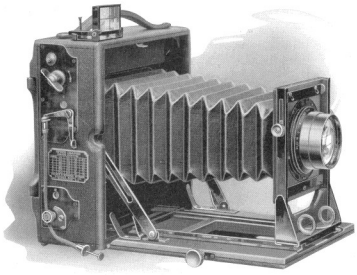
GRAFLEX Journal

SHARING INFORMATION ABOUT GRAFLEX AND THEIR CAMERAS

ISSUE 2 2019

FEATURES



The SPEED GRAPHIC

TOP HANDLE SPEED GRAPHICS
1912-1927

By Ken Metcalf

In the last issue of the Graflex Journal, Davis Strong wrote about the rare 4x5" pre-Anniversary Speed Graphic with the carrying handle on top of the camera instead of on the side. It is my goal to present the prequel to his article. I will cover what I have found about the origins of the camera, how you can identify the various models, how many were made, and show a few special cameras. First though, "top handle" was never used by Graflex (nor was the word "Graflex" used until 1902), but it has become a recognizable way to describe Graflex's first model "Speed" camera.

Origins of the camera

According to Todd Gustavson[1], "Designed to collapse down to the smallest possible package, cycle cameras proved a popular carry-along with bicyclists. The RB Cycle Graphic, introduced in 1900 by Folmer & Schwing Manufacturing Company of New York, was the 'embodiment of all that is perfect in a camera of cycle size'.

Widely believed to have surpassed all other cycle cameras in terms of workmanship and materials, the RB Cycle Graphic featured extra strong wood panels, heavier gauge brass fittings, and red Russian leather bellows. For viewers of old black-and-white movies, this camera may seem vaguely familiar. Picture it with an added rangefinder and a wire-frame finder protruding above the front lens board, and you have the Speed Graphic, the legendary press camera and offspring of the Cycle Graphic."

According to Eaton Lothrop[2], "As with many other cameras which are the result of a union of previously established design concepts, the Speed Graphic reveals its heredity in its appearance. The compactness and basic design of the camera were derived from the 'bicycle' of 'cycle' type of folding camera which emerged in the 1890s. The Folmer & Schwing Mfg. Co. had produced a 'Cycle Graphic' camera as early as 1896 and the introduction of the Graflex line of reflex cameras involved the company in the production of focal-plane curtain-shutters. As early as 1904 the 'Graphic Focal Plane Shutter' * was being employed on Folmer & Schwing cameras. One might wonder why, then, it took till 1912 to introduce a camera whose basic features had already been separately developed [U.S. Patent 843,140, February 5, 1907]."

"One possible explanation is the organizational situation in which the company was involved. Around 1906 the Folmer & Schwing Mfg. Co. was acquired by George Eastman and moved to Rochester. In 1907 the company became a division of the Eastman Kodak Co., as did the Rochester Optical Co., the Century Camera Co., and the Blair Camera Co. Reshuffling of personnel and the establishment of new policies may well have slowed down design activity. In 1923 the courts decreed that the Folmer & Schwing branch should be separated from the Eastman Kodak Co., and the Folmer Graflex Corporation, which was formed as a result of that decree, continued production of the cameras."

Another theory, from "Doc" Skinner (a well-known New York Journal photographer and constructor of early electrical-type flash bulb synchronizers)[3], from the June 1949 issue of The Camera Magazine, "40 Years a Newscamerman": "Every invention that I've turned out, from the first Speed Graphic to my latest experimental work with Speedlites, has been devised for these purposes – to improve the quality of a picture –

to make the camera operation simpler – to get pictures that couldn't be made otherwise.

The first Speed Graphic that I designed was built in 1909. Newscamermen in those days used a 4x5 Graflex camera for snapshots and a 5x7 view camera for setups and interiors. The boxes were bulky and difficult to carry around. I figured out a box 2½" thick in regular 4x5 size. Then I sent the specifications to Folmer and Schwing, Graflex Division. Mr. Folmer didn't want to make it up for me at all. I wouldn't be a success, he said.

Finally, he agreed to fill the order, for $75.00. That included nothing but the camera box with lens board and focal plane shutter in back. It has a single rack, non-adjustable slits like the pre-war model, and I used a 5" f/4.5 B&L Tessar in a front shutter. The others used f/6.8, 4¼" (12cm) [sic] Dagors. When they realized its advantages, the lack of bulk and other features, they ordered copies. The same camera, changed only by the addition of a larger lens and double track, is the Speed Graphic of today, the most popular camera in news work. My reward was a gift of six cameras – that could take better news pictures."

Richard Paine[4] has a straightforward narrative: "The original purpose of the Speed Graphic was to provide focal plane shutter efficiency in a compact, folding, large-format camera. Thus, only barrel lenses were provided for, and its later reputation as 'press' camera was probably not anticipated. The camera had a tapered bellows, an f/4.5 lens, and a relatively small 3¼" or 3¾"- square lensboard. A rising front was the only adjustment. Handles were secured to post on the top, and a crosshair, folding optical finder was included."

Models and Production

Catalogs. Second only to actual cameras, catalogs are an excellent source of information on Graflex products. With this model, because of a few examples, catalogs were used extensively. Not expecting a nerd lining up all the catalogs, Graflex made changes in their presentation, especially in the sequence of measurements and weight (with or without a lens). In 1929 they showed the 3¼x5½ top but gave the dimensions of the new model pre-Anniversary.

Specifications from Graflex catalogs

1912-13	1914	1915-21	1922-3	1924-5	1926-1927	1928 No catalog
			4x5			
2⅞x7x8½	3¾x7x8½	6½x4x6⅜	same	7¼x3½x7½*	same as 1915	
3 lbs.	same	3½ lbs.	4¼ lbs. in 1923	4¾ lbs.	4¼ lbs. weight w/ lens	
$35 w/o lens	same	**	**	$90 w/lens	$75	
			3¼x4¼			
Not listed	Not listed	5¾x2¾x6¼	same	same	not listed after 1925	
		2½ lbs.	3¼ lbs. in 1923			
			3¼x5½			
3⅛x7½x7½	same	7x3⅛x7½	same	same	not listed after 1925	
3¼ lbs.	same	same	4¾ lbs. in 1923			
			5x7			
9x3¾x9½	same	8¾x3¾x9⅜	same	not listed after 1924		
4¼ lbs.	same	5½ lbs.	7¼ lbs. in 1923	***		

* "The 4x5 model marketed since May 1, 1924, is of different dimensions from its predecessor and is called the 4x5 *Special* Speed Graphic.

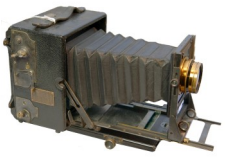
** 1915- $35, 1916-$37, 1917- $45, 1918-$56.25, 1919-$45, 1920-21 - $88, 1922- $72, 1923 - $84 w/lens.
*** According to Tim Holden, there was a "design change" in 1924.

According to catalogs, metal parts were oxidized from 1912 to 1921; from 1922 through 1924, metal parts were of "brass, silver plated, then oxidized." Paine and others thought that the silver plating was done earlier, but not noted. In 1925 and 1926, a "Graflex finish" was used. Possibly cameras with gray paint. In the 1925 catalog, it was stated that "Press photographers pick this camera for theirs, which indicates its ready adaptability to all sorts of subjects under all sorts of conditions," while in 1923 they boasted that "It is suited for general amateur use as well as for swift action."

The 3¼x5½ (post card or 3A Graflex), which has been described as the "elegant Speed," was used as the illustration in all catalogs.

Compiled from catalogs and sample cameras by Richard Paine[4], "All four sizes had the same features and, in some cases, the same hardware." Poor sales in 1924 led Graflex to modify 3¼x5½ cameras made ca. 1920 and rebrand them as the "4x5 Special Speed Graphic." As shown in the chart above, Graflex returned to the body dimensions of 1915-1923 in 1926. "The 3¼x4¼, which was not introduced until 1915, had a four-aperture curtain with speed to 1/500 second. [As opposed to five apertures and a top speed of 1/1000.] It also had a reverse winding curtain to reduce the depth of the body, all resulting in a weight one pound less than the 4x5, and a small lensboard. The Graflex-style back was available as a factory modification in 1916."[4]

3¼x5½ 28186
Jim Chasse

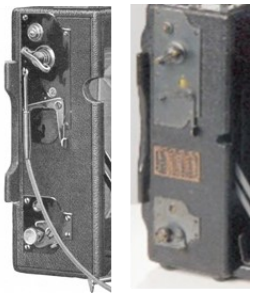


4x5 31723
Chris Cooper

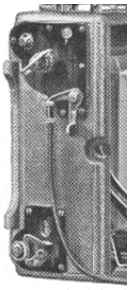
Graflex always showed a barrel lens on their top handle and never listed a front shutter as available, until the next model in 1929, when it could be fitted with a Schneider f/3.5 lens in a Compound shutter.

Here are catalog scans, along with pictures of actual cameras, showing that catalogs are not always correct, and to show changes in top handle cameras.

1912 3¼x5½
Catalog vs. actual. Hook release, flat cut-out, fold down & open winding key.



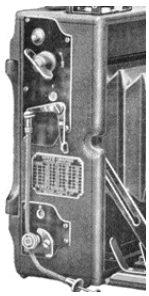
1916 3¼x4¼
Catalog & actual. Threaded release, Small beveled cut-out .

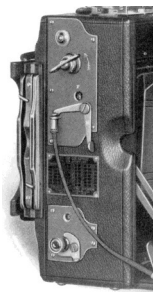


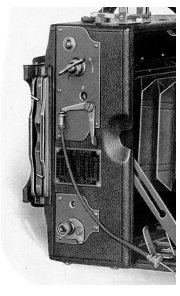
1917 4x5
Catalog & actual.
Flat non-folding key.

1922
3¼x5½

1926 4x5
Catalog vs. actual. Return to earlier flat cut-out and 1916 size.







Special Cameras

Although the company thought highly of their cameras, they either solicited or accepted orders for custom-built cameras, and they even made their own "Special" cameras with the top handle and later the Pacemaker line. Because the body was made of wood, there were a number of modifications and updates, some well-done.

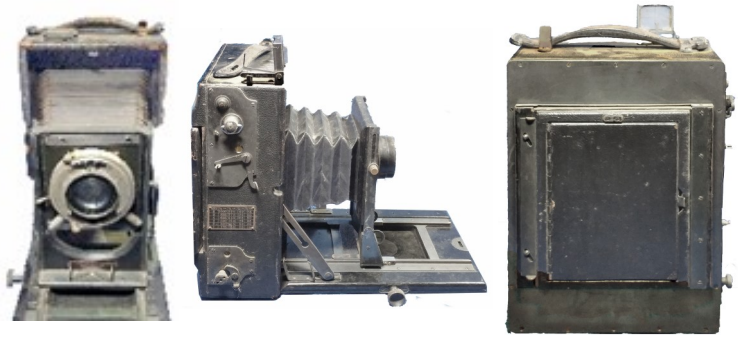
Special order cameras. Around the time of the top handle, a series of specially made cameras were ordered by the Spencer Lens Company. Unfortunately, none has so far been found. Here are several that have been rescued.

50888 3¼x4¼ Graphic-style revolving back ca. 1915

One "Special" ordered. From a 1915 camera, we have the side-mounted handle of the Pre-Anniversary, the forward mounted focus knob of the Anniversary, the tilting standard and missing focal plane shutter of a Pacemaker Crown, and the rotating back of a Super Graphic, although the turntable came from a 3¼x4¼ RB Auto, and the ground glass assembly is from a standard 3¼x¼ Speed Graphic.

51589 4x5 Graflex-style revolving back ca. 1915

One of three "Special" revolving back cameras ordered.

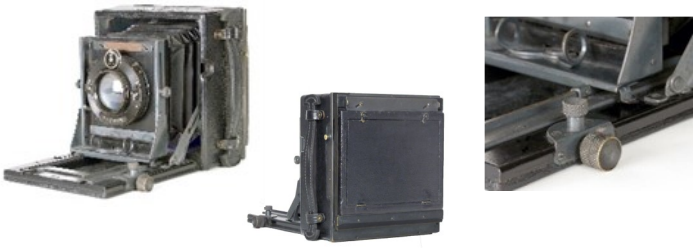


56987 & 79011 4x5 One of six "Special" cameras

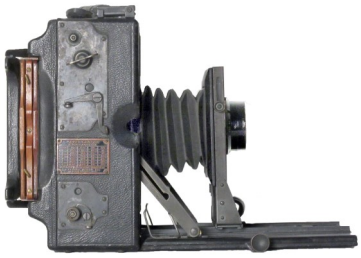
Both ordered without a focal plane shutter. Left, 56987, and center 79011. On right, a standard top-handle Speed Graphic number 31867 ca. 1913-14, and in the back, Special number 56987 ca. 1917.

142033 4x5 Graflex-style revolving back 1925

One "Special" ordered. No focal plane shutter and side mounted handle. RB Auto turntable.

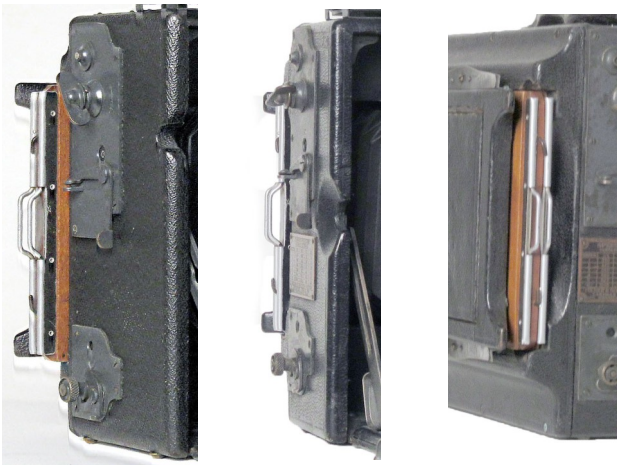


4x5 Special Speed Graphic 1924-1925 ** From the 1924 and 1925 catalogs: "The 4x5 model marketed since May 1, 1924, is of different dimensions from its predecessor and is called the 4x5 *Special* Speed Graphic." It has been suggested that in 1924, poor sales of the 3¼x5½ convinced Graflex to modify the bodies and market them as the "4x5 Special Speed Graphic." There are a number of converted cameras, all from the 1920 batch of 500 3¼x5½ cameras (110777-112276). One from the batch was found not converted, but being from eBay, it may not have been accurately described.



3¼x5½ 110864 ca. 1920, converted in 1924 or later to 4x5. Speed plate number 13476, on plate number list as "4x5 Special"

This camera has the "4x5 Special" tag, but others so far do not.



Why the special back for the 4x5 Special? Left, holder sticks out for easy removal with standard 4x5; middle, holder in Speed Special; and right, cutout and thicker back, to allow easier removal of holder.

Left, Jim Flack's 1926 4x5 148842, with handle straight across, and on the right his 1928 5x7 160570, with diagonal handle.

Some cameras had their handle straight across, while most had them at a diagonal, as shown above. Straight handles have been observed on cameras from 31625 through 148842, and on, at least, the 4x5 size. Further examples are needed to make a conclusion about which ones and why it was done.

The spring back was available from 1912, and in 1916 an optional Graflex-style back became available, thus allowing many more accessories.

1912-13	1914	1915-21
2⅞x7x8½	3¾x7x8½	6½x4x6⅜
3 lbs.	3 lbs.	3½ lbs.

28135

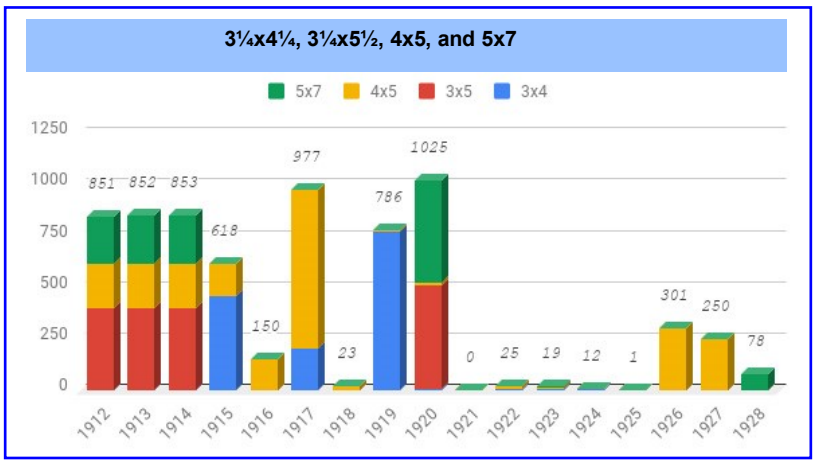
85866

One of the minor mysteries of the camera is why it was tall, a little less tall, not tall at all, taller for a while, and then back to not tall at all.

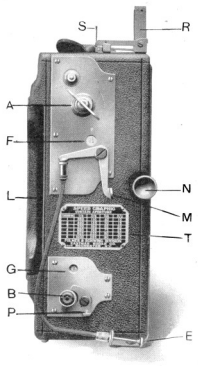
Here are some facts, that do not lead me to any worthwhile conclusion.

- The slits are the same width.
- The distance between the tension and speed plates is substantially different.

Production. Because the Graflex production book (aka serial number book) starts at about 1915, and is not dated until about 1920, it is not possible to give an accurate tally of cameras made. However, based on camera serial numbers kept by Mr. Paine and others, a rough estimate of batch and total production can be made. Approximately 7,000 cameras were scheduled for production from 1912 through 1928. Here is a graph of that data, created by Leigh Klotz. The uniformity of the pre-production book estimates is due to the uncertainty of specific years, thus totals were divided by three. After that, Graflex production may be assumed to be in response to demand. An anomaly in the graph occurred in ca. 1920 when 500 3¼x5½ cameras were made, but many, if not all, were converted to the 4x5 format.



Directions for Operating the Speed Graphic



Open the camera by pressing the concealed spring at the top; swing the bed down until the spring-actuated side arms lock the bed in extended position. Grasp the front standard clamp and draw the lens standard out to the "infinity stop" fastened on the bed track.

FOCUSING When the lens is set at the "infinity stop" the white line on the focusing pointer, attached to the base of the lens standard, should be in line with the 100-foot mark on the graduated focusing scale on bed of camera. When focusing upon objects nearer than 100 feet, the lens is advanced into focus, by means of the focusing button **N**, to a point on the focusing scale representing the distance from the camera to the point focused upon.

THE FOCUSING PANEL The spring actuated Focusing Panel **L** is provided with side shields to facilitate focusing upon the Ground Glass Screen. This panel recedes to accept the Graphic Plate Holder or Premo Film Pack Adapter. When the Plate Holder or Film Pack Adapter is withdrawn from the camera, and the curtain aperture **O** (open) is registered at **F**, accurate focus of the full negative size image can be obtained by varying the position of the lens with the focusing button **N**.

The adjustable Rising and Falling Front, on the lens standard, affords means for vertical centering of the composition with the exposure aperture.

THE VIEW FINDER A Direct Vision View Finder **R**, is located on top of the camera. The subject being photographed can be centered with the exposure aperture by means of the sighting bar **S**, and the vertical and horizontal lines engraved on the finder lens. When not in use the finder is folded down and compactly closed.

The Shutter Speed Table **T**, attached to the camera, gives approximate shutter speeds in fractional parts of seconds, obtainable with the various curtain apertures **O**, 1½, ¾, ⅜ and ⅛, and the tension numbers 1 to 6.

THE CURTAIN APERTURE When the letter **O**, "full opening," appears at **F** the shutter is wide open. The other apertures 1½, ¾, ⅜ and ⅛ follow in rotation at **F** as the key **A** is turned to the left.

SETTING THE SHUTTER The shutter is set by turning key **A** to the left, until the curtain aperture indicated on the Speed Plate for a certain exposure, is registered at **F**. If the curtain is already set so that any one of the aperture numbers 1½, ¾, ⅜ or ⅛ appears at **F**, release the curtain by pressing Shutter Release **M** until the proper aperture is in position.

The 3¼ x 4¼ Speed Graphic is equipped with a Focal Plane Shutter having but four, instead of five curtain apertures, and the speeds range from "time" to $\frac{1}{1000}$ second. The shutter curtain is wound in opposite direction to that on the other models.

CAUTION The *dark slide* of Plate Holder, or Film Pack Adapter, MUST BE IN POSITION WHEN THE SHUTTER IS SET; otherwise injurious fogging of Plate or Film will result.

REGULATING THE SHUTTER SPEED Tension on the curtain is regulated by turning the milled head **B** to the right until the tension number indicated on the Shutter Speed Plate for a certain exposure, appears at **G**. The numbers run from 1 to 6—the highest number indicating the greatest speed.

To decrease speed of shutter, release tension on shutter curtain by pushing escapement **P** back and forth until the required lower tension number is registered at **G**.

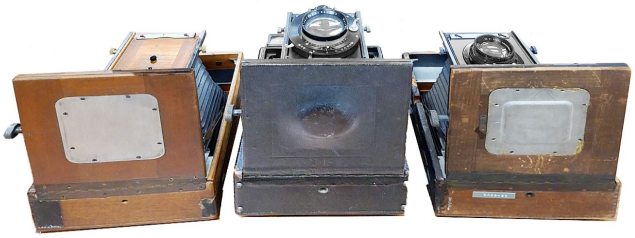
INSTANTANEOUS EXPOSURES When the shutter has been set in accordance with the above directions, the exposure is made by carefully pressing Shutter Release **M**, or plunger **E** of the Cable Release.

EXAMPLE For an Instantaneous Exposure $\frac{1}{1000}$ second, use curtain aperture ⅜ and tension No. 5. To set shutter for $\frac{1}{1000}$ second, wind the tension to No. 6.

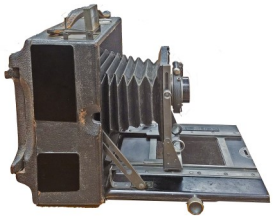
TIME EXPOSURES Wind or release the curtain until **T** (TIME) appears at **F**. Set the tension at No. 1; rest the camera upon a rigid support; open the shutter with one pressure upon release **M** or **E**, and terminate the exposure by a second pressure. Immediately after an exposure is made, a Plate or Film should be placed in position for the next exposure.

CAMERAS FROM THE GEORGE EASTMAN MUSEUM

Prototypes. Left, 3¼x5½", right, 3¼x4¼", no serial numbers, except on right camera where "1920" was stamped where a serial number is usually placed. As is common with Graflex prototypes, leather is used in places to adjust for thickness of full leather covering.



Prototypes left and right with new museum acquisition in center. Center, 11066, ca. 1920, was given to the museum and was used by a professional photographer. The camera is the Special Speed, but with the focal plane shutter removed.



The bump. Although it is present on both prototypes, and the sample camera, it is the only one that has surfaced to date. Logic, unless you are talking Graflex, would suggest it was meant for longer lenses, but was not deemed necessary for production cameras. There are other differences, such as the deep bevel on the prototype that was not initially present, and some variances in the dimensions of the camera.

Left, 3¼x4¼ (1/4-plate), and right, 3¼x5½ (postcard and 3A, #28371).

Conclusion. Although more can be learned as more cameras are found, it seems reasonable that the top handle Speed Graphic, though not much of a "user" camera, is an important start to a line of cameras that continued in various models until 1973.

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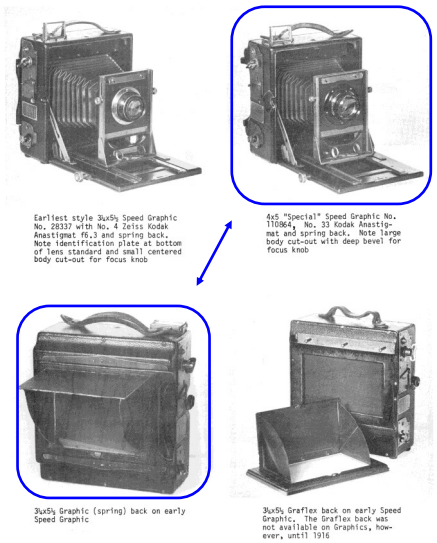
* Graflex Historic Quarterly 12, 3, James Flack, "Evolution of the Graflex Focal Plane Shutter"

"Cameras incorporating the focal plane shutter designed by William Folmer had many significant advantages over the Goerz Anschütz and other similar cameras with a focal plane shutter. First and most important, especially now that these cameras are about 100 years old, is that this shutter design is very reliable and durable. The Graflex shutter designed by William Folmer has many fewer moving parts and stress points. In fact, if a Graflex camera has been properly protected during periods of disuse and storage, one should still expect it to function properly today."

** Richard Paine's book The All-American Cameras is the best book for Graflex collectors. Over time, new information and newly found cameras have been located, which require updating his book. Here are two from the top handle entry.

In fact, the 4x5 and 3½x5½ even used the same body, bellows, track and lens standard until 1924. In 1924, a more compact 4x5 "Special" Speed Graphic replaced the early version.

The chart on page two, I believe, clarifies this statement.



The illustrations need to be switched.

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[1] Gustavson, Todd, 500 Cameras, 170 Years of Photography Innovation, Sterling Press, 2011, NY, p. 56.
[2] Lothrop, Eaton S., Jr., A Century of Cameras, Morgan & Morgan, NY, 1973, p. 136.
[3] Morgan, Willard D., Synchroflash Photography, Morgan & Lester, NY, 1939, p. 2.
[4] Paine, Richard P, The All-American Cameras, a review of Graflex, Alpha Publishing, TX, 1981, pp. 39-40.

Army - Signal Corps Photog...

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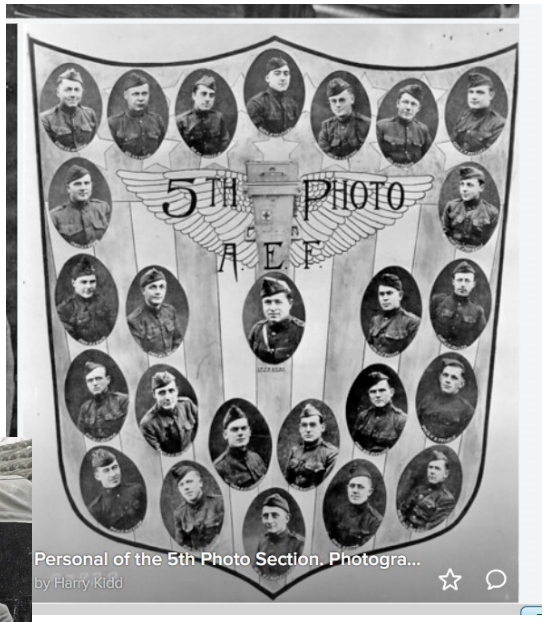
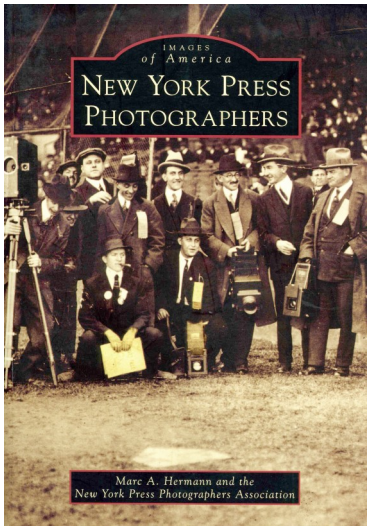


From a 5x7 Speed Graphic.

Images of American NEW YORK PRESS PHOTOGRAPHERS

Reviewed by Davis Strong



Beginning with the Pre-Anniversary, then continuing through the Anniversary model and lasting until the Pacemaker in the early 1960s, the Speed Graphic was the almost universally used camera by the press photographer.

The New York Press Photographers book is a collection of over 150 nicely reproduced photos of the members of the New York Press Photographers Association (NYPPA) at work and play. Marc A. Herman, the NYPPA historian, has gathered the photos, many from the association archives, which date back to the inception of the association in 1915. The NYPPA is considered the oldest press association in America.

The photos in the book are not of the events in the media capital of the world during the golden age of newspapers but of the photographers covering those events. Because Graflex-made cameras were dominant during much of that time, they feature prominently in many of the photos.

This is a great resource for anyone interested in photos of Graflex cameras at work.

New York Press Photographers is part of the Images of America series published by Arcadia Press, www.arcadiapublishing.com, ISBN 978-1-4671-3361-6. Available on amazon.com, paperback $15.24, hardcover $26.25. Photos from the book used with permission.

"In the mid-1930s, a group of photographers outside the mayor's office in city hall. They are all equipped with four-by-five-inch Pre-Anniversary Speed Graphic cameras and new battery-powered flashbulbs. Hazardous and smoky flash powder was a thing of the past."

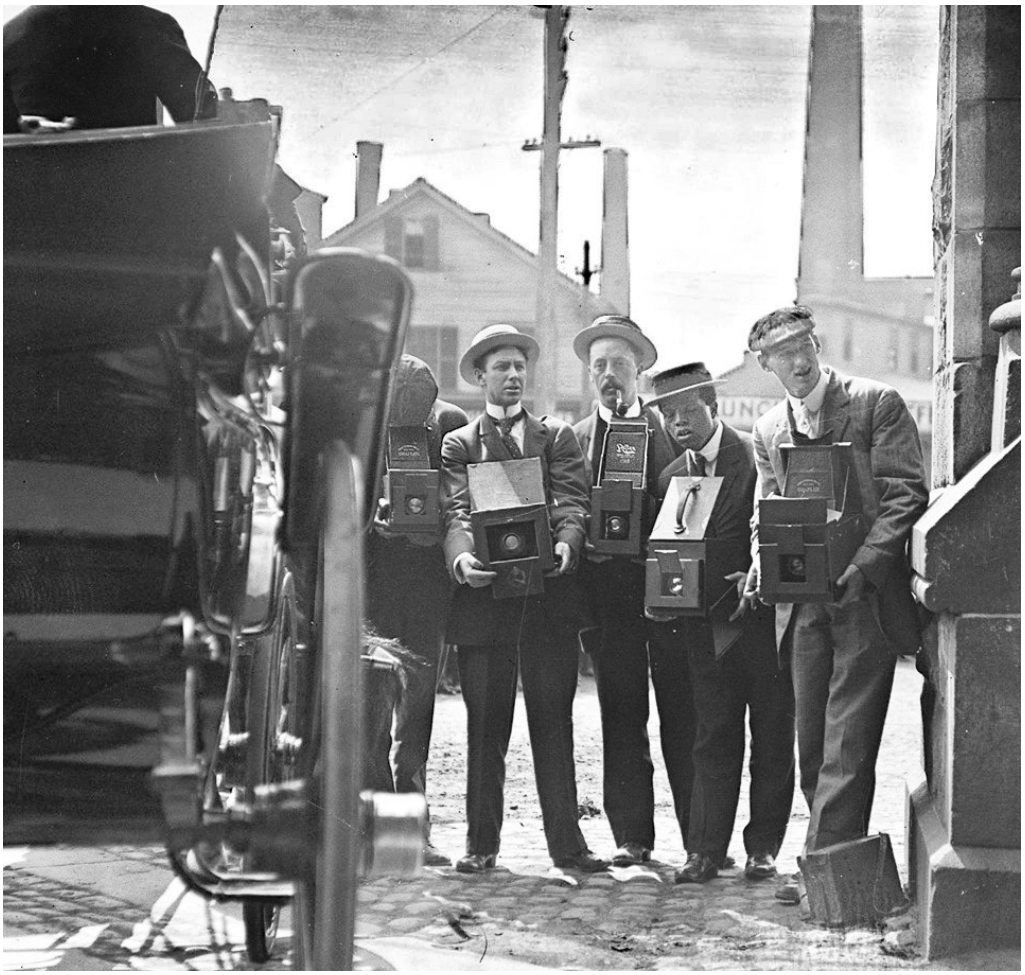
"Photographers (shown in the hallway) cover the Wayne Lonergan trial at the Manhattan Courts bldg. in March 1944. News photographers still operate in this corridor; the clock above the doorway remains, although it is no longer functional. (Courtesy of the *Daily News*.)"

"In 1948, the New York Times photographers show off their Civil Defense press armbands. From left to right are Carl Gossett, Larry Morris, George Alexanderson, Ernie Sisto, Patrick Burns, Arthur Brower, John Dugan, Fred Sass, Bill Eckenberg, Neal Boenzi, Mike Leibowitz, and Eddie Hausner." A lot of Pacemaker Speeds, but Ernie seems to have the earlier Anniversary model!

EARNIE SISTO FROM THE GHQ

In his 1939 book, Synchroflash Photography, Willard Morgan discusses early development of synchronizers. Newspaper photographers had begun to experiment with synchronized flash even before they were manufactured in the U.S., bringing flashbulbs in from Europe. Morgan wrote: "Among the first synchroflash pioneers in the United States were 'Doc' Skinner of the New York Journal, Ernest Sisto of the New York Times, and Clarence Stieglitz of the New York World Telegram." Morgan quoted Ernest Sisto as saying: "As far as I know, the first 'buzzer' or magnet type of synchronizer was made by Tommy Flannagen of the New York Daily Mirror."

FROM GEORGE DUNBAR

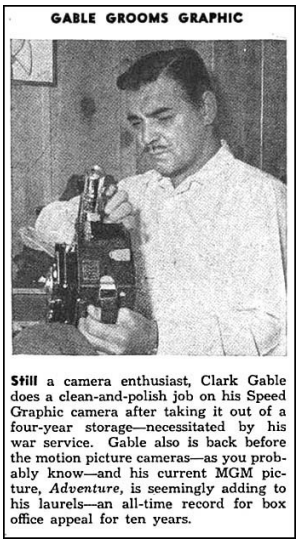


American Antiquarian Society

In 1907, Prince Wilhelm of Sweden visited Worcester (a city that would be home to 40,000 Swedish residents by 1910). During his stay the Prince was followed by a bevy of photographers, including Theodore Wohlbruck, who took this shot of a photo scrum waiting for the Prince to exit a building to the carriage at left. This image is taken from a 4 x 5 glass plate negative in the Society's archive of Wolhbruck's work — the resolution is so good you can read the brand of cameras being used by the journalists: One Roflex and two Graflex box cameras!

https://www.facebook.com/American.Antiquarian/photos/pb.33248928544.-2207520000.1559601120./10157250592948545/?type=3&theater

How many are Graflex cameras?



1946. Clark Gable and his Speed Graphic.

Life Magazine 1948 and 1950.

MY CAMERA COLLECTION, and How I Ended up Purchasing a Unique, Wooden Aerial Camera

By Steven Rudd

First, a few words about how I started collecting cameras. When I first met my wife over 25 years ago, she and her mother had a small antiques business. One of their areas of specialty was British antiques, necessitating annual trips to England for purchasing new inventory. As I accompanied them on my first buying trip, I was mainly keeping my eyes open for the things they liked to sell, but I was immediately smitten when I spotted the first antique, wooden camera I had ever seen: it was perched atop an advertising post along Portobello Road, the famous weekly antiques market held every Saturday in London. I was not quite impulsive enough to purchase that wooden camera but did buy Robert White's small but excellent "Shire" book Discovering Old Cameras: 1839-1939, which taught me a great deal, and solidified my interest in old cameras. My wife subsequently surprised me when she later returned from London with a 1930s Kodak folding roll film camera. I was hooked, and my collection has blossomed to over 1,000 cameras and accessories! My primary areas of interest include Kodak (cameras, accessories, advertising pieces, boxes of film); miniature/subminiature cameras; Polaroid cameras; cameras with original boxes; Art Deco cameras; and wooden cameras. With regards to wooden cameras, I strongly prefer the polished, natural wood finish varieties, as opposed to cameras with painted wooden bodies or those covered with leather or leatherette. In terms of Graflex, the two cameras I own are a Folmer & Schwing Graflex No. 3A and a Number 0 Graphic, largely because of their connection to Kodak. As an offshoot of my wife and her mother's antiques business, I began to sell vintage cameras and have done so at dozens of antiques shows around the U.S. (e.g., Nashville, Dallas, Washington D.C., and New York City) and at multiple camera shows throughout the world (including Boston, Toronto, Detroit, Philadelphia, London, and New York City).

Second, here is how I found the unusual, wooden "aerial camera." A mutual acquaintance, whom I met at the Rochester Photo Symposium in April 2018, learned of a prominent camera collector named Alan Cotter who passed away a few years ago, and Alan's widow was now selling off her husband's collection. This contact put me in touch with the widow, Paulette Cotter, and after some communication by email and phone conversations, I visited her home near Cooperstown, NY, a little more than an hour's drive from my home in Utica, NY. The collection was quite impressive, and everything was for sale! I had to choose selectively, as many of the cameras were rare and thus expensive. I was initially naïve and optimistic enough to think that perhaps I was the first potential buyer to peruse this incredible collection; however, I soon learned that at least a handful of knowledgeable collector/dealers had preceded me, several of whom had already purchased some wonderful pieces from Paulette (e.g., Original Kodak camera, Demon Detective Camera, etc.). Nevertheless, there was still plenty to choose from. I was a bit pressed for time and focused on my main interests. I ultimately purchased two dozen items from the vast array of goodies, including this wooden, aerial camera. I was immediately struck by the beautiful appearance of this unusual, polished, wooden camera with its cone-shaped front. The only thing Paulette knew about this camera is that her husband categorized it as a "Graflex Airplane Camera." I barely had time to inspect it, but my gut told me it was a special, well-made camera, and thus I bought it. Once I returned home, I started doing some research and was a bit surprised that I was unable to find anything quite like my aerial camera in McKeown's Cameras guide or online. I then began networking, emailing multiple fellow collectors and "photographica" experts around the world. Eventually, fellow collector Ralph London (who lives in Oregon) put me in touch with Ken Metcalf, as an indisputable Graflex expert, and Ken was gracious enough to share his wisdom and thoughts regarding my camera.

The rest of this story is provided by Ken.

By the way, Paulette Cotter welcomes any serious inquiries if you are interested in items for sale from her late husband's collection. She can be reached by email at: ACOTTER1@STNY.RR.COM

Although Steven does not have many Graflex cameras, hopefully, he will eventually be drawn to the dark (leather) side.

A few facts

The film size is 6½x8½" (whole plate).

A fixed focus, 296.8mm. (12 inches) lens. No provision for haze filter, or wear on lens.

Folmer & Schwing Division on shutter speed plate. Division replaced by Department in 1917.

Tapered box-jointed cone.

Difference in color and finish between shutter and cone.

Hardware attaching shutter to cone. Typical with F&S shutter, which was sold separately.

Back appears to be standard F&S spring back.

Newtonian finder is F&S made. Sold separately. Side handles appear sturdy.

F&S sometimes made prototypes in wood, then metal, and many prototypes did not make it into production.

All parts appear to be stock F&S items, except for the cone and lens.

Does not show rough wear.

F&S advertised for custom work.

A few thoughts

Hardware attaching shutter to cone looks similar to that used on F&S focal plane shutters.

Dating the camera is difficult, although the shutter is at least from 1908, and prior to 1917. The whole plate survived in the Cycle Graphic until 1922, but was not available on most Graflex cameras after the merger with Eastman Kodak in 1905.

As there is no tripod mounting feature, it must have been for hand-held work.

Although it has the look of an aerial camera, if used outside of a plane, the wind would collapse the finder, the handles would not work with gloves, and the film changing process would be difficult.

As the lens focus is fixed, the use of this camera is limited.

Based on the condition of the camera, I don't think it was used a lot.

All made with F&S parts, except for the cone, which could have been made by an experienced cabinet maker.

There are numerous examples of prototypes that never made it into production, and this one did not make it into production.

In my opinion, it was an elegantly made one-off, possibly used as a training aid.

identifax

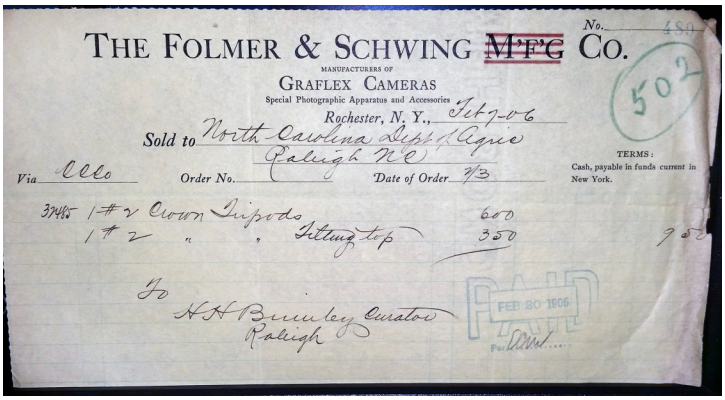
In the third 2017 issue of the Graflex Journal, an article was written about the last Graflex identification camera, the Identifax, with the hope that an example would someday be discovered. The camera at right was found...in the Joel R. Havens collection!

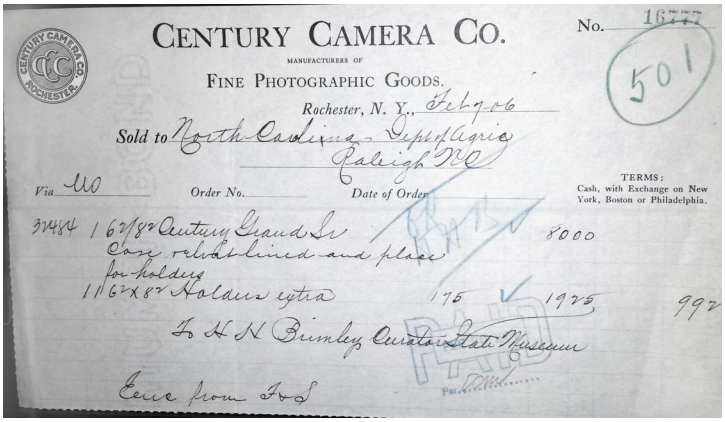
Joel is a long-time Graflex collector and contributor to Richard Paine's book, A Review of Graflex. In his words, "Tim Holden told me that all of the Identifaxes except for this one were shipped to South America for use there. This one remained at the factory until the end, when it was auctioned off. I bought it in Rochester from the fellow who was at the auction, along with a prototype top-rangefinder Speed Graphic."

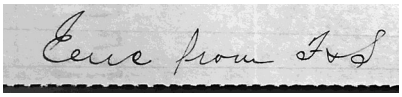
FOLMER & SCHWING-CENTURY CAMERA

Documentation below, prepared by Folmer & Schwing for the government's anti-trust case against Eastman Kodak.

After the deal was closed the operations were continued in the same premises (407 Broome Street, New York City.) Towards the end of August 1905, the machinery, fixtures, merchandise, etc., were shipped to Rochester, where quarters were ready in the Century Camera Building. A number of the company's mechanics were transferred to Rochester. Though this company's business was treated as one distinctly separate from the Century, the business operations were recorded in the Century books, keeping the Folmer and Schwing Mfg. Co., however, as a separate department, with the intention to keep the records in such a manner that the profitability of each could be ascertained. Mr. Folmer was in charge of the manufacturing and selling end.


THE FOLMER & SCHWING ~~MFG~~ CO.
No. 480
MANUFACTURERS OF
GRAFLEX CAMERAS
Special Photographic Apparatus and Accessories
Rochester, N. Y., Feb 7 06
Sold to North Carolina Dept of Agric
Raleigh NC
Via Ello Order No. Date of Order 2/3
TERMS: Cash, payable in funds current in New York.
502
3485 1 #2 Crown Tripods 600
1 #2 " Setting top 350
To H H Brimley Curator Raleigh
FEB 20 1906
Paid


CENTURY CAMERA CO.
No. 16
MANUFACTURERS OF
FINE PHOTOGRAPHIC GOODS.
Rochester, N. Y., Feb 7 06
Sold to North Carolina Dept Agric
Raleigh NC
Via NO Order No. Date of Order
TERMS: Cash, with Exchange on New York, Boston or Philadelphia.
501
3484 1 6 1/8 x 8 Century Grand Sr 8000
Case relined and plate
for holding
1 1/6 x 8 Holder extra 175 1975 997
To H H Brimley Curator State Museum
Enc from F&S
Paid


Enc from F&S

"Enc. from F&S"?

Above are two bills for the North Carolina Department of Agriculture (Now in the collection of the North Carolina Museum of Natural History).

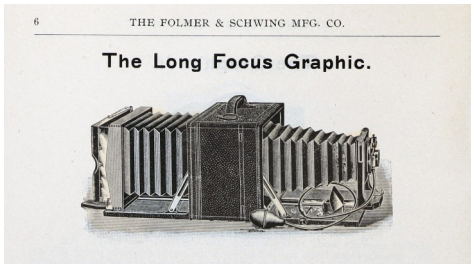
Both were prepared on the same day by the same hand, but on different order books. The enlarged notation is another indication of the close relationship of the two companies.

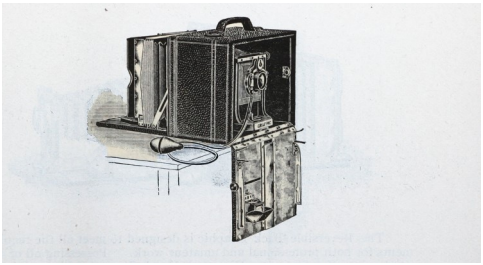
FROM THE COLLECTION OF THOMAS EVANS

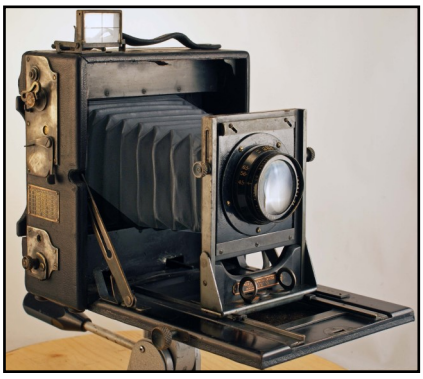
5x7 Long Focus Graphic, serial number 4766, ca.1898-1901.

The Long Focus Graphic is similar in appearance to the Graphic Sr., and may be used for either hand or tripod work. While it is a trifle larger, it has more than double the focal capacity of the Graphic Sr.

The extra length of Bellows is obtained by the addition of a folding back, which opens the same as the front of camera, forming a bed upon which the rear portion of camera, carrying ground glass screen, will slide.







Also, an early 3¼x5½ Top Handle Speed Graphic, serial number 29554.

Graflex Journal

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

Masthead photo, 1930s, two photographers with 5x7 Speed Graphics from Laurent De Miollis.

Pacific Rim Camera has an interesting site, which has a downloadable collection of Graflex catalogs.

https://pacificrimcamera.com/rl/rlgraflexmisc.htm
Pacific Rim Camera reference library.

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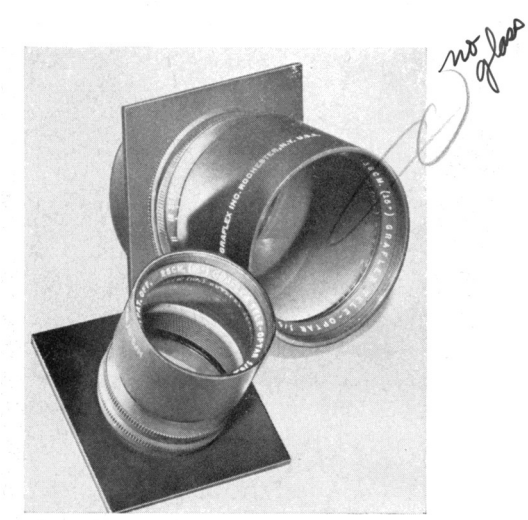
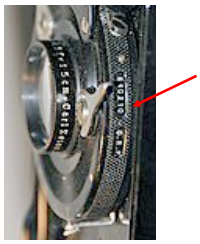


One of many jobs for Tim Holden was proofing Graflex publications. In a brochure, for the Super D, he gave advice to their photographer on how to shoot a picture of a lens!

RESTORATION—LENS MATCHING



Many Graphic cameras were fitted with various models of the Compur shutter. Below is a serial number list to help match your camera to the right shutter, given the shutter is listed in the Graflex catalog.

Serial no.	Year	Serial no.	Year	Serial no.	Year
214,000	1912	1,000,000	1929	4,250,000	1937
250,000	1914	1,150,000	1930	4,850,000	1938
450,000	1920	1,500,000	1931	5,400,000	1939
500,000	1922	1,800,000	1932	6,000,000	1947
600,000	1925	2,250,000	1933	6,200,000	1948
750,000	1926	2,700,000	1934	6,500,000	1949
850,000	1927	3,200,000	1935	7,000,000	1950
950,000	1928	3,750,000	1936	7,700,000	1951

Source: http://camera-wiki.org/wiki/Compur_serial_numbers

Authentic or not? To be continued.