Capturing Connecticut and history through photography
Focusing on three women’s views of people, landscapes and architecture

Hartford, CT (September 19, 2013) – Digital cameras, smart phones, and tablets have put photography in the hands of just about everyone. The camera started out as a heavy, bulky, expensive piece of equipment. Combine that with dangerous chemicals and cultural expectations of the roles of women; no wonder photography was deemed a man’s professional practice. However, by the 1880s, advances in technology helped open the field of photography to others, including women, as both a profession and a hobby.

Through a Different Lens: Three Connecticut Women Photographers opens October 11, 2013 at the Connecticut Historical Society (CHS). The exhibition presents the work of three female photographers, who came from very different places in Connecticut history and society. Each of their photographs is a record of personal and local history, a picture of the people, landscapes, and buildings of Connecticut. Together they reveal how women have taken part in amateur and professional photography from the late 1800s into the mid 1900s. A photography show and a historical look at the camera, Through a Different Lens includes black-and-white and color photographs as well as photographic equipment from the CHS collection.

Marie Hartig Kendall began a photography business in Norfolk, Connecticut, in the 1880s. She supplemented her physician-husband’s income by selling portraits, postcards, and photography books that captured the architecture, landscape, and people of rural Norfolk, a popular summer vacation spot for New Yorkers and city-dwellers.

Also during the late 1800s and into the 1900s, Harriet V. S. Thorne was an amateur photographer who used her studio and darkroom in Bridgeport, Connecticut to depict the lifestyle of her wealthy family. As the wife of a New York leather merchant, Thorne had the resources and leisure time to develop a serious hobby, producing pictures of her family, children, and vacation homes.

From the 1950s to the 2000s, Rosalie Thorne McKenna, the great-granddaughter of Harriet V.S. Thorne, photographed well-known artists and literary figures, as well as scenes of the fishing town of Stonington, Connecticut, where she settled in 1961. Her work appeared in exhibitions as well as Vogue, Esquire, and Harper’s Bazaar, and her portrait subjects included Hartford’s Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Wallace Stevens, renowned sculptor Alexander Calder of Roxbury, Connecticut, and Helen Keller, who lived in Easton, Connecticut.

As a companion to the exhibit, The Connecticut Historical Society is hosting “The Connecticut Photo Contest,” a contest open to both amateur and professional photographers. Winners in three categories—Connecticut People, Connecticut Architecture, and Connecticut Landscape—will be chosen by an expert panel of judges, and a Viewer’s Choice Award will be determined by visitors during the run of the exhibit. Winners and select entries will also be on display at CHS from October 11, 2013 through March 29, 2014. For more information, go to chs.org/photocontest or call (860) 236-5621.

Through a Different Lens: Three Connecticut Women Photographers is made possible by the Rosalie Thorne McKenna Foundation. CHS is located at 1 Elizabeth Street in Hartford. For more, visit chs.org.
About the Connecticut Historical Society (@ConnHistSoc):

Founded in 1825, the Connecticut Historical Society is a non-profit museum, library, research and education center. CHS strives to inspire and foster a life-long interest in history and ignite a passion for learning about history through research assistance, exhibitions, tours and programs for all ages. Visit chs.org or call 860-236-5621.