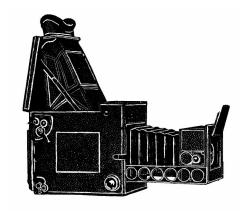
GRAFLEX HISTORIC QUARTERLY



VOLUME 10 ISSUE 3

THIRD QUARTER 2005

FEATURES

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A Shooter's Graflex

By Jim Flack

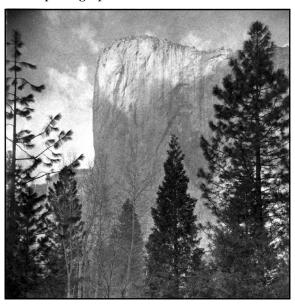
It was the quality construction and the clever simplicity of its mechanical design that originally attracted me to my first Folmer & Schwing Graflex camera. Unlike vintage British field cameras displaying polished mahogany and brass with red leather bellows, the beauty of a Graflex SLR is on the inside, the way it is designed and the way it works. Graflex cameras really appeal to my background as an engineer, and I must admit to having the "collectors" disease, too. I now own more than just a couple of different models. I won't say exactly how many Graflex cameras I currently own, just in case my wife happens to read this article.

I want all of my cameras to be working models, not just shelf-queens in a display cabinet. Now and again I find that I've unintentionally purchased a Graflex camera that is not quite functioning correctly, and I've taken those opportunities to get into them a little bit to fix or clean and adjust what I can. However, my greatest source of satisfaction with a Graflex is taking a fully capable vintage camera into the field on a "shoot."

To me, using a Graflex for photography today is like being transported back in time to an era when making photographs was a deliberate process, and the men and women who pursued this craft were necessarily both artists and technicians of the highest order. I feel a personal connection to

the legacy of the great photographers of the early 20^{th} Century whenever I raise the viewing hood and open the lens door of a Graflex SLR. Yes, I do own a digital camera, too. But I feel no romance, no emotional connection to the traditions and aesthetic of photography's past by clicking away in "auto mode" and then downloading to a computer with PhotoshopTM to use the auto-enhance function. To me, digital image capture is just not very "soul-satisfying" photography.

Using a Graflex SLR in the field is always an enriching adventure. Often I will take two or three different models with me on an outing so I can pick and choose the camera to fit the moment. Sometimes I'll take a camera that I've recently adjusted or repaired for the satisfaction of using it "again for the first time" and knowing that I've given that camera a second life. Usually, though, I just choose a Graflex that is appropriate for the conditions at the scene and also fits my intention for the photograph.



"El Capitan," Palladium image taken with 2x3 Graflex SLR and 10 inch Tele-Optar lens.



"Yosemite Falls," Bromoil image taken with 2x3 Graflex SLR.

I use a simple electronic shutter tester to measure the actual shutter speed settings of every Graflex that I plan to use. Frequently, an old Graflex camera's shutter speeds will not be close to the speed indicated by the shutter speed matrix on the camera. The slower speeds may not even work at all because the shutter springs have lost some of their tension over the years. However, at least a few of the higher spring tension settings will usually produce consistent shutter speeds in the most important range of 1/50th to 1/200th of a second. Using the shutter tester, I prepare a new shutter speed matrix specifically for each camera that I refer to when shooting a Graflex SLR in the field.

When I was learning platinum/palladium printing, I'd often use a 4x5 Auto Graflex in the field, and I would shoot with Polaroid™ P/N film (I have a Polaroid™ film holder that I modified for use with my Graflex SLRs.). I'd also take along my Speed Graphic to make Polaroid™ negs, too. Invariably, I would also have along one or two smaller Graflex cameras, such as a 2x3 Graflex Series B or a 3x4 Graflex Super D, since there was always some extra room in my pick-up. Sheet film for the 2x3 Graflex Series B and the 3x4 Graflex Super D is not readily available today (although still available through online resources), so I'd take along a 2x3 roll film holder and a handful of 120 Tri-X™ film for each of these cameras just in case there was an opportunity to use them.

Recently, after moving house, I've been unboxing, reviewing and refiling my negatives and prints. It

has been a fun, nostalgic experience to see many of these images again and remember the outings, the cameras and the activities of the day captured on film. Quite surprisingly, it has also been a revelation about my choice of Graflex cameras when shooting in the field. I discovered that well more than half of my favorite images were shot on 120 film using either my little Series B or the 3x4 Super D! They were always just my "take-along" cameras, not the cameras that I planned photographic trips around. This revelation caused me to take a closer look at the small Series B and the "odd-size" Super D.

Today, the small Series B and the 3x4 Super D are not prized by collectors, and so they are readily available at a reasonable price from dealers at vintage camera shows and on the internet from sources such as eBay™. I guess I had a "collector's mentality," and I, too, was not placing much value on these models of the Graflex line. Yet my shooting experience with these cameras proved to me that they deliver excellent results whenever I would give them a chance. Furthermore, it seems that I have actually been giving them that chance by taking them out to shoot much more often than I had realized. I've learned to appreciate that there is something special about these models that appeals to the "shooter," if not the "collector."

If you would like to shoot with a Graflex SLR, I urge you to consider the 2x3 Graflex Series B. I actually have several of the little Series B (Again, don't mention this to my wife.), and after thinking about my shooting success with each of them, I realized that I am frequently grabbing one of them out of my truck, not just because they are so small and light compared to my 4x5 Graflexes, but also because each one I've owned seems to be very reliable and accurate. Although the young ones might be only about 50 years old, the earlier Series Bs are pushing 90. My oldest Series B was made around 1920 but it seems to be as lively and accurate as my youngest example. Perhaps I've just been lucky to get good working cameras, but also perhaps their small size has helped them remain reliable and accurate over the years.

Because of their smaller size, their reflex mirror is smaller with less mass for the mirror return spring to move, and the mirror causes less impact against the internal stops at the end of travel. Also, the shutter curtain is smaller in both length and width. The shorter length may mean that the shutter spring need not be so tightly wound at the highest tension and may also provide a more linear change in tension across the adjustment range. The narrower width of the shutter cloth may enable it to travel more uniformly and smoothly from one spool to the other. These fea-

tures, due simply to its smaller size, may contribute to my experience that the 2x3 Series B is an especially reliable and accurate model within the Graflex SLR camera family.

Roll film holders made by Graflex for this camera are available from time-to-time on eBay™ and through vintage camera dealers. Even at around a hundred bucks, I think they are worth it, because they transform the little 2x3 Series B into a reliable shooter you can use every day. In addition, you can pick up a nice 10-inch Wollensak Tele-Optar lens at a reasonable cost that will screw right into the lens mount of the little Series B. The Graflex 2x3 Series B has proven itself to be one of my most used Graflex cameras, and the available 10-inch Tele-Optar adds to the versatility of this model.

Similarly, I've had surprisingly good success with my 3x4 Graflex Super D. Equipped with a Graflex 120-roll film holder, it seems always ready to shoot. Since the Super D is a relatively recent model, it has a more modern, flexible shutter curtain material and has accumulated a lot fewer years of use. The Super D's sharp Ektar™ lens and automatic aperture are nice, modern features that prove their worth for many photographic situations. Just like its highly prized brother, the 4x5 Super D, this camera was the top of the line, albeit today's price of the 3x4 Super D is substantially less than the 4x5 Super D model coveted by collectors. Its smaller size compared to the 4x5 Super D seems to be an advantage in the field, and shooting roll film is also an advantage when making pictures on the go.

A 120-roll film holder for the 3x4 Graflex SLR is a bit difficult to locate, but it is definitely out there and worth the search. The biggest difficulty in locating one for a Graflex SLR is finding a vintage camera dealer or eBay™ seller who knows that there is actually a difference between a Graflex and a Graphic film holder. You may have to contact the seller directly to confirm the dimensions of the mounting plate and the groove across the face for the Graflex, not Graphic, version to be certain you've found a Graflex roll film holder for an SLR. Then, unfortunately, you may also have to bid in competition with some eager yahoos who don't know the difference between the two versions either.

When you have a 3x4 Graflex SLR and a 120-roll film holder to go with it, you hold in your hands one of the most sophisticated cameras that ever wore a Graflex badge. Even including a premium price for the 3x4 roll film holder, your investment in the 3x4 Graflex Super D package will likely be ½ or even 1/3 of your potential cost for a 4x5 Super D model today. My experience has been that because "Secret Woods," Silver gelatin image taken with a 3x4 Graflex SR. of its smaller size and lighter weight compared to a 4x5, I have included it on many photo trips and then grabbed it frequently whenever its smaller size

or its automatic aperture feature was a virtue. Many wonderful photographs were made because my 3x4 Super D was close at hand with a roll film holder loaded and ready to shoot.

Don't get me wrong. I still prize some of my more unusual Graflex cameras, and I am just now getting into shooting with a 5x7 Press Graflex. However, I have a renewed appreciation for those little Graflex Series Bs and my odd-size Super D. Their size, flexibility and reliability are assets in the field. Whenever I go out on a shoot, I know I can count on either one of these cameras with a roll film back to add to the success of the outing.

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[Jim Flack is a pictorial photographer and Executive Director of the New Pictorialist Society. Jim's email address is pictorialist@tampabav.rr.com1

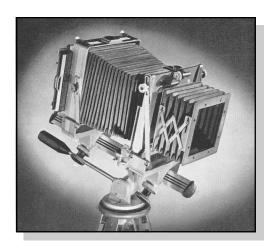




The Graphic View Cameras 1941 to 1969

Copyright William E. Inman, Sr.

In 1940 The Folmer Graflex Corp. introduced their 3½x4½ and 4x5 Anniversary Speed Graphics, named in honor of the company's 50th anniversary. A year later, in 1941, as WWII was starting, they introduced the 4x5 Graphic View camera. It was



The 4x5 Graphic View Camera 1941-1949.

revolutionary and unlike any other view camera the photo industry had ever seen.

The Graphic View was compact, lightweight and all metal. It had an inverted V-type monorail-focusing base, unlike the cumbersome double track wooden view cameras of the day. Because of its flexibility, the new camera became immediately popular. The Graphic View offered fore and aft swings and tilts, side-to-side settings, and sidewise shifting motion on both the back and front. The camera also had a 3" rising motion of the front standard. Once the camera adjustments were made, set and locked, the camera was rigid and vibration proof.

The Graphic View camera featured a metal 4x4 lensboard (interchangeable with 4x5 pre-Anniversary and Anniversary Speed Graphic lensboards) and a reversible back. Four reversible backs were available: a 4x5-4x5 Graphic or Graflex back, or a 4x5-3½x4½ Graphic or Graflex back. A 12½" bellows extension permited one-to-one copying with focal lengths up to 6", large close-ups even with long-focus lenses, and direct magnification with short-focus lenses. A spirit level was also fitted to the top of the rear section of the camera. The camera had a silver finish with a red bellows.

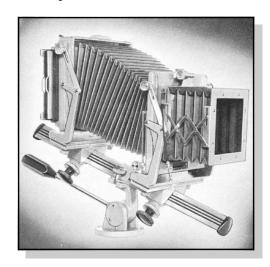
The Graphic View was usually supplied with a

203mm Kodak Anastigmat f7.7 lens in a non-synchronized Supermatic shutter, along with a fiber carrying case and was priced at \$127.50. When the bellows was in the collapsed position, the camera would accommodate a $3\frac{1}{2}$ " wide-angle lens. At the same time, a bellows-type sunshade was designed for the Graphic View that attached to the top of the front lens standard. It was designated the Accordion-type Lens Shade.

The integral Graphic View tripod Pan Tilt Head was unique in that it clamped around the V-type monorail and could be positioned anywhere on the rail. The Pan Tilt Head could also be removed for storage with the camera in the camera's Vulcanoid hard case.

When the camera was fitted with a Graflex back, the accessory 4x5-4x5 or $4x5-3\frac{1}{4}x4\frac{1}{4}$ Graflex Dividing Back could be used. Also, using a special mounting plate (Cat. No. 2754), a Graflite battery case could be attached to the front standard. Either one or two heads could then be attached.

In 1942 a modified version of the Pan Tilt Head was introduced for standard tripods. The V-type clamp was changed to a platform with a tripod screw for regular Graphic or Graflex cameras. It tilted 100° down and 25° up. It was designated the Graphic Pan-Tilt Tripod Head (Cat. No. 4610), and it was price at \$14.50.



The 4x5 Graphic View II 1949-1969.

In August 1949, an improved model of the Graphic View was introduced with additional features. It was designated the Graphic View II (Cat. No. R-16 with a Graphic back). The new model had a 16" bellows draw instead of the 12½" found on the earlier model. This gave a 1:1 copy ratio with an 8" lens. The camera could be purchased with the new 203mm (8") Kodak Ektar f7.7 lens in a Kodak Flash Supermatic shutter (Cat. No. 173), and it was priced

at \$222.50 in 1950. The 90mm Graflex Wide Angle Optar also became available with a fully synchronized shutter. A recessed lensboard was also introduced in 1949 for the 90mm lens, as well as shorter wide angle lenses (Cat. No. 9234). Also, Graflex added a lensboard adapter to accept Pacemaker Graphic "45" lensboards (Cat. No. 9230), priced at \$5.85.

Another change made on the camera was the front and back standard assemblies pivoted in the center instead of at the base. The change gave better control of the image. The finish was changed to a gray hammertone, but the red bellows was retained, although later production was supplied with black bellows.

In 1951 the Graphic View II Graphic back became available with an Ektalite Field Lens under the ground glass for a brighter image. Also introduced was a Right Angle Connector Plug for the recessed lensboard (Cat. No. 2588).

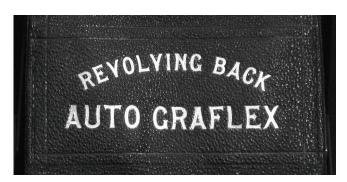
In 1954 the Graphic View II became available with a 4x5 Graflok back (Cat. No. R-24). This feature permitted the use of the 4x5-120 Graphic Roll Film Holders, the 4x5 Graphic Grafmatic (Cat. No 1268), the 4x5 Graflarger back (Cat. No. 6019) and the 4x5 Graflok Dividing Back (Cat. No. 9109), which was introduced in 1951. 1964 saw the introduction of a Pacemaker/Super Graphic lensboard adapter for the Graphic View II (Cat. No. 9229).

In 1969 the Graphic View II Camera was discontinued. An estimated 9,000 1949 Graphic View II cameras were manufactured, as well as 6,700 of the original 1941 Graphic View cameras.

[Ed. The next issue will give readers additional information on model changes, availability of special order backs and model improvements, in order to assist the user/collector in finding the best view camera for his needs.]



A Graflex-modified Speed Graphic using Graphic View parts, used by the then L.A. Rams in 1957.



The First Revolving Back

By Ken Metcalf

In 1905 William F. Folmer (of Folmer & Schwing Mfg., New York) applied for a patent and sold a camera having a shutter that was "... scientific in construction and composed of few parts, the curtain being one long strip containing apertures from full opening to one-eighth of an inch, and permitting instantaneous exposures of from one-tenth of a second to one-thousanth part of a second." This non-movable Graflex-style back camera was called the Auto Graflex. Although it was advertised in magazines during 1905, no catalog has been located for that year, possibly because this was also the year the company was purchased by the Eastman Kodak Company.

The following year, 1906, the company, now Folmer & Schwing Co. of Rochester, distributed at least two catalogs. Interestingly, neither catalog acknowledges the new parent, Kodak. The earlier catalog was devoted entirely to their Auto Graflex line, which, at that time, included three models in three sizes. The second 1906 catalog was similar to the Folmer & Schwing Mfg. catalog of 1904, except that there were far fewer cameras (6 versus 22) and pages, probably again due to Kodak's influence.

In the first catalog, one model was advertised with a reversible back. This type of back had been used on the "original" Graflex model circa 1903, as well as on Graphic-style and "long-focus" cameras. Shown in Figure 1 is this camera (serial number 8496). As stated in the catalog, "This type of Camera is not quite so compact as the regular Auto Graflex, but the difference in size permits the adjustment of somewhat longer focus lenses, which for special work is often desirable." The camera weighed 5½ pounds, compared to the fixed back version at 4¾ pounds and had a focal capacity of 11½ inches (versus 8½ inches). The dimensions were $8-7/8 \times 6-1/8 \times 7-1/2$. The reversible back version sold without a lens for \$125 and with a fixed back for \$85.

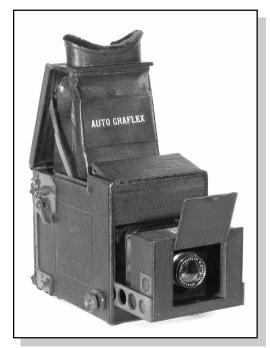


Figure 1

Now it gets interesting. Within the same year (and in the second catalog), Graflex dropped the reversible back and replaced it with the turntable-style revolving back, which was the first time this type of device had been used on a Graflex camera. Shown in Figure 2 is this camera (serial number 10712). This version had grown a little, to 9-1/2 x 6-1/8 x 8-¼, and gained a little weight to 6¾ pounds. Finally, the focal capacity had increased to 12½ inches, while the price remained \$125. The following year, 1907, Graflex added a similar form of revolving back to their spring back Cycle Graphic camera.

Although proudly proclaimed in gilt lettering, no Folmer patent can be located for a revolving back with a date near 1906. A patent (number 1,060,748 - "Camera Back"), applied for in 1910 and granted in 1913, clearly shows the back; however, the "claim" section does not mention this feature, rather it deals with the familiar slide lock of the Graflex-style camera. A sentence in the patent (according to subscriber Steve Church) may be a clue: "The operation and purpose of a revolving back being well-known in the art they require no explanation here..." Namely, it was too common to patent, or a patent for the back had been turned down because it was "obvious."

According to Richard Paine's <u>A Review of Graflex</u>, "...the appearance of the camera adheres closely to the design of the original Graflex, and evolved into the 4x5 Telescopic R.B. Auto Graflex of 1912; it certainly bears no resemblance to the double

extension R.B. Auto Graflex introduced in 1909." A recently discovered camera (serial number 12157) has aperture and tension plates first shown in the 1909 catalog, suggesting manufacture after it was last shown in the 1908 catalog.

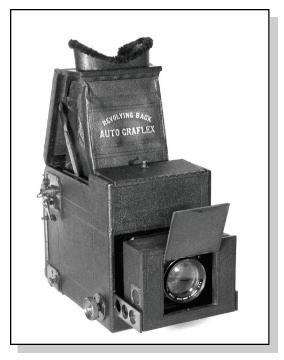


Figure 2

In all, I counted 14 differences in the two cameras, although other than the change in backs, a side-by-side comparison shows little visual differences in the cameras. One feature, the spring loaded lever to open the hood cover, appeared on the second version of this camera, the Press Graflex and the 1914 version of the Telescopic Revolving Back Auto Graflex. Also, in two examples of the earlier version, the paper speed chart is glued to the front lens housing, while the metal chart is riveted to the front hood door in the later version. This lack of a metal speed chart on other Auto Graflex cameras is not characteristic of Graflex workmanship.

The revolving back was used on many Graflexstyle cameras through their last camera, the Super D, which was discontinued in 1963. Revolving backs in various forms were also used on Cycle Graphics, Speed Graphics (very limited) and, finally, Super and Super Speed Graphics.

Future articles will look at other models that had major modifications, such as the Telescopic Revolving Back Auto and the 3½ x 4½ Super D Graflexes.



Ask Tim Holden....



Q Could you tell us about the long-lived Graflex Trade Notes?

A First, let me say that although I was responsible for approving everything that was written in the <u>Graflex Trade Notes</u>, the Advertising Department (and ad agencies they used) were responsible for preparing the publication. Consequently, I never had access to the entire set of Notes.

It was produced primarily for Graflex dealers and, at one time, had a printing of about 1,000 copies. It is hard to generalize about Trade Notes, as it started as a multigraphed letter printed occasionally (probably in 1938), was sometimes printed monthly (although sometimes it was printed for twomonth spans), was issued with volume and issue numbers (although there are a few errors and changes), was page numbered by issue or by year, and apparently ended in 1961, with no volume or issue number being given. Initially, <u>Trade Notes</u> was produced to give information on products and price list changes. In 1940 they changed to a glossy paper stock, which continued through the remainder of its life. In 1946 pictures and stories of major dealers were added. Over time, sales pitches, technical questions (articles which were my responsibility, and in some cases were printed under the title "Hints and Aids from Service Sales"), information on trade practices, national advertising campaign information, information on Graflex employees, lists of available equipment, and promotional inserts were added. The size of the publication grew from a single page to an average of twelve pages. In addition to providing information, Trade Notes augmented the company's sales staff, by reaching dealers more frequently than could by done by in-store visits.

Because Graflex dealers were also dealers for other cameras, this publication was an important tool in differentiating Graflex from other cameras. In addition to the promotion function, the company used this bulletin to keep dealers informed of new products and accessories. It is certainly no wonder that the dealers couldn't keep up with us, as we gave them so much to read that they didn't have a prayer of a chance of doing that, and selling any merchandise, even in a 10-hour day!

One of the less interesting, but necessary, functions of the bulletin was to make dealers aware of Fair Trade Agreement changes, dealer franchise plans, financing plans available, and promotions.

I believe it was a value to both the dealer and the company in introducing and updating dealers on equipment, advertising programs, sales tips, and policy and personnel changes. Although, as an Advertising Department product, its primary emphasis was presenting sales pitches, it also provided valuable technical information to dealers and a valuable record for present day users and collectors. The primary source of information was the Advertising Department, which unfortunately changed hands about every three years, so it is a wonder that the messages were so continuously carried.

[Ed. Quarterly Publisher Mike Hanemann and others have a number of these bulletins. If you have copies, the Quarterly would like to obtain copies they do not have, to use as a reference source. Please let Mike or Ken know what copies you have. An index of topics for a number of issues is available at cost from Ken.]



Q Could you tell us about the short-lived <u>Graphic Graflex</u> News?

A The <u>Graphic Graflex News</u> was published only two times, in May 1947 and March 1949. Its target market was registered owners of Graflex cameras. At the time, it was described as "a colorful news magazine...directed editorially to owners of Graflex-made equipment." In addition to being mailed free-of-charge to registered camera owners, at the request of dealers, it was sold to them for resale at the cover price of 15 cents, or given out free as a promotion. Graflex charged dealers 7 cents up to 1,000 copies, and 5 cents over 1,000. In the final issue, they talked of decreasing the cover price in the future to 10 cents. Initially, 150,000 copies were printed.

Bob Garland was hired in 1948 basically and primarily to edit this publication. When Bob left Graflex, he worked at Kodak, and upon his death, his name was given to the second highest award at the National Press Photographers Association. (The highest award was the "Joe Sprague Award.") Joe preceded Bob in interacting with the field and was also the originator of the "Big Bertha" camera.

The publication contained articles on professional camera users, photo contest news, product introductions, and technical assistance articles, which I wrote.

Given the high hopes for this magazine, it unfortunately did not succeed, I believe, for four reasons: 1. Owner addresses were compiled from returned registration cards, but when Graflex received a lot of returned copies of the News, they realized that many original owners had not bothered to change their address with Graflex when they moved, and new owners usually were not aware that they should register with the company. 2. With many functions at Graflex, time and manpower dictated what was done. It is my belief that the delay in publishing the second issue and the demise of the News were also caused by these factors. 3. Although I do not fully recall the circumstances, I believe, when Bob Garland and his publishing background, left to go to Kodak, this may have had an effect on the News. 4. Though completely my personal opinion, I believe Vice President Hod Schumacher's enthusiasm (or lack of it), may have played a role in the fortunes of the News.

Here is a prophetic, and a bit sad, quote from the last issue: "...resolving ourselves to the end that, other things permitting, not pestilence, famine, war or unforeseen obstacles will cause our demise as once seemed possible."

Graflex Historic Quarterly

The <u>Quarterly</u> is dedicated to enriching the study of the Graflex company, its history, and products. It is published by and for hobbyists, and is not a for-profit publication. Other photographic groups may reprint material provided credit is given <u>GHQ</u> and the author. We would appreciate a copy of the reprint.

John Manser

We regret to inform our readers of John Manser's passing. John was an avid Graflex collector and founder of the first publication for Graflex users and collectors, the Graflex Historical Society Journal.

John's knowledge and enthusiasm will be missed.

Here is a 1913 quote from Desmond Coke, provided by John as a forward to an article he wrote for an upcoming issue of the Quarterly:

"The collector is usually thought a crank by his acquaintances, a nuisance by his friends, a miser by his relatives, a blessing by the dealers and a deluded idiot by everyone concerned."

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An index of back issues is enclosed. Copies of the issues may be purchased for \$2.50 each.

Please contact Ken.

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- 2. 4x5 Pacemaker Speed Graphic. Excellent. \$200, w/Heiland flash \$300
- 3. 4x5 Speed Graphic box \$50
- 4. 3 Graflex plate or film holders \$25 (2 4x5 & 1 5x7)
- 5. 5x7 Graflex body w/hood \$50
- 6. 6 4x5 film holders in boxes \$6 each
- 7. Original 1904 catalog \$150
- 8. 2-3 dozen later model film holders Some prices negotiable. Please write or call for details.

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