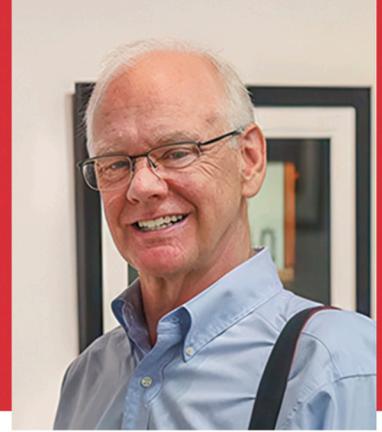




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Backus Portrait © Ursula Ruhl 2025

## St. Louis Camera Club Celebrating 85 years of PSA Club Membership

The St. Louis Camera Club has been a creative home for photographers for decades, evolving alongside the art itself, from the days of film to the limitless possibilities of digital photography.

The club welcomes photographers of all experience levels, from curious beginners to seasoned professionals. What all the members have in common is a desire to learn more about photography, share their experiences and enjoy the company of like-minded friends. The club fosters connection, creativity, and continuous growth through hands-on workshops, constructive critiques, photo sharing, and regular competitions. The club features special competitions that include: a short photo essay, a longer travelogue essay, and a yearly competition for new members called the Rookie Competition.



"The Consultation" by Barry Telfair 1944

(Man is Oscar C Kuehn)

During the late 1800's, St. Louis was the world's largest producer of glass photographic plates, supplying 80% of the plates used by photographers at the time. The St. Louis plates were considered to be of the best quality and this environment helped nurture the interest in the St. Louis Amateur Photographers Club. In 1885, the club changed its name to the St. Louis Camera Club to be in alignment with other clubs around the nation. Lantern slides taken by members were shared with the Boston Camera Club and Photographic Society of Philadelphia.



Annie Kuehn standing on Ice - Mississippi River 1905

While SLCC existed since the 1880's, 1914 is considered the "birth year" of the modern St. Louis Camera Club with the use of film photography by members. SLCC has continuously met since the date of February 12th, 1914, with an original group of five amateur photographers headed by Oscar Kuehn. The club outgrew meetings in members' homes and has since held meetings in community centers and libraries. From a small group of five, the Club membership has grown to over 200 active photography enthusiasts with many and varied interests. Club Members range in age from 23 to 99, with most being between their 40s and 60s.



112 Years of Excellence and Innovation



- The Club's first exhibition of 150 prints was in April 1915.
- The first by-laws were written and a Board of Directors was established in the 1940s.
- St. Louis Camera Club International Salon of Photography Program featured work by Ansel Adams in 1945. In addition to his presentation, Ansel Adams took photographs at the local Bellefontaine Cemetery and Arboretum. He gifted a gelatin print of the "Wainwright Tomb" to the St. Louis Art Museum.
- On November 19, 1969, the club was incorporated as the St. Louis Camera Club, Inc.
- Club competitions were in black and white prints until 1945 when color slide competition began.

The club has responded to the expanding interests of it's members by adding new competition sections: Nature Slides in 1960, Color Prints in 1970 Photo Travel and Photojournalism in 1985.

The New Member Workshops began in 1982 to help new members learn about the Club and participate in its activities.

Bruce Backus joined the club in 2008 and became president in 2025. "When I first joined the club, I wasn't always happy with the candid feedback by judges about my submitted images. It took me a while to realize the comments were not personal - they were coming from the judge's aesthetic and personal preferences." He came to appreciate the constructive criticism. "The feedback did help me to become a better photographer, from taking snapshots of family, friends and places, to creating images that had a deeper meaning for myself, which hopefully resonates with the viewer of those images. There's a balance of staying true to one's aesthetic and not pandering to a judge's biases."



Rainy Evening Barry Telfair 1930's

All Images provided by St. Louis Camera Club.

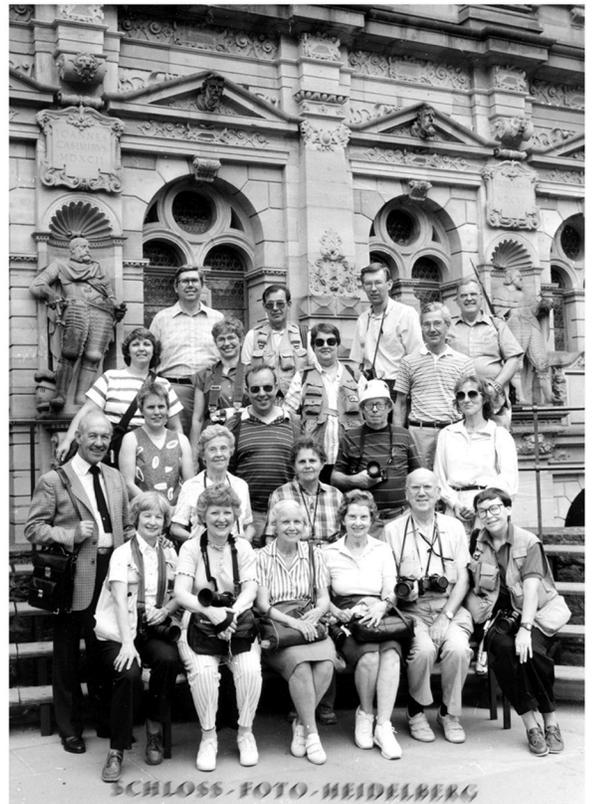
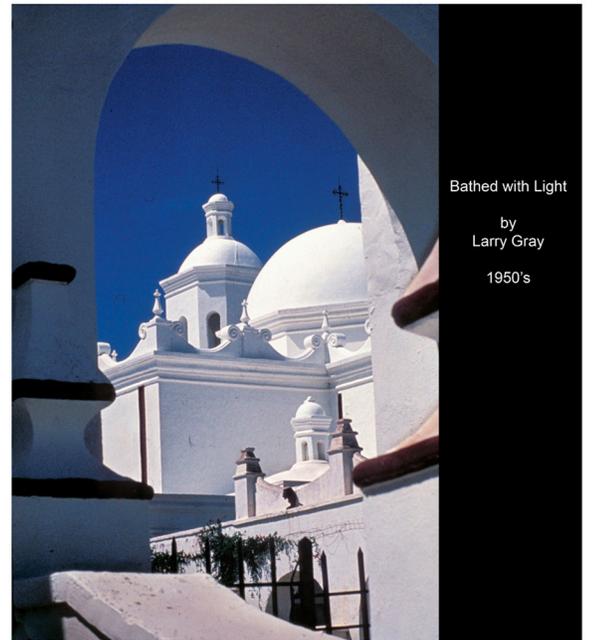
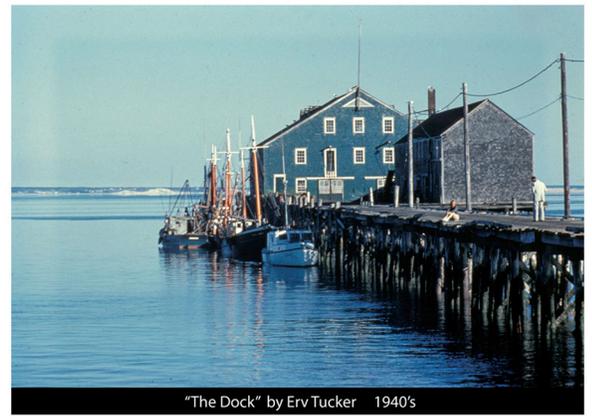


**"The Club's mission is threefold- creating social connections among those who love photography; offering candid, constructive feedback through anonymous image submission; and providing learning opportunists from local and national instructors on both the art and science of photography."**

In 2024, the Club received a \$15,000 Program Grant from the St. Louis Regional Arts Commission, <https://racstl.org/>, to advertise about the Club in local newspapers, provide honorariums to outside photographers to present seminars and workshops, develop a branding initiative and create a new logo for the Club, and purchase a large screen high-definition calibrated television for viewing and judging competition images at the St. Louis Ethical Society, current home for Club in-person meetings. Outside invited photographers covered by the grant included: Angie McMonigal, Collen Miniuk, Kent Burgiss, Teo Kefalopoulos, Freeman Patterson and Emily Moore.

The Missouri Arts Council, <https://missouriartscouncil.org>, has also reached out to the Club to ask for permission to use Club photos in their annual shows.

In addition, local city arts foundations have sponsored many exhibits for Club members in their city halls and performing art centers. For example, the Kirkwood Arts Commission, <https://www.kirkwoodmo.org/government/boards-and-commission/art-commission>, has sponsored and hung prints for at least five club members.



All Images provided by St. Louis Camera Club.

The St. Louis Camera Club has 37 Competitions offered for the 2025-26 season. Fifteen competitions are through the Photographic Society of America Worldwide so their members get to compete with camera clubs around the world.



One special highlight in 2025 was the 12th Annual Peterson Photography Lecture series at the St. Louis Community College which featured a St. Louis Camera Club exhibition from August 28th to September 25th.



Ingrid Borecki is the Committee Chair for the club's Photo Meetups. In the last 3.5 years, they have had 41 meetups.

She lists the Meetup goals:

- Provide an opportunity to go shooting as a group and enjoy making images.
- Provide an opportunity for informal learning from each other.
- Provide a platform for photo sharing unconstrained by competition rules
- Provide a means to look at each others' work to discover new perspectives and techniques.
- Provide a way to share feedback and comments with each other.
- To have fun!

