

[ Established 1884 ]

THE CAMERA CLUB OF NEW YORK

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To whom it may concern,

We support having The Bancroft Building at 3-7 West 29th Street, New York, New York, 10001, evaluated by the Landmarks Commission.

This particular building housed the Camera Club of New York, which exhibited many of the most famous photographers of the turn of the century. As The Director of this 125+ year organization I can tell you this was a very important time for the Club and for the history of the arts in NYC. Alfred Stieglitz, considered by many to be the father of American photography, was an early member, and his groundbreaking publication, *Camera Notes*, documented the Club's activities while advocating for the inclusion of photography in the catalog of fine arts.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Stanley', on a light gray background.

John Stanley  
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### **The Camera Club of New York at 3-9 West 29<sup>th</sup> Street, 1898-1903**

The Camera Club of New York, during the time of its residency at 3-7 West 29<sup>th</sup> St. (1898-1903), was recognized as the leading photographic organization of its day in the United States. Combined in 1897 from two other camera clubs, the newly named Camera Club of New York constructed a state of the art facility on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor and a portrait studio on the roof. The Club had about 335 members at that time.

The Camera Club at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a combination of social club and scientific and artistic meeting place. A popular social event was the viewing a member's work via the lantern slide. The glass lantern slide was a popular photographic medium at that time. By projecting the slides onto a screen they could be critiqued by members or a group of judges. Lantern slide show exchanges were a worldwide phenomena and the Camera Club as was major participant in exchanges and competitions. Alfred Stieglitz was often asked to judge these competitions. The Camera Club accepted women as early as 1888 into its membership. Several exhibited and lectured here at 3-9 West 29<sup>th</sup> St., including Gertrude Kasebier, Frances Benjamin Johnston and Eva Watson.

The science of photography, by way of experimentation and the introduction of new techniques and technology, was always front and center at the Club. Indeed, the Club's official mission was "to promote the science and art of photography". All the major manufacturers of cameras, chemicals and papers demonstrated their latest products to its members. For instance, X-Ray photography was demonstrated here in 1898 and the American Vitagraph Company exhibited "Moving Pictures, Up to Date" in 1899. In 1902 lectures detailing Peary's expedition to the North Pole and developments in astronomical photography were held.

As soon as Alfred Stieglitz got settled into the Camera Club in 1897 he began his crusade to legitimize photography as an art here at the Camera Club. He began with a series of exhibitions. Among them were: Frederick Holland Day (Feb. 1898); Gertrude Kasebier and William J. Cassard (Feb. 1899); Alfred Stieglitz (May 1899); Clarence H. White (Oct. 1899); Frank Eugene (Nov 1899); Eva L. Watson (Apr 1900); Joseph T. Keiley (May 1900); Alvin Langdon Coburn (Jan 1903).

As head of the Publications Committee at the Club Stieglitz promoted photography as a legitimate art through the Club's official journal, *Camera Notes*. By reproducing high quality photogravures and enlisting articles from leading art and photography critics, *Camera Notes* quickly gained recognition as one of the best journals of contemporary photography available. Stieglitz would later use the template forged under *Camera Notes* to create his own art and photography journal *Camera Work*.

In 1900 Edward Steichen, then just 21 years old, made a pilgrimage to the Camera Club at 3-9 West 29<sup>th</sup> St. to meet Stieglitz and show him his photographs. Stieglitz immediately recognized his talent and bought three of his prints. When Steichen moved to France he began to send Stieglitz works by photographers and artists in the new modern style for exhibition at his Little Galleries at 291 Fifth Avenue and in *Camera Work*. After his return to New York Steichen would join the Camera Club and remain an active member for the rest of his long life.

-Anthony Troncale  
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