

THE KODAK CAMERA.



The Digitized Kodak Catalog Project (1886 - 1941): A Very Brief History

Most camera collectors at some point in their collecting careers pass through a Kodak phase - some never come out of it. And if there ever was one name that came to be associated with both cameras and collecting, it was Kodak.

George Eastman received his first patent (for coating dry plates) and bought his first manufacturing facility in 1880, and in 1881 he started the Eastman Dry Plate Company. In 1886 he received a patent for the near-mythical Eastman Detective Camera, but it wasn't until 1888 that the first camera bearing the name "Kodak" was introduced.

One of the nice things about collecting Kodak is that the product line is pretty well known, and because the company produced annual catalogs for many years, collectors can be reasonably sure of what they're looking at, when it was made, the variations and so on - presuming that they have access to either the appropriate catalog, or a number of the many books which document Kodak, each to some greater or lesser extent.

But what would be really nice would be to have a complete set of Kodak catalogs in an easily accessible form and readily available. And since the advent of portable computing devices (PC, Macintosh, etc.) that's been possible - except for the difficulty of assembling a complete set of Kodak catalogs in one spot and then scanning them and making the results available.

The idea of digitizing a complete set of Kodak catalogs has kicked around the collecting community for many years. It's been proposed on a number of online forums, during meetings of various photohistory groups, and for years there have been many incomplete "Kodak CDs" on eBay but at best, they only contained a few catalogs - whatever the owner had available. But assembling a complete set of catalogs, then scanning and processing perhaps 3,000 to 4,000 pages, was a daunting task - if not completely overwhelming - and nothing ever came of it.

Until now.

In early 2010, the idea came up again, but this time we - "we" as in "the collecting community" - were lucky. A number of collectors were willing to loan their catalogs to this project and a couple of insane - wait, let's call them "dedicated" - dedicated enthusiasts - neither of whom collected Kodak, but both of whom enjoyed the challenge of such a project - were willing to put in the time and effort to scan and pull together the entire set of catalogs into a full-blown Kodak Catalog Digital Library.

Our initial objective was to include just the annual amateur catalogs, but it turns out that many cameras only appear in certain professional and specialty catalogs. We included as many of those as we could obtain so that almost every Kodak camera made in the US, Canada and Europe, would be documented - at least up to about 1941. After that, it becomes much more difficult as Kodak stopped producing annual catalogs as their product line became increasingly more diversified.

However, even with the additional "non-amateur" catalogs, we weren't completely successful in illustrating "every" camera Kodak ever made. There are an elusive few that might appear in specialty catalogs that we simply couldn't track down. If you can't find one of those odd cameras, that's no doubt why. We may do a revision at some point in the future if someone is willing to loan us a catalog that includes a camera that isn't already recorded.

In this project, a total of 67 catalogs were used from 1886 through 1941 including a number of professional and dealer catalogs, and in some years, two or even three different catalogs to cover all the bases. With the cooperation of a number of dedicated collectors, we were able to pull together all those catalogs and in June 2010, the project started in earnest.

By November 2010, we had scanned everything we needed and eventually all 67 catalogs were then reassembled as image folders and converted to the universally accepted PDF format and finally, converted into individually searchable PDFs which could then be searched globally as a collection.

For those of you interested in the statistics: about 200 hours of scanning time (we never want to hear that sound again), 67 catalogs and 3,908 page scans - which generated 7,917 original and processed images - and 11.4 GB of disk space. Additionally, another 100+ hours of technical development time was needed to convert the digital catalogues into a fully searchable "knowledgebase" that could be launched from most any standard web browser.

The overwhelming number of catalogs was loaned to us by that most remarkable of Kodak collectors, Charlie Kamerman of Eagle Creek, Oregon. Without Charlie, it's very doubtful that this project could even have been attempted.

But as it turned out, even Charlie didn't have all the publications that were needed, but he was able to track down the five that he lacked and was able to secure either a copy or high resolution images that we could work with. And so, our thanks to the contributors of the catalogs and scans that we used:

Charlie Kamerman for the vast majority of catalogs used and all his help,
Steve Shohet for loaning a variety of test catalogs,
Ryerson University (Toronto) for the 1886 Eastman Catalog
George Layne for the 1890 New Kodaks Catalog,
Mike Kessler for the 1891 Dealer Display Catalog,
Ralph London for the 1893 UK Catalog,
Michael Pritchard for the 1897 UK Catalog.

The digital side of the project - also known as "all of the work" - was done by Rob Niederman of Medina, Minnesota, and Milan Zahorcak of Tualatin, Oregon. Remarkably we're still friends and in a few years, we'll probably be able to talk about this project rationally.

And there you have it, a more-or-less done deal. We're fairly sure that it isn't quite perfect, and expect there will be some carping about something or other; but all-in-all, we believe this to be a pretty good product and can now move on to something else.

Our thanks to all of those involved.

Rob Niederman
Milan Zahorcak

Fall, 2011



The Kodak Camera



ANYBODY

Who can wind a watch can use the KODAK CAMERA. It is a Magazine Camera, and will make 100 pictures without reloading. The operation of taking the picture is simply to point the Camera and press a button. The picture is taken instantaneously on a strip of sensitive film, which is moved into position by turning a key.

A DIVISION OF LABOR.

After the 100 pictures have been taken, the strip of film (which is wound on a spool) may be removed and sent by mail to the factory to have the pictures finished, thus relieving the purchaser of all the trouble of finishing the pictures. Any amateur can finish his own pictures, and any number of duplicates can be made of each picture. A spool of film to reload the Camera for 100 pictures costs only Two Dollars.



NO TRIPOD IS REQUIRED.

No focussing, no adjustment whatever. Rapid rectilinear lens. The KODAK will photograph anything, still or moving, in-doors or out. . . .

A PICTURESQUE DIARY.

Of your trip to Europe, to the mountains or the sea-shore may be obtained without trouble with a KODAK CAMERA, that will be worth, in after years, a hundred times its cost.

A BEAUTIFUL INSTRUMENT.



The KODAK is covered with dark Turkey morocco, nickel and lacquered brass trimmings, enclosed in a neat sole leather carrying case, with shoulder strap, and is about the size of a large field glass.

Size, . . . $3\frac{1}{4} \times 3\frac{3}{4} \times 6\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

PRICE, . . . \$25.00.

Weight, 1 lb. 10 oz.

Size of picture, $2\frac{5}{8}$ inches diameter.

Loaded for 100 pictures, including sole leather carrying case, with strap.

Reloading, developing and printing (100 pictures), \$10.00. Negatives returned with the prints. .



IF YOU ARE INTERESTED, SEND FOR



The Kodak • Primer

WITH KODAK PHOTOGRAPH, SENT FREE ON APPLICATION.

Mr. Pearl especially recommends the KODAK to his patrons.

The "KODAK CAMERA" will be forwarded promptly by express on receipt of price.

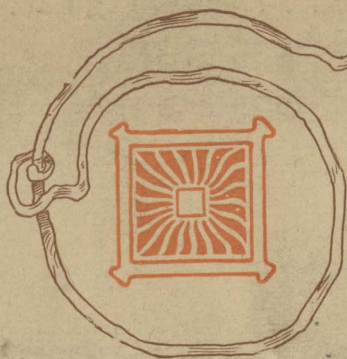
Address,

EUGENE PEARL,

≡ ART + ROOMS. ≡

23 Union Sq. (above Tiffany & Co.)

NEW YORK.



The Eastman Dry Plate and Film Co.,

ROCHESTER, N. Y. AND LONDON,

PATENTEES AND SOLE MANUFACTURERS OF THE

Kodak Camera.