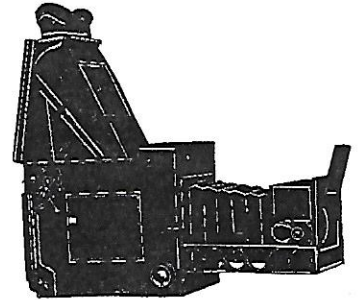


GRAFLEX HISTORIC QUARTERLY



VOLUME 6 ISSUE 2

SECOND QUARTER 2001

FEATURES

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William Folmer Special Issue

Editors note: Folmer was the principle founder of the company that later became Graflex. Of the man whose name graced the company's name for many years, Schwing, we know nothing; it is thought that his contribution was chiefly financial.

Folmer, however, remained with the company even after its sale to George Eastman in 1905, and was active for decades afterwards. Recently, documents have been discovered by Tim Holden at George Eastman House that shed much light on Folmer and the early years of the company. We bring some of those into this issue of our newsletter.

Our first item is a letter written by Folmer, apparently in response by a board member's inquiry about an incident earlier in the company's history. It explains some early incidents surrounding the manufacture of the first Graphic cameras, treated casually by Folmer in the letter, but actually the beginning the Graflex line!

Rochester, N. Y., Dec. 3, 1912.
Mr. Rudolph Speth,
c/o Eastman Kodak Co, City.

Dear Sir:-

Replying to yours of the 2nd. Inst., regarding information pertaining to the early history of the Folmer and Schwing Mfg. Co., you are mistaken in regard to our taking over the Flammang Camera Co., and for your purpose you may select whatever of the following facts you desire:

The Folmer and Schwing Mfg. Co. was manufacturing illuminating goods and novelties, located at 271 Canal Street, and put in a photographic side during the summer of 1891. During the years 1895 and 1896 we had the Scoville and Adams Co. make a number of special cameras to order, being improvements upon their then existing model known as the Henry Clay. Matthias Flammang., being their superintendent at the Waterbury factory, knew of these special cameras. He left the Scoville and Adams Co. in 1896, came to New York, and was desirous of starting a camera business. He solicited orders from the Folmer and Schwing Mfg. Co., and we made an agreement with Flammang to make up special cameras for us according to our designs and suggestions with the understanding that so long as our orders were sufficient to keep his factory busy he would not make similar cameras for any other concern. This arrangement was continued through the remainder of the year 1896 and up until the fall of 1897, when we advanced Flammang money to meet his pay roll and for material, and introduced the early models of the Graphic line of cameras as well as some copying Cameras but during the summer of 1897 we were unable to secure sufficient deliveries of

existing Graphic models at that time to meet the demand, owing to the fact that Flammang was making hand cameras for the Scoville and Adams Co., G. Gennert, and a number of the local dealers, when we refused to advance further money to meet the pay roll or material. As a result the concern was stranded and was sold out at a sheriff's sale. It was purchased by a man by the name of Spellman who was practically subsidized by the Scoville and Adams Co., and attempted to make their Soliographs for a short time, when he failed and was practically succeeded by the Star Camera Co.

During the fall of 1897 we equipped our own manufacturing plant, carrying some of the old men from the Flammang Camera Co., as well as the old American Optical Co., with factory located at 167 to 171 Elm St., New York City, and store at 271 Canal St. In 1900 we moved the store or retail department from 271 Canal St. to 404 Broadway and in 1903 closed the retail store at 404 Broadway, and established the office and show room at the factory 407 Broome Street. The factory in the meantime had been moved from Elm St. into an L shaped building running from 251 Centre St., extending through to 407 Broome St., where we remained until the spring of 1905, when we were acquired by the Eastman Kodak Company.

Yours very truly, FOLMER & SCHWING DIVISION

(Signed) W. F. Folmer, Manager.

Editor: even more is revealed about Folmer by the following letter written to George Eastman by someone he had apparently asked to report on conditions in his newly acquired company. Eastman had taken over numerous competing businesses, such as Century Camera, mentioned frequently in this letter [and evidently sharing building space with Folmer & Schwing]. It might be remembered that Eastman had his hands full directing the affairs of all his divisions, including Rochester Optical, Blair, various plate manufacturing companies, and so on, not to mention his own company, Eastman Kodak. This letter predates the one above and was written shortly after his acquisition of Folmer & Schwing.

Rochester, NY, November 17. 1905

Geo. Eastman Esq.
Rochester, N. Y.

Dear Sir, Folmer Schwing - Century Camera Co.

In regard to the progress made with the amalgamation of these two companies I beg to report to you that the work as outlined in the plan submitted to you in my report of the

27th ult. [sic] has now been carried out with the exception that the Folmer & Schwing Department Accounts are going to be continued in the Century books until December 31st., just as if they were in a separate ledger, in order to show the results of that department independently. This only means a little more complicated work for the book-keeper.

As far as the other features of the unification plan are concerned, I think your attention should be called to various existing conditions which, if they are allowed to keep on indefinitely, will more or less do harm to the business. Before entering into this, however, I must say that it is rather a difficult proposition to convey to you the impressions which one naturally gets when for three weeks constantly in touch with the heads of the two concerns. There is first of all a lack of application on both sides with that distinction that the Century people, even if they are not exerting their individual efforts to the full extent, conduct the affairs in a business like way when they do attend to business, which cannot be said of Mr. Folmer. Here are some facts:

Factory and Office Work

I have heard Mr. Folmer say time and time again that he wants to be relieved of the office work so that he could attend to the factory, It was part of the plan to accomplish this by having him attend to important correspondence only, and put such routine work which any correspondent could attend to after Mr. Folmer informed him of the facts into the hands of the Century people. Thereupon all the mail was opened by the Century Co. and all the Folmer & Schwing mail turned over to Mr. Folmer later on. Mr. Folmer objected to this and he is now getting the Folmer & Schwing mail and he attends to it, and it takes him one half of his time to do this. His reasons were entirely personal, and I do not know whether based on prejudice or experience. I said that Mr. Folmer's time is half taken up by correspondence, the remaining half is probably evenly divided between visiting the shop and talk. If the last few weeks can be taken as a criterion to judge this, then I do not hesitate to say that a good deal of Mr. Folmer's time is wasted. It is far from me to imply by this that this is intentional; I think it is his nature, and he knows of no better way.

But this is not all. Important questions are awaiting action and decision but nothing is done.

(1) Finished stock is now accumulating and will be much more so in four weeks from now, but nothing is done, no plans are made to dispose of it. Mr. Folmer I think is so optimistic in his views about selling these goods that to my notion he is altogether too overconfident about it. An illustration is that "B & C" goods taken over when this

business was acquired. You will remember that Mr. Folmer talked as if he could dispose of these goods within a very short time, and to do it would be no trouble at all. About \$260.00 have been expended in advertising for these goods alone, and I think a little more than \$1000.00 worth have been moved. Though Mr. Folmer himself is a remarkably good salesman, I doubt very much that he can create a sales organization to dispose of the Folmer Schwing products in the manner called for by the increased output. I think that the present Century Management could take this (with the exception of special apparatus) very much better in hand, especially as the same has time to spare to do this. This of course would all have to be done under the name of Folmer & Schwing Mfg. Co. I have reasons to think that Mr. Folmer would rather prefer this, but I also think that he would like to have in place thereof a larger scope in the factory.

(2) The New York store is now conducted at an average cost of roughly \$450.00 per month. The sales for the months of September and October amount to \$3900, but there is to be remembered that this includes orders which were taken prior to the Removal to Rochester in the last week of August. It also includes sales to dealers which would have been made anyway from Rochester. The cash sales included in that total amount to about \$1000.00. For argument sake I shall admit that these cash sales would not have been made without the store, but the cost to sell these goods is about as much as the sales. Upon my return from New York I submitted to Mr. Folmer figures showing that the cost of maintaining this store was just as much as the rent of the entire Factory and Sales Force before the removal to Rochester. I suggested that possibly the New York Branch of your Company could accommodate quarters for a Folmer & Schwing representative if Mr. Folmer thought there was one required, but he waited fully two weeks before taking it even up, though he fully saw the logic and correctness of the figures. Nothing definite has been done. The Company has no lease on the place, but I presume the usual time has to be given before the store can be vacated. One reason which Mr. Folmer mentioned for the Company paying \$452.00 a month was "If it was not for the "B & C" goods I would discontinue the store in a minute. In fact I would not have started it at all." If you consider that the "B & C" goods' sales of this store for two months amount to \$265.82 this reason is very pertinent. It is just like throwing good money after bad.

(3) The Company has to pay the rent of \$258.00 per month for the two lofts formerly occupied. Mr. Folmer left this matter in a very vague condition when he left New York, not even thoroughly instructing the Manager of the store as to what to. The lease expires May 1st 1906.

When in New York I tried to make the Landlord release the Company by paying the rent up to January 1st, but he wanted it up to February 1st, to which I obtained Mr. Folmer's consent, subject to a rebate if the Landlord would collect rent prior to February 1st. But Mr. Folmer in confirming this went beyond this by wording his letter in such a manner that rent would stop whenever somebody else would move into the place. The main point which I want to bring out is this, that the Landlord himself told me that if such a proposition would have been put before him in August when people were looking around for lofts he could have saved the Company some money.

These matters mentioned under paragraphs 1, 2, & 3 are the most important ones, outside of the manufacturing end of the business, where I am quite sure the Company has suffered more than it should during the past few months. The same, together with the heavy moving expenses and increases in salaries on account of the moving to Rochester, will have a very bad effect on the showing at December 31st. Mr. Folmer devoted more careful consideration, work and attention to the business when I saw him directing the affairs of his Company before disposing of his holdings, and somehow I cannot help but think that he has in mind in all his calculations the powerful organization standing now behind the Folmer and Schwing Company.

I do not want to do him an injustice, and will say this much, that I think he would spend money liberally for his own account if he could afford it, but I believe that anyone who has the interests of the Company at heart and sees how things are going would come to the same conclusions which I have here submitted to you. There are a few other matters about which I would like to hear your decision:

(4) Mr. Folmer guaranteed all Accounts receivable taken over at April 27th. At that time a few accounts appeared which Mr. Folmer now claims should be taken out in advertising. He mentioned nothing then about this, and even if this should be so I do not think it is fair on his part to ask us to take these accounts out in advertising and thus to pay 100% on the dollar for which he paid himself only about 50 cents, namely the cost of those cameras. He guaranteed that there were no other liabilities and obligations except those stated, and as the accounts of those people that were charged with the cameras appeared on the one hand as Assets, he should have stated the Liability for advertising.

(6) In January (2) and March (1) three Auto Graflex Cameras were sold to Almer Coe and Blasius & Son, which cameras were I think the first ever sold. These

cameras were taken back some time in September and the new model delivered to these people in their place, and the old style are intended to be sold as second hand cameras, and they certainly now look that. It does not seem to me as the right things for Mr., Folmer to do, to shoulder this loss on the Company for something for which he got the benefit, especially when he says that he wants all the twelve of this kind which he sold to come back and be replaced.

(6) I mentioned above that all Accounts Receivable of April 27th are guaranteed. In May, June and July goods came back and were put in stock which were sold prior to April 27th 1905 and which were credited to Customers at sales prices, though their value to the Company is only the cost thereof. You probably will remember that when the contract was prepared I asked to have a clause inserted which would protect the Company against losses on account of such returns. Mr. Hubbell then stated that the guarantee would cover this point. It is my intention to charge Mr. Folmer with the difference between cost and the amount allowed to customers for those goods.

(7) It seems to be the custom of this Company to make bargains with newspaper and private people to give them cameras to be paid for part in cash and part in advertising, or negatives, or enlargements, but nothing can be shown that the Company ever received the advertising, etc. Since April such credits amounts to about \$500. I think it would be of interest to you to hear of this, and if you do not approve of it I think it would be well for Mr. Folmer to know your views; about \$180 of above amount refers to items mentioned under paragraph 4.

This all points to the difficulties which will have to be overcome until this company's organization is in a better condition, and to accomplish this I do think that it is very advisable to relieve Mr. Folmer of all the office responsibilities (which is not his strong point and which must act like a handicap on his strong point, namely the manufacturing of cameras). As it is now, nothing is done right, and the manufacturing end is not looked after in the proper way. If the change is made, then the office work cannot any more be the cause for not doing things in the factory which ought to be done, and the office part cannot get the blame therefore.

I am satisfied in my mind that the factory ought to get very much more supervision than it gets now, and that much more time should be spent therein. Mr. McLaughlin tells me that conditions in the factory are showing improvements right along, and though the Folmer & Schwing methods are in some cases old

fashioned and not labor saving, he says that there is an improvement to be noticed.

In regard to the selling end of the business, you will please note that the Century people are now attending to some extent to this, and their salesmen are carrying the Folmer & Schwing line, but that is all they are doing in regard to selling Folmer & Schwing goods. Today in addition to the Manager of the New York store there is Mr. Fincke calling on the trade as well as one of the traveling men of the Century Camera Co. (I understand Mr. Fincke is to work on the B & C goods). That makes three men at one time in New York City and that certainty is inviting conflict between the interests. Something should be done regarding the New York store at once and I am very much afraid this matter will be postponed and delayed for weeks if not taken up with Mr. Folmer at once. In conclusion I beg to mention that I have endeavored to give you a description of some conditions in this place, and though it may sound as if I were prejudiced against Mr. Folmer, I hope you will not consider it that way. I think it to the best of the cause that you know these things.

Yours faithfully,

[unsigned - probably written by Rudolph Speth, according to annotation on the letter]

[editor's note: after the above piece of what might be referred to as tattle-tailing, Rudolph Speth was relocated by Eastman back to company headquarters on State street!]

...ask Tim Holden

Q.: "How much did Bill Folmer himself have to do with the features that made Graflex cameras great? That is, how much credit is due him personally?"

Answer: Folmer, who was with the company from its beginning until 1928, not only founded the company, but was very inventive and their chief problem solver. He was the main force in the creation of their style focal plane shutter, and the design of their single lens reflex. Until WWII, these were Graflex cameras' most important features. So the answer is that he is due the lion's share of the credit.

FOLMER AND SCHWING MFG. COMPANY - 1st Company.

Directors.

| | | <u>From</u> | <u>To</u> | |
|-------------------|------------------------------|---------------|---------------|----------|
| W. F. Folmer | Available Record of Election | Apr. 20, 1903 | | |
| I. S. Lydecker | Available Record of Election | Apr. 20, 1903 | June 23, 1905 | Resigned |
| H. C. Fincke | Available Record of Election | Apr. 20, 1903 | May 13, 1905 | Resigned |
| H. H. McCutcheon | Available Record of Election | Apr. 20, 1903 | May 13, 1905 | Resigned |
| A. M. Lawrence | Available Record of Election | Apr. 20, 1903 | May 13, 1905 | Resigned |
| George Eastman | Succeeds H. C. Fincke | May 13, 1905 | | |
| Rudolph Speth | Succeeds A. M. Lawrence | May 13, 1905 | June 23, 1905 | Resigned |
| William H. Corbin | Succeeds B. H. McCutcheon | May 13, 1905 | | |
| Frank W. Lovejoy | Succeeds R. Speth | June 23, 1905 | | |
| Walter E. Hubbell | Succeeds I. S. Lydecker | June 23, 1905 | | |

All offices expired at merger of this Company with Folmer and Schwing Manufacturing Company of New York and formation of Folmer and Schwing Company January 2, 1906.

Listing of the board of directors before and right after the acquisition in 1905. What change took place in 1903 is not clear - it is possible it is a reorganization for purpose of incorporation and/or stock sales. This appears to be organizational only and did not affect the operation of the company nor the fact that it was still directed primarily by Bill Folmer.

FOLMER AND SCHWING MFG. COMPANY - 1st Company.

Officers

| | <u>From</u> | <u>To</u> | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|---|---|
| <u>President</u> | | | |
| W. F. Folmer | Available Record of Election | Apr. 20, 1903 | |
| <u>Vice President</u> | | | |
| A. M. Lawrence | Available Record of Election | Apr. 20, 1903 | May 13, 1905 Resigned |
| George Eastman | Succeeds A.M.Lawrence | May 13, 1905 | |
| <u>Treasurer</u> | | | |
| W. F. Folmer | Available Record of Election | Apr. 20, 1903 | Apr. 20, 1903 Resigned |
| H. C. Fincke | Succeeds W.F. Folmer | Apr. 20, 1903 | Resigned - Minutes of meeting not available |
| R. H. McCutcheon | Succeeds H. C. Fincke | Date of election or minutes not available | Resigned - Minutes of meeting not available |
| Rudolph Speth | Succeeds R.H.McCutcheon | May 13, 1905 | June 23, 1905 Resigned |
| George Eastman | Succeeds R. Speth | June 23, 1905 | |
| <u>Secretary</u> | | | |
| I. S. Lydecker | Available Record of Election | Apr. 20, 1903 | June 23, 1903 Resigned |
| R. H. McCutcheon | Succeeds I.S.Lydecker | June 23, 1903 | May 13, 1905 Resigned |
| Rudolph Speth | Succeeds R.H.McCutcheon | June 23, 1905 | June 23, 1905 Resigned |
| Miss A.K. Whitney | Succeeds R. Speth | June 23, 1905 | |

All offices expired at merger of this Company with Folmer and Schwing Manufacturing Company of New York and formation of Folmer and Schwing Company January 2, 1906.

Listing of the actual management of the company during the transition. Noteworthy is that Folmer stayed on to run the company, even though he no longer owned it. Also note the position held by Rudolph Speth, who figures prominently in the letters featured in this issue.

AFFIDAVIT

William F. Folmer, being duly sworn, deposes and says:
that he was in charge of the Folmer and Schwing
division of the Eastman Kodak Company during the years this
division operated in Rochester, namely, from about August
1905 to until June 1926;

that in 1906, at his direction, a kite camera was
designed, made and operated and that the attached
photographs, marked Exhibit A are photographs of that kite
camera;

that he supervised the operation of this camera in
making negatives of Kodak Park, Rochester, New York in the
summer of 1908, and that it was actually operated when
supported from the cord of a large kite;

that at least one successful negative was thus taken of
Kodak Park, Rochester, New York in the summer of 1908

with said camera, and that the attached exhibit B is a
3-1/4x5-1/2 print from the said original negative, a large
number of these prints having been made and used for passes
to Kodak Park;

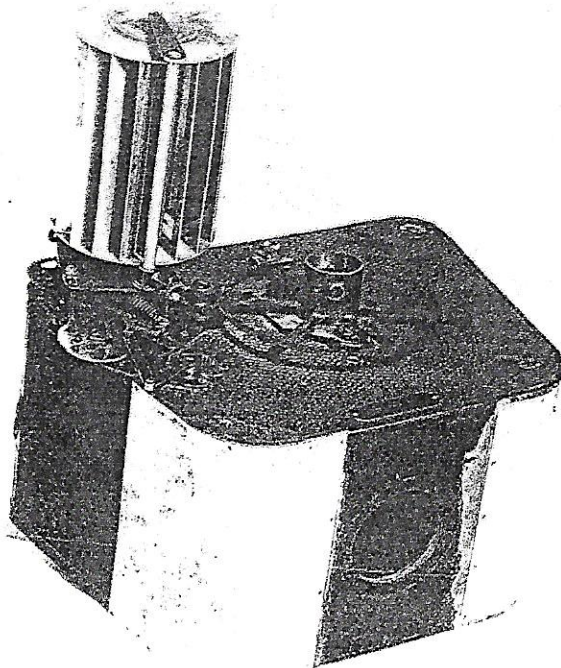
that the said original Kodak Park negative is now in
the possession of the Eastman Kodak Company, 343 State
Street, Rochester, New York;

that the drawings and descriptions marked Exhibit C
and attached hereto accurately describe the operation of the
various parts of the said kite camera;

that the said kite camera made in 1908 is now in the
museum of the Eastman Kodak Company, 343 State Street,
Rochester, New York as originally constructed in 1908 with
the parts unchanged except for a few minor repairs
necessitated by a fall from the air during one of the flights
made by said camera for taking pictures, and the lens is now
missing.

(signed) William Folmer

Exhibit L



The Kite Camera

*Nothing much is known about this
oddtity, apparently one-of-a-kind,
except the testimony above, some
structural drawings, the drawing to
the left, and the photo of Kodak Park,
which we have displayed on page 8. No
explanation was included of why
Folmer had to give the deposition., but
it sounds as if it might have had to do
with patent infringement.*

WANT AD POLICY:

Any subscribers wishing to place a want ad selling or seeking Graflex-related items may send them to the GHQ for inclusion at no charge (at this time). The editors reserve final publication decisions.

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If anyone did not receive the previous issue of this newsletter, please contact the address below. Sometimes one goes

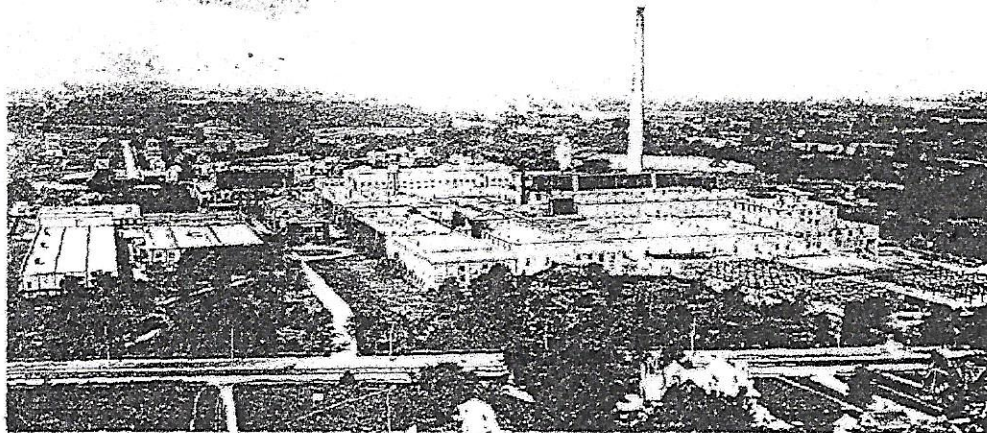
FOR SALE 1927 3x4 GRAFLEX series C, Serial. # 159160. Lens locked at 2.5, good shutter, fpa, Excellent condition, MBG, \$350.00 plus shipping

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Graflex Historic Quarterly

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KITE PHOTOGRAPH OF KODAK PARK.

Image from a postcard taken by the kite camera [story p.7]