

Dear Friend of U. S. Camera:

This week we begin our collection of prints for U. S. Camera Annual 1940.

To fans in every branch of the photographic world, U. S. Camera is known as the outstanding annual of photography - devoted to the work of America's leading photographers. Each year since its inception in 1935, it has been a front rank best-seller.

The 1939 edition was the most successful in the book's history - the entire print order being sold out within one week of publication date. Today scores of people are still vainly trying to get copies.

Reviewers and critics of almost every American newspaper hailed the last U. S. Camera Annual as the finest collection of photographic masterpieces ever published. These are typical comments:

From Life publisher, Roy Larsen: "The best annual you've ever done." Says Lewis Gannett, New York Herald-Tribune reviewer: "Some beautiful pictures here . . . magnificent . . . eloquent." Says Arthur Ellis in the Washington Post: " . . . the most vital, forceful and thought-provoking examples of camera technique." The New Yorker: "Best Camera annual available." Walter Winchell: "The most eye-arresting art and photos of them all.

Hundreds of newspapers and magazines requested permission to reproduce pictures from U. S. Camera. Papers like the New York Times devoted a full rotogravure page in hailing its pictures as the finest photographs of the year. Recognition of its place as the foremost photographic annual of America was found in the comments of authorities in all branches of photography.

Back of the success of the last U. S. Camera Annual were both the thought and planning that went into its makeup, and the beautiful physical appearance of the book itself. It signaled the first year that Edward Steichen acted as one man judge and jury and the intelligence of his selection and the catholicity of his taste were undoubtedly the most important reasons for the book's unusual success. Frank Crownshield's analysis of photography as an art, the Farm Security Administration's portfolio of photographs were also highly commended.

As for its physical appearance, critics unanimously lauded the craftsmanship which went into its preparation. The two finest types of printing, sheet fed gravure and fine screen letter-press, preserved almost every detail and tonal variation of the original salon prints. These plates were made by two of America's leading engravers. The binding, too, won acclaim, for it was the first time that stiff board covers and heavy spiral binding were combined to produce a book of exceptional permanence.

As we start to work now on U. S. Camera 1940 for fall publication, we have more ambitious plans than ever -- plans to make it a more beautiful and desirable book than any previous edition. Here are some features for 1940.

1. 100th Anniversary Celebration: Commemorating photography's first century of achievement. Leading writers, critics and authorities will signalize what photography is doing NOW to enrich the world - not what photography did in its early years.
2. Edward Steichen is again sole judge and jury. Mr. Steichen's masterly selection of prints this year helped tremendously to establish U. S. Camera as the world's finest photographic book.
3. Edward Weston Portfolio: A 24-page section featuring the work of this master photographer of the west - the first time his pictures have been put into a book in this form. Included will be scores of masterpieces from Weston's photographic history of California, on which he is now working through a Guggenheim fellowship, the first ever awarded in photography.
4. Arnold Genthe - an Appreciation - A tribute to this gentleman-photographer whose pictures have for nearly two score years been outstanding examples of the finest modern technique. The working philosophy of a man who has and is contributing much to the art of living and the prestige of photography.
5. Color Section: Keeping pace with the tremendous growth of color photography, U. S. Camera 1940 will present a large, complete color section of 24 pages - featuring the finest color photographs of the year taken by America's leading photographers.
6. Aviation Section: A portfolio of the outstanding aviation pictures of of the year which will recognize and reproduce pictures taken by the world's best known aerial photographers.
7. News Pictures - a portfolio and a salute to this vital branch of photography. A selection of the work of leading news photographers whom men like Edward Weston and Edward Steichen regard as leading contributors to the photographic art.
8. New, Larger Index: Complete information on the pictures in U. S. Camera 1940 will be contained in a 24 page index section. This index will give all data connected with the making of the individual photograph - the camera, lens, filter, aperture, exposure, the time and light condition, etc.
9. Larger Text Section - 24 pages of text material - articles, stories and other data - informative, invaluable for reference, and highly inspirational.
10. A New Catalogue of Equipment and Supplies: For the first time, a complete catalogue of everything a photographer needs or wants, will be included in a gravure book printed separately and bound into every copy of U. S. Camera 1940.

11. Other Features: Stiff board covers and regular cloth book-binding will be used for the first time . . . more letterpress printing plates, the ultimate in fine reproduction, will be used to retain every subtlety and shading of the original salon print.

In all respects, U. S. Camera 1940 will be the finest photographic year book we have ever published . . . a book of 256 beautiful pages for everyone who likes, uses or takes pictures!

To America's photographers, both professional and advanced amateurs, U. S. Camera has become the standard works, the "bible" of the photographic world. It is seen and read by hundreds of thousands of people in homes, in offices, in libraries, in galleries all over the world. It has properly been called "The biggest-photographic-salon-in-book-form-in-America," and as such, it has become the hall of fame for American cameramen and women - a springboard to fame for unknown workers and a testimonial of sustained excellence for veterans.

So make plans now to send your best prints for Mr. Steichen's judging - which gets under way as soon as he returns from Hawaii in a few weeks. We invite the best work of every photographer - man, woman or child - regardless of where he lives or works, and regardless of what category his work falls into. We invite pictures of any subject, any place, anything - and as heretofore, photographic excellence, dramatic quality and originality in choice of subject are the only factors in selection.

Earmark your best prints - both those you now have and those you will soon take - and send them to U. S. Camera Annual. They should be 5x7" or larger, mounted or unmounted, but don't send negatives. Be sure to give complete photo-data on each entry - data on time, equipment, aperture, exposure, comments, etc. Your prints will receive the best of care while in our hands.

Cordially yours,

Tom Maloney
U. S. CAMERA
Tom Maloney, Editor

P.S. This year, prints will be returned immediately after judging is completed if you so desire. Be sure to enclose sufficient return postage.

P.S.2. Pictures used in U. S. Camera Magazine are not used again in the Annual.

SPECIAL NOTE: We are also including special combination offer on the magazine and annual - a low bargain rate for contributors. Reserve your copies now to avoid disappointment!

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THE LENS LEAGUE

This particular idea needs the value of your judgment and that of a hundred others before it is presented on a larger scale.

As you know, successful photographic books - that is, successful from the publisher and author standpoint - can be counted on the fingers of one hand. The main reasons, of course, are the cost of production, the lack of knowledge on the part of both book and photographic stores in the promotion of these books, and, not least, the fact that high production cost means that so little money is left for promotion that the books do not get a fair chance to begin with.

Suppose, however, the list of subscribers to U. S. Camera were carefully combed and certain other good photographic lists which we have available, searched for names of people who would be interested in good photographic books. To these people, the following offer would be made.

During 1940, four photographic books would be published by an organization called The Lens League, and these books would become known as Lens League Books. The first book would arrive in purchasers' hands just before Christmas and the others would appear regularly at three month intervals.

The books in the 1940 series would be four of the following eight. We are anxious to get the ideas of all subscribers to the series and for that reason would not make any final selection of the books until we had their ideas.

1. California by Edward Weston. Edward Weston is the first photographer to merit the recognition of a Guggenheim scholarship. For two years under this scholarship, he has been photographing California and parts of the southwest. This book would be not only his pictorial record containing over 100 plates of his work in full contact size, but would be augmented by the complete written story of this two year's work. It would be in large format and would undoubtedly become one of America's first photographic books. Anyone at all familiar with Weston's excellent work should want the book. There will, of course, also be a complete photo index with a careful record on conditions accompanying the taking of each picture.

2. Colonial Williamsburg by F. S. Lincoln. Lincoln was commissioned by the Rockefellers to photograph Williamsburg and his pictures are an outstanding contribution to American photography in that they recapture the charm of Colonial Williamsburg to an amazing degree. The pictures would be accompanied by a text on Colonial Williamsburg and, of course, a very explicit photographic appendix. The book has already been designed by T. M. Cleland, who, with Bruce Rogers and Daniel Updike, is considered one of the world's finest designers. His knowledge of photographic treatment in a book led to his being selected to design Fortune Magazine and to redesign Scribners when it was changed from a non-illustrated to an illustrated monthly.

3. The Stars and Planets by Ansel Adams. Ansel Adams plans on doing a book completely photographic, which will be a simplified and beautiful presentation of the universe. Done in photography, it will be comparable in its scope and simplicity to Van Loon's famous book on geography. In a large format with exquisite plate work, it will be a unique photographic venture. There will again be a thorough appendix written by Mr. Adams and concerned completely with the taking of the pictures.

4. Steichen Omnibus by Edward Steichen. This would be a large volume and, like a short story omnibus or detective story omnibus, it would carry a tremendous number of pictures. It would show Steichen's work as it has never been shown before. It would, of course, also contain a liberal amount of text written by Edward Steichen.

5. Children by Toni Frissell. This would be a volume devoted to her splendid photographs of children taken all over America. In addition to children in general, she has done a series to illustrate certain parts of Stevenson's Child Garden of Verses which might well be included. The text would be written by Miss Frissell and she would include a photographic appendix on photographing children.

6. Bruehl Omnibus by Anton Bruehl. Like the Steichen Omnibus, this would be a large volume carrying a tremendous number of pictures. It would show Bruehl's work as it has never been shown before. It would

also contain a Bruehl text which should be extremely illuminating to anyone interested in photography, due to Anton Bruehl's candid opinions and his complete sincerity. Again, a large photo data appendix would be included.

7. The American Small Town. Would be a collection of the fine photographs done of the American small town by the Farm Security Administration. This book would carry text to probably greater length than any of the others. It would be written by George Leighton or some other fine writer and authority on the American town and village. The pictures, themselves, would be comparable to the outstanding F.S.A. section in the 1939 U. S. Camera. They would be by the same photographers - Lange, Evans, Rothstein, etc.

8. Photographing in Color by Paul Outerbridge. This volume, which is already planned for fall publication, will become the authoritative book on color photography. Outerbridge explains all phases of color very comprehensively and includes sixteen of his finest color photos, most of which have never been published before. The book is simply and beautifully written. No book of this calibre and color content has ever been published before for less than \$7.50.

These books would sell in the book stores and camera stores of the country at from \$3.50 to \$5.00. To members of the Lens League, they would cost roughly \$2.50 each. This means that members would not only receive the four finest photographic books of the year, but would receive them for \$10. while others would be paying \$15 to \$17.50 for the same books.

Members could, if they wished, pay for these books in advance. However, they need not do so. Books will be delivered and billed individually at the time of delivery. If the individual is dissatisfied with any one or all of the books, he is privileged to return them. In other words, we are confident that we can do such beautiful books and such fine contributions to photography, that every member can receive his books at greatly less than the regular price, but can also have the privilege of rejecting or returning any book not up to his expectations. Each of these books will be sold through regular channels and at the prices stated. Photographic stores and book stores

will both handle them and they will reach a wide audience. But only members will be able to purchase them at the \$2.50 price.

It would be foolish to conceive such a venture if it were not established for not only 1940, but 1941 and 1942 and years beyond. With this in mind, we would like to know just the type of photographic books people interested in them would like to see. So, we would want all members of The Lens League to have every opportunity to express their opinion on the books they would like to see published. We think that four photographic books a year are plenty. And even in the case of 1940, some book which is not on the suggested list, might well replace one of the suggestions included.

With this in mind, I have attached a sample questionnaire which I hope will aid you in answering. Will you be kind enough to fill in the answers - or if you'd rather, simply drop me a note expressing your feelings about the venture. As I stated at the beginning of this letter, this is a preliminary letter to one hundred people we believe will be vitally interested in this project. On their reactions depends the furtherance of it.

Cordially,

Tom Maloney

TJM:GMC