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# When Booksellers Created the Early Photography Market

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*Photography catalogues attest to a growing transatlantic trade between 1939 and 1961, when booksellers and bibliophiles played a central role in the commercial development of photography in North American institutions.*

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Isabella Seniuta has just finished her PhD thesis on the history of « The Eye Club ». Her study aims at unveiling a network of actors, active in the 1960s-1980s between Paris and New York, whose common interests in photography have made it possible to recognise photography as an art form and establish the photography market as we know it today. Her research has been supported by the Getty Research Institute and Columbia University. Most recently, she has co-curated a show about Gilles Caron.

Nicolas Rauch's Geneva bookshop is where André Jammes (born 1927) decided to hold Europe's first photography auction in June 1961. [1] The son of Paris bookseller Paul Jammes (1890-1983), he began buying photographs from his network of dealers in France, Switzerland and England in 1955. Before him, two London booksellers—Maggs Bros. (founded 1853) and Ernest Philip Goldschmidt (1887-1954)—as well as the Swann Galleries auction house in New York contributed to commercially promoting photography from the 1930s to 1960s by publishing catalogues. These publications are key for understanding the emergence of the early photography market in the 1930s because they are among the very rare written sources from this period documenting the prices practiced at the time.

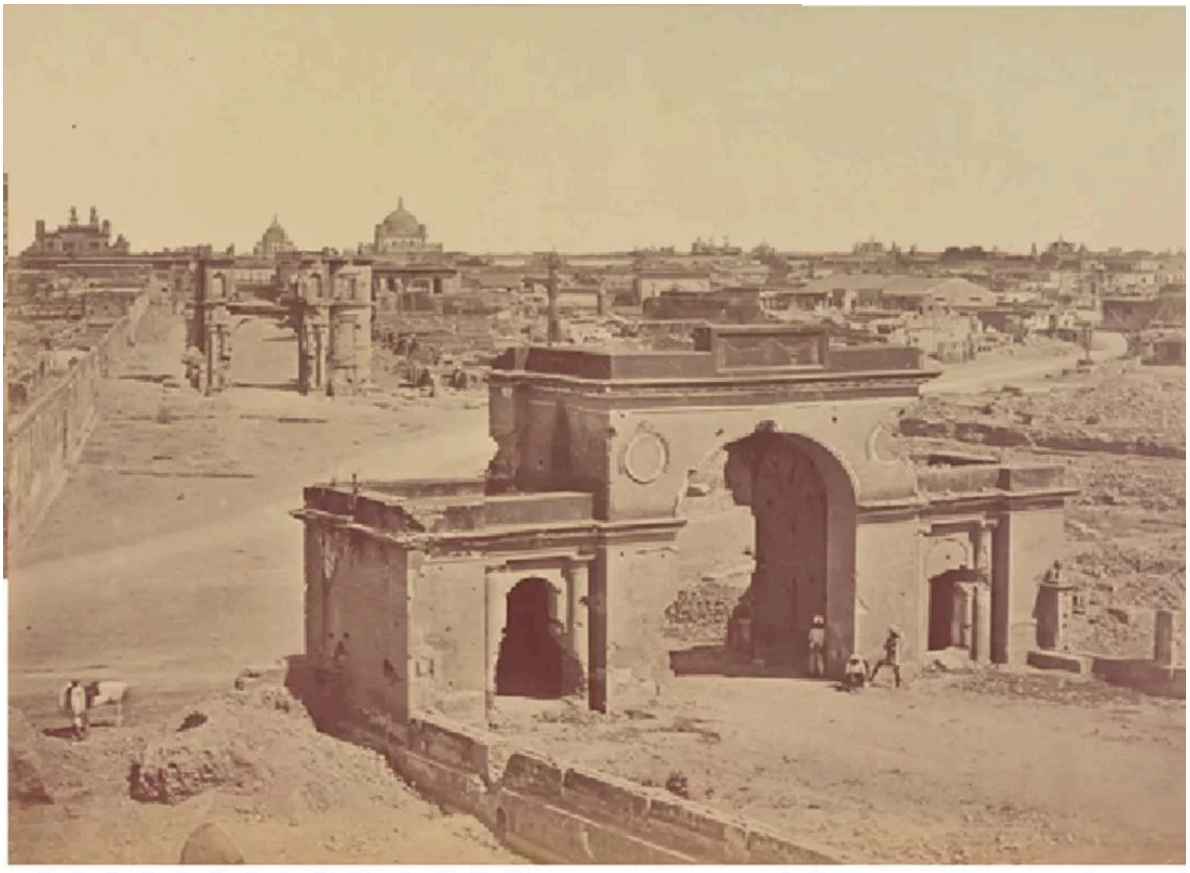
Booksellers and publishers' names are sometimes mentioned, but photography historians have overlooked their role as go-betweens in a transatlantic context. Several explanations may account for this. First, the bookstore community functions by family legacy and word of mouth. It is almost exclusively the domain of a male elite that is hard for outsiders to penetrate. Second, investigating the role of booksellers and publishers comes up against two hurdles: access to documents is difficult, and the information in the catalogues is incomplete. The analysis of these publications, however, opens a first door to the study of the transnational dynamics of a nascent photography market.

## From London to New York: the example of Maggs Bros.

In March 1939, the Paris branch of the British bookshop Maggs Bros. published an unprecedented catalogue, the first known source with precise descriptions and prices of historic early photographs. It came out in a special context: 1939 was the centenary of the invention of photography. As François Brunet writes, [2] many commemorations, exhibitions and publications in Europe and the United States marked the occasion. For example, the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA) held a major retrospective, "Photography 1839-1937", and published a catalogue edited by the curator, Beaumont Newhall (1908-1993). [3] The event was a milestone: this was the first time an art museum hosted a show about the history of photography on such a scale. Until then, photography was seldom exhibited in France. As Éléonore Challine's research shows, most artistic institutions considered it unworthy of their attention. [4] Only a few places showed photographs, and even then primarily for their documentary interest, such as the hospital museums in Paris and the 1936 International Exhibition. There were no specialized galleries or auction houses, just fledgling, uncoordinated attempts to commercially promote photography. For example, in 1933 the Braun gallery in Paris held a somewhat successful retrospective called "L'image photographique en France, de Daguerre à nos jours", which met with critical acclaim.

In a context where the commercial and institutional value of photography fluctuated, Maggs Bros. published a catalogue to celebrate the medium's centenary. It was not a survey of the history of photography since its invention, but rather offered objects from the medium's earliest days for sale to a specific readership comprised of collectors and rare book specialists. Entitled *Beaux Livres. Manuscrits, miniatures et beaux livres du du XIV^e^ au XIX^e^ siècle*, [5] the catalogue included objects collected by bibliophiles as well as about a hundred photographs. Why did a catalogue for booklovers have pictures? In the 19th century, photographs printed from paper negatives were put in albums and books to preserve them, which had future consequences: they were acquired by libraries and bookshops. Founded in London in 1853 by Uriah Maggs (1828-1913), Maggs Bros. trades in manuscripts, miniatures and rare books. It is a famous place that includes the British royal family among its customers. The shop's London address is 50 Berkeley Square, while the French branch is located at 93-95 rue de la Boëtie in the eighth arrondissement of Paris.

In the photography section of the 1939 catalogue, the author suggests several strategies to meet the challenges posed by the medium's reproducibility and create rarity. One is to have photographs institutionally validated, which allows the author to estimate them at the highest price. For example, entry 448 is a signed calotype by American portraitist Charles D. Fredericks (1823-1894) from about 1854 showing a group of soldiers in front of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-1877) invented the calotype in 1841. Because the image is printed directly on paper, calotype, more than any other early process, is a reference point in the history of modernity in photography. The picture is accompanied by the following text: "photograph [...] from Fredericks' store reproduced in the catalogue of the 1937 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York." The author points out that the picture was also reproduced in Beaumont Newhall's 1937 catalogue for the "Photography 1839-1937" show. The reference to MoMA provided institutional validation for Fredericks' work. While the links between Maggs Bros. and MoMA are not known, the entry shows that the formation of the market value of photography in the book trade is concomitant with the circulation of publications on the London-New York axis. An analysis of the Maggs Bros. catalogue reveals the criteria for valuating calotypes, which were taken up several months later in a catalogue by the British bookseller E. P. Goldschmidt.



Felice Beato (British, 1832-1909), *Lucknow-The Indian Mutiny*, ca. 1858. This photograph is in the June 1939 E. P. Goldschmidt catalogue

**Source:** Wellcome Collection

## E. P. Goldschmidt and the formation of a taste for calotype

The approach of British bookseller E. P. Goldschmidt (1887-1954) is a representative example of various attempts to promote photography's market value in the book trade just as the centenary of its invention was being commemorated. While Goldschmidt is barely mentioned in books about the history of

photography and none of his peers identified him as an expert, in June 1939 he published *Old Books. A Collection of Early Photographs and Books Commemorating the Centenary of Fox Talbot and Daguerre 1839-1939,* [6] one of the first catalogues to include prices and detailed descriptions. One section focuses entirely on early photography in England.

The catalogue highlights two photographers: painter David Octavius Hill (1802-1870) and technician Robert Adamson (1821-1848). Hill and Adamson teamed up for one of the first reportages in the history of photography a few years after its invention. The 1840s saw two competing photographic processes: the daguerreotype, invented in France by Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre, and the calotype, developed in England by Fox Talbot. Already an established landscape painter, Hill was fascinated with the possibilities offered by the calotype's pictorial quality, which is similar to charcoal and red chalk drawings. He and Adamson photographed the fishing community of Newhaven at a time when Edinburgh was undergoing major changes. The E. P. Goldschmidt catalogue stands out by considering Hill and Adamson's calotypes a rare genre. Their work won praise from Lady Eastlake, who was not only their model but also one of the first photography critics. Almost a century later, Beaumont Newhall shored up their transatlantic reputation in his catalogue. While the E. P. Goldschmidt catalogue mentioned neither publication, its author drew on the research of Austrian-born historian Heinrich Schwarz (1894-1974), who in 1931 wrote a monograph about Hill and Adamson illustrated with original photographs. [7] This significant work, immediately translated into English, inspired some passages of Walter Benjamin's "Kleine Geschichte der Photographie" published in *Die Literarische Welt* (September-October 1931). [8] Several months before the E. P. Goldschmidt catalogue came out, a smaller number of Adamson's photographs had already featured in the one published by Maggs Bros. The example of Hill and Adamson makes it possible to track the development of a photographic continuity between Vienna, Berlin, London and New York.

The Maggs Bros. and E. P. Goldschmidt catalogues reveal that while Hill and Adamson were little-known protagonists in the history of photography, they ranked among the first to commercially promote the medium at a time when the centenary of its invention was being celebrated in conjunction with cultural institutions. Although relegated to a footnote in history, booksellers built a bridge between photography studios, antique dealers and museums. Together and individually, Maggs Bros., E. P. Goldschmidt and their successors, including Weil and Rauch, who were active in the 1950s, played a key role in connecting several institutions. Today, the provenance of photographs can be traced on museum websites. For example, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York purchased many pictures from Weil and Rauch, including, for example, prints or albums by Hugh Welch Diamond, Felice Beato, Julia Margaret Cameron, Oscar Gustav Rejlander and Armand-Hippolyte-Louis Fizeau, that were subsequently acquired by numerous other museums.

A study of the provenances of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collections is also helpful in mapping out transatlantic links between booksellers and museums. The examples of Maggs Bros. and E. P. Goldschmidt demonstrate that in the 1930s, photography already transited through booksellers, which helped museums build up their first photography collections. While their catalogues did not create a market in the 1940s, they inspired other booksellers like Weil [9] to feature early photographs in theirs. Booksellers' efforts to promote the market value of photography climaxed at a public event: the 1952 sale of the Albert E. Marshall Collection at Swann Auction Galleries in New York. [10]



David Octavius Hill (British, Perth, Scotland 1802-1870 Edinburgh, Scotland), Robert Adamson (British, St. Andrews, Scotland 1821-1848 St. Andrews, Scotland). *Newhaven Fisherwives*, ca. 1843-47. The Met, New York. Provenance: E. P. Goldschmidt, Ltd.

**Source:** Met Museum

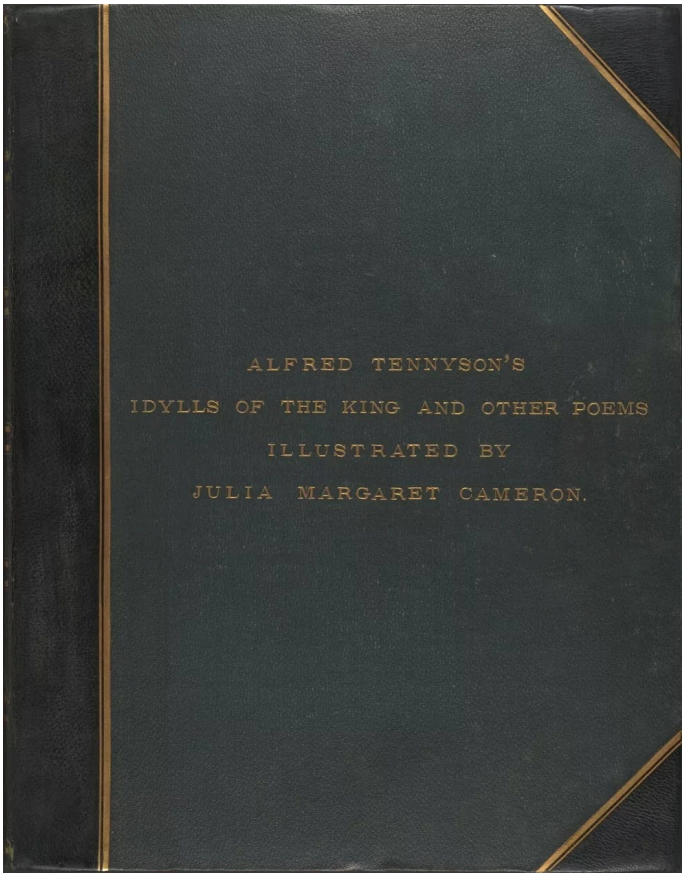
## Preamble to a market: the Marshall sale in New York (1952)

On February 14, 1952, Swann Auction Galleries, which specializes in old books, held a sale called "The first complete auction of Photographica in America. A panoramic history of the art of photography as applied to book illustration, from its inception up to date". Preceded by a three-day exhibition that was innovative for the time, the auction dispersed the Marshall Collection. Albert E. Marshall was a photography-loving engineer who sourced his collection mainly from booksellers in England and the United States.

Lot 67 was *Idylls of the King*, a collection of Alfred Tennyson's poems illustrated with photographs by Julia Margaret Cameron. Models and people close to Cameron posed to enact scenes from the poems. The book was acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Department of Prints and Photographs. The groundbreaking Swann sale treated photography as an art form, with a pre-auction show featuring artist-photographers like Cameron, whose work was seldom exhibited by institutions until then.

The sale had no sequel, nor was it enough to launch the market, probably because there were no groups of competing buyers. Nevertheless, it was a milestone. The catalogue was reissued in 1978 with an introduction by David Margolis, who disclosed that the author was Edwin V. Halbemeir. Margolis pointed out that Halbemeir researched Marshall's personal notes and drew from Robert Taft's *Photography and the American Scene* for the 1952 auction catalogue. Moreover, *Popular Photography* magazine published an article about the sale that was read by many photography lovers. As John Raeburn showed, [11] a photocentric "art world", to borrow Howard Becker's phrase—an informal network of enthusiasts,

collectors and experts—had emerged by the 1930s. Popular magazines such as *Life* published articles about contemporary photographers and their forerunners, including Mathew Brady (1822-1896) and Nadar (1820-1910). When the French bookseller André Jammes came on the scene in the early 1960s, his actions marked a breakthrough: he brought bibliophiles and photography together.




Julia Margaret Cameron (British), Calcutta 1815-1879 Kalutara, Ceylon), Alfred Tennyson's *Idylls of the King, and other Poems*, 1874. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. David Hunter McAlpin Fund, 1952. Provenance: Ifan Kyrle Fletcher; Albert E. Marshall, Providence, Rhode Island (5/24/1944); Swann Galleries, New York, February 14, 1952, lot 67

**Source:** Met Museum

## André Jammes and the creation of a transatlantic photography market

In the early 1950s, collector, dealer and historian André Jammes joined the "Société du Vieux Papier", whose members met frequently to talk about photography. During these discussions, Nadar's portraits raised his awareness of photography's importance. At Nicolas Rauch's bookshop on June 13, 1961, Jammes held the first international catalogued auction of early and historic photographs. The event has never been analyzed from a transatlantic perspective.

The sale featured 215 lots including cameras, daguerreotypes and many calotypes. Information about the results is patchy, but in interviews Jammes said it was successful. Today it is known that the sale netted a total of 100,000 Swiss francs, which indicates that prices were low. The buyers included several European and American institutions. In an interview 40 years later, Jammes said:

> *"A contemporary observer would say it was a commercial failure, but what mattered was the buyers' identity: the Smithsonian Institution in Washington bought many cameras. The National Library acquired important pictures by Herschel and Talbot, while the Newberry Library in Chicago enriched its collection of photomechanical processes. Otto Steinert, representing the Essen Museum, pushed the bidding up against Dr. Lührig of the Agfa Museum, which was being created. A number of institutions showed interest in the catalogue."* [15]

The names Jammes mentioned show that his main target was a North American clientele. His father Paul Jammes, also a bookseller, already had a reputation on the other side of the Atlantic, where he traveled to find rare books. By the early 1960s, many customers from the United States were regulars at Jammes' bookshop. It "was very central and had a good reputation [...] if somebody found an album, they were often told: 'bring it to Jammes'" [12] to have it appraised. For example, Hugh Edwards, curator at the Art Institute of Chicago, purchased items from Jammes during the sale and continued to buy photographs from him in later years. So did Newberry Library curator James Wells.

An analysis of the correspondence between Jammes and the German-born photography historian Helmut Gernsheim (1913-1995), held at the Harry Ransom Center in Austin, leads to new hypotheses. In his letters from 1961 to 1963, Jammes wrote about organizing the Geneva sale and mentioned his relationship with Beaumont Newhall and John Szarkowski (1925-2007), the head curator of MoMA's photography department from 1962 to 1991. Moreover, in 1967 Jammes translated the fourth edition of Newhall's authoritative *History of Photography from 1839 to the Present*. While further research into Szarkowski's archives would be welcome, the correspondence between Jammes and Gernhseim shows that people and ideas were traveling along a London-New York-Paris axis during this period. It also confirms that dealers and collectors had close ties with major cultural institutions during the process of "the cultural transformation of photography into a museum art", as Christopher Phillips wrote. [13]

Jammes' 1961 sale was based on existing models, notably because he valued the calotype as a work of art. However, he differed from Maggs Bros. and E. P. Goldschmidt by organizing an auction and inviting an international clientele of museum curators and stakeholders in the book trade, thus paving the way for the emergence of an international market and network. It is now known that in the following years the auction helped to increase Jammes' clientele abroad before he dispersed his collection during four sales at Sotheby's between 1998 and 2008.



Nadar (Paris, 1820-1910). "Pierre-Luc-Charles Cicéri", ca. 1855-60. Gift of Marie-Thérèse and André Jammes in memory of Samuel J. Wagstaff Jr., 1991.

**Source:** Met Museum

In the 1960s, Jammes was active with American institutions. In 1969, he organized a major exhibition of his collection in Philadelphia called "French Primitive Photography", whose catalogue was published by the *Aperture* publishing house. [14] However, while many stakeholders in the photography world showed interest in the Jammes sale, it was not until the following decade that a market emerged in parallel with the opening of photography departments in the largest museums in the United States. The 1961 sale, then, foreshadowed a market focusing more on photographer-artists, which really emerged in London during Sotheby's 1970s auctions, especially the one in October 1974 when the American collector Sam Wagstaff, Jammes' customer incidentally, pushed prices for early photography up to unprecedented levels by buying an album of Cameron's photographs for $130,000, a considerable sum at the time.

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