

The President's Message  
*Mike Robinson, President*

It is with great honor and pleasure that I announce that the Matthew R. Isenburg Collection will remain intact in name and substance in its new home within the holdings of the Archive of Modern Conflict (AMC), in Toronto, Canada. The goal of the AMC archive (jointly located in Toronto, Canada, and London, England) is to collect and preserve photographic records relating to the human condition. War photojournalism, political unrest, social and technological revolution, and human triumph in the face of conflict are subjects rich within the photographic holdings of AMC. The purchase of the Isenburg Collection adds a new and powerful nineteenth-century dimension to the collection at AMC, much as the Gernsheim Collection added early photographic history to the Harry Ransom Center in Austin, Texas.

Proudly, I have been appointed to direct the new era of the Isenburg Collection. My first priority is to organize a team to design systems and facilities to make this material available to the worldwide community of curators, researchers, photograph historians, and social historians. Our goal at AMC is to help facilitate scholarship to preserve and extend our knowledge of nineteenth-century photography.

The Isenburg Collection covers the first four decades of photographic history in a unique way. Matthew has collected as much ephemera and as many three-dimensional objects as he has images concerning the culture of that period. The collection is very strong in images that show the history of photography. Though its content is mostly American, there are Canadian, English, French, and German highlights. American treasures include the last of three known half-plate daguerreotypes of the U.S. Capitol taken by John Plumbe (the other two are at the J. Paul Getty Museum and the Library of Congress). Another treasure, the magnificent Eagle, is an eight-and-a-half-foot-wingspan polychrome eagle clutching a whole-plate daguerreotype of the Warren Light Guard of Worcester, Massachusetts, which lost four soldiers trying to quell the Baltimore riots—an event that provoked the first bloodshed of the American Civil War.

Hundreds of letters written in California during the Gold Rush accompany the largest collection of Gold Rush daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, and paper prints in private hands. The ephemera collection of that time and place is large beyond imagination. The runs of nineteenth-century trade magazines and assorted newspapers are fabulous. Clipper ship cards, Gold Rush jewelry, stereo cards,

diaries, letter sheets, rare lithographs, and even rarer paintings depicting life in California abound. Even late-nineteenth-century California cabinet cards make their presence felt.

The Southworth and Hawes collection retains rare letters (including the partnership agreement) that provide a perspective beyond the common perceptions surrounding the Boston studio. The studio posing chair, so prominent in many Southworth and Hawes daguerreotypes, an oil painting of Nancy Southworth Hawes and a daguerreotype taken with her standing next to it, and four pairs of full plate stereo images taken for viewing in the Grand Parlor Stereoscope (the only sets in private hands) are part of this section of the collection.

The technology collection includes the earliest complete American photographic outfit (ca. 1842), more than two dozen daguerreotype cameras, and more than thirty collodion wet-plate cameras. Many of these cameras are part of complete sets of photographic apparatus including polishing equipment, sensitizing boxes, wet-collodion dipping tanks, mercury baths, plates, and process chemicals, many in the original boxes and labeled bottles in which they were obtained from the supply depot. A vast collection of studio equipment includes wooden tripods, iron headrests, and posing tables of every variety available throughout the nineteenth century.

The library of original volumes is one of the best. Besides trade catalogs, how-to books, weekly or twice-monthly trade magazines, it includes illustrated weeklies filled with woodcuts derived from daguerreotypes. The largest display of broadsides from 1841 to the 1860s is another major specialty. Early photos of famous photographers and famous photographers' business cards are also part of the History of Photography collection. The CDV collection is one of the finest ever assembled; much of it emphasizing the technological history of photography. Tintypes as well as an amazing collection of stereo cards concerning photo history abound. The rarest thermoplastic and mother-of-pearl cases accompany an over-three-hundred-item case collection including both versions of the Henry Clay case and the obverse steel die used to mold one of them.

Yet, even with Matthew's tremendous scholarship, there remain untold wonders and histories still to be discovered within this collection. It is Matthew Isenburg's hope and my goal that many academics, students, scholars, and authors will research, write, and publish papers, articles, books, and dissertations from the available material.