1764 East 71st Place
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Mr. Briggs:

I received a copy of a letter today from Harold Seton, Hotel Imperial, Broadway and 32nd Street, New York City, who is interested in disposing of his collection of N. Y. (city) photographs dating back as far as 1860. The collection numbers some 11,000 items. I do not know whether you are interested in handling material of this kind, but I thought I would pass the word along, and, if interested, you can write to Mr. Seton directly.

Sincerely yours,

RT/cdo

Robert Taft.

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MISSISSIPPI HEIGHTS ACADEMY

J. E. BROWN, President

BLUE MOUNTAIN, MISSISSIPPI

3/24/42

Dr Robert Taft
University of Kansas

Dear Sir: -

Several months ago a newspaper clipping was handed to me containing an article written by Elmo Scott Watson concerning "Who made the first camera in the U.S. and took the First Photographic Portrait."

I have meditated writing to you since I was handed the clipping, for I have in my possession a valuable daguerreotype which

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MISSISSIPPI HEIGHTS ACADEMY

J. E. BROWN, President

BLUE MOUNTAIN, MISSISSIPPI

dates back some where before 1841.

It has been sent to me from New York
and is the "picture" of my Great Grandfather
Nathaniel Garrow who died March 3. 1841.

I have treasured this above all my keep-
sakes, but am now getting up in years
and would like to have it preserved.
For I believe it is one of the earliest
productions in U. S.

You will no doubt be interested in
the man whose picture it passes. I refer
(over)

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you to the Congressional Records of
1827 - 1829.

He lived at Auburn N.Y. and
my father was the named for him.
I have traced records both Revolutionary
and Historic for every thing I could
find concerning him and my G. Grand-
mother, and have secured other things
belonging to them besides the daguerreotype
which I mention.

If you feel more interest I will
be glad to furnish you with further details.

Very sincerely -
Mrs Eddie Garrison Brann

Kansas Memory



Robert Taft photography correspondence

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART NEW YORK

11 WEST 53rd STREET
TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900
CABLES: MODERNART, NEW-YORK

BEAUMONT NEWHALL, CURATOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Professor Robert Taft
University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kan.

March 28, 1942

Dear Taft:

Thank you very much for sending on the letter from Mr Seton, which I am returning. I have heard of him from several sources, and I hope to be able to work out an arrangement so that I can see some of his material. Please be assured that I shall let you know the outcome.

The exhibition of the Civil War and the American Frontier is attracting a good deal of interest. We had a little tea for Mr Jackson on the opening day, and the friends I invited to meet him were very much impressed with him. He is indeed a wonderful little man. Your loans look very fine. We have the best stereos exhibited in stereo viewers, which are fixed up in such a way that the public can see into them, but that the stereographs themselves are safe and secure.

A request has come from the Chicago Art Institute to borrow the exhibition. May we keep your photographs for a few months longer so that they may be included in the showing there?

One of the delightful things about exhibitions is that people come in with material similar to that displayed. A reverend from Brooklyn came in the other day with some excellent Civil War photographs by a pair of workers entirely new to me: "Haas & Peale" From Charleston, S.C. The series shows the assault by the Union forces on Fort Sumter. While they are poorly preserved, they have a remarkable quality of seeming less posed than the Brady, Gardner, etc. photos. Are you familiar with these workers? If not, I'll send you a few copies. We did not acquire the lot, but I persuaded a friendly collector to buy them, and they are always available. That same collector has four beautifully preserved albums of views of the Yosemite, Yellowstone, and other western parks. I saw the Yosemite series this morning. They correspond exactly to the description of the Watkins pictures by O. W. Holmes which you have quoted in your book. In addition they are of the same format---rather narrow, with arched tops---and of the same general style as the few Watkins pictures we have in the show. They are not signed, but one of them shows Lieut. Wheeler's party in Yosemite. We bought some fifty early Jackson Hayden Survey prints, with the illustrated catalog---a delightful little collection.

I was given as a joke a dozen carte de visites. They are of no intrinsic value, and I was about to dispose of them when I looked more carefully at the stamps on the backs. These stamps are all 2 cents; the photographers are all Michigan workers. What interested me especially was that many of the stamps are cancelled with the name of the photographer and a date. Here is a list of the dates:

Photographer unknown	Dec. 15, 1862
Photographer's name not given	1866 (also cancelled Ives, presumably E. B. Ives of Niles, Mich., a photographer of other cards in the group)

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Robert Taft photography correspondence

Photographer's name not printed. May 1, '68
" Dec. 28, 1869
Marvin Cathcart July 3, '71

I find it difficult to fit this data in with your statement, on p.151-2 of your book, "These stamps were required by law in the period from September 1, 1864 to August 1, 1866." So I thought I'd pass this information on for whatever it may be worth.

Have just done a short technical essay for Ciba Symposia, the house organ of the Ciba Pharmaceutical Products, to serve as an introduction on collected essays on medical photography, and I shall send you a copy upon its publication.

With all best wishes,

Beaumont Newhall

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Robert Taft photography correspondence

March 31, 1942

Mrs. Addie Garrow Brown
Mississippi Heights Academy
Blue Mountain, Mississippi

Dear Mrs. Brown:

Thank you for your kind letter of March 24th. You must have one of the very earliest daguerreotypes made in this country. The earliest American-made one that I have seen was taken in 1846 (you will find it reproduced on page 47 of my book Photography and the American Scene) so you can see that yours is indeed a rare specimen.

Sometimes the maker of the daguerreotype placed his name on his handcraft. Does the case or the frame have any name stamped or written on it? Sometimes, too, valuable data concerning a daguerreotype may be found behind the daguerreotype itself. Usually, with a little care and patience, the daguerreotype can be gently pried from its case and the back of the daguerreotype and the inside of the case examined for any writing. If you do find the name of the maker, would you be good enough to write me?

I believe you are showing good judgment and public spirit in your desire to have your daguerreotype carefully preserved. As Nathaniel Garrow would be of greater interest and importance to New Yorkers, it seems to me that its preservation in a New York museum is indicated. If I may make suggestions, I would recommend that it be given either to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City or to the New York Historical Society (170 Central Park, West, New York City). The Metropolitan has, within recent years, begun the collection of daguerreotypes. The New York Historical Society has long been interested in the preservation of historic material of interest to the nation in general and to New Yorkers in particular. You might write to either or both of these organizations and ask them if they would accept the daguerreotype under such conditions as you cared to make.

If I can be of further assistance, please feel free to write me.

Sincerely yours,

RT/cdo

Robert Taft.