

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, November 7, 2005

Clarence Marshall and Early Photography, 1897: My father, T. Clarence Marshall (1885–1969), for whom the museum is named, had a myriad of hobbies during his lifetime. I have told of some of the first cars he owned. Before that, however, at age 12, he became interested in photography. A distant cousin, Horace Dilworth, also a many-talented man who lived near Centerville, Delaware, had made a name as an early local photographer, and Israel and Lizzie Marshall told their 12-year-old: “If thee really wants to learn how to take pictures, we must take thee over to see Cousin Horace Dilworth.” So, in 1897 or ‘98, he dressed in his best suit and went for the visit. The first thing Horace did was to take *his* picture, and we have a print of that photo showing my 12-year-old father standing on a stepping block at the Dilworth farm.

His parents bought him a reflex camera with plate holders from Sears, Roebuck and Co., and he began his picture-taking career by using Stanley dry plates. As with any new toy, it was used a lot, and many prints exist, taken between 1898 and 1900, some of them good, some not very good. Dad had many cameras during the next 50 years, the largest of which was a dry plate camera that made 12 x 20 contact prints. Several photos of the Yorklyn mills were taken with this camera between 1914 and 1922. His first 35mm camera was a Leica about 1935, and toward the end of his life, he was interested in the instant Polaroid Land cameras. In 1925, when I was one year old, Dad bought his first movie camera and took many 16mm black-and-white movies of family, Easter egg hunts, Rehoboth Beach, and his favorite sport, trapshooting. He bought his first Bell & Howell sound projector about 1934, and whenever evening guests were entertained at Auburn Heights, they had to endure a 15-minute sound film in the living room. Most seemed to enjoy it, or so they said.