GRAFLEX Journal

SHARING INFORMATION ABOUT GRAFLEX AND THEIR CAMERAS

ISSUE 3, 2017

FEATURES

THE GRAPHIC 35 ELECTRIC

By Michael Parker

The Graphic 35 Electric was a game changer. It was the first 35mm camera with electric film advance; it used a leaf shutter synchronised for electronic flash at all speeds up to 1/500 sec; the lens was interchangeable by bayonet with a variety of quality German lenses from 35mm to 135mm, and to top it all the camera viewfinder with parallax correction, showed the wide base rangefinder-coupled to all lenses, bright line frames for different focal lengths and the pointer for the built -in exposure meter. **Figure 1**

Figure 1: The Graflex Graphic 35 Electric with Iloca-Quinon 50mm f/1.9 lens.

In 1959 no other camera could beat it on specifications. The Voigtlander Prominent II came close but had manual lever film wind and no exposure meter. The best available Leica models (IIIg and M3) had manual lever wind, no exposure meter and a focal plane shutter that would synchronise with electronic flash at only 1/50 sec and below.

The Graphic 35 Electric is an Iloca Electric in all but name and was made in Hamburg, Germany, by Iloca Kamera-Werk owned by Wilhelm Witt. **Figure 2** The differences are the engraved name 'Graphic 35 Electric' on the top plate, the name repeated next to the rangefinder window, a small round Graflex logo on the camera front below the viewfinder window and the addition of strap lugs. In Australia, the camera was marketed as the Hanimex Iloca Electric.

Figure 2: The Iloca Electric of 1958. Photo courtesy of Peter Coeln, Westlicht, Vienna.

The camera is heavy, and the example in Figure 1 with Quinon lens weighs 36 ounces, just over 1Kg.

Figure 3: The Robot Royal 36 uses a clockwork motor for film advance.

Electric motor drive

The Robot family of cameras was probably first in 35mm motor wind using a clockwork drive, but the only robot competitor for the Graphic 35 Electric, with 24x36 format, was the rare and expensive Robot Royal 36 which required an add-on viewfinder for non-standard lenses. **Figure 3**

The electric drive, the first in a production 35mm camera, was the standout feature for the Graphic 35 Electric. The motor is housed in the film take-up drum **Figure 4** and with a grinding sound, advances one frame per second. A series of pictures at roughly one-second intervals can be produced by maintaining continuous pressure

Figure 4: Film take-up drum in the Graphic 35 Electric housing the electric motor. The tiny red dots on the body and the back must be aligned when replacing the back.

Figure 5: Battery compartment for the electric drive with insulating shield and baseplate cover.

on the shutter release. The motor is powered by two AA cells located in a cavity in the base of the camera. **Figure 5** The battery compartment can be accessed by removing part of the baseplate and a plastic insulating shield without opening the back. Advertising material claims that the batteries are sufficient for 1500 exposures.

Exposure automation

Exposure is semi-automated and shutter-priority. The circular disc adjacent to the lens mount is used to select film speed in ASA or DIN. Then, once the desired shutter speed has been selected, it's simply a matter of rotating a second circular dial at the base of the lens mount to change the aperture until the meter needle visible both in the eyepiece and on the top deck moves into the correct range. The shutter speed and aperture are then coupled rather like the EV system, and the two-black plastic "ears" can be rotated around the lens mount to allow linked changes to the shutter speed and aperture while maintaining correct exposure. **Figure 6**

Figure 6: Showing the film speed dial (left), aperture adjustment dial (bottom) and the two plastic 'ears' for shutter/aperture adjustment.

Interchangeable lenses

Figure 7: Contemporary advertisement for the Synchro-Compur shutter incorporating the DKL lens mount.

The camera uses the DKL bayonet mount developed by Friedrich Deckel AG, manufacturers of Compur shutters. The system involves a shutter mounted behind the lens with mechanical linkages for rangefinder actuation and aperture adjustment**.** **Figure 7** When an appropriate lens is fitted to the camera, two red pins move across the distance scale to indicate depth of field. **Figure 8** The Deckel mount was also used in the Balda Baldamatic III, the Wittnauer Continental/Braun Super Colorette II, Kodak Retina IIIS and the Voigtlander Vitessa T. Unfortunately, commercial interests dictated that although the cameras shared a common mount, small differences in mounting tabs meant that lenses were not generally interchangeable across camera bodies, and consequently, lens manufacturers generally added the camera name to the lens description on the front bezel.

Figure 8: Depth of field indicator tabs integral with the shutter & mount mechanism. The frame counter window is just above the shutter.

Not all manufacturers demanded exclusivity. The lenses designated for the Voigtlander Vitessa T could also be used on the Wittnauer Continental/Braun Super Colorette II without modification. And with judicious tinkering, the lenses made for the Kodak Retina IIIS could be used on other cameras with the Deckel mount. **Figure 9**

Figure 9: Graphic 35 Electric with Retina Curtagon 35mm lens. A small modification allowed use of other lenses with DKL mount.

Two respected German manufacturers made lenses specifically for the Iloca Electric/Graphic 35 Electric. From Steinheil came the 35mm f/4.5 Culmigon, 50mm f/1.9 Iloca Quinon (see Figure 1) and the 50mm f/2.8 Iloca Culminar. Rodenstock lenses were the 35mm f/4 Iloca Eurygon, 50mm f/1.9 Iloca Heligon, 50mm f/2.8 Iloca Ysarex and the 135mm f/4 Iloca Rotelar. Of the accessory lenses, only the Steinheil 35mm Culmigon and the Rodenstock 135mm Rotelar were marketed by Graflex, and it is unclear how many of the lenses were readily available even in Europe, as most seem to be particularly scarce.

The camera viewfinder showed the area covered by the 35mm lens and had suspended bright frames for the 50mm and 135mm lenses. The frames moved with lens focusing to compensate for parallax.

Removing the camera back

Most cameras made by Iloca defy logical assumptions about how to open the back. Moreover, the method of back opening is not consistent across models. To remove the back of the Iloca Electric/Graphic 35 Electric, press sideways the small catch adjacent to the rewind crank on the camera base. While maintaining pressure on the catch, pull the crank upwards to release the back which comes off completely. To replace the back, it is imperative to ensure that the red dots on the back and the body are aligned.

Once the camera back is removed, it's possible to check out the serial number and the date of manufacture, because the last three digits indicate the date and year of production. In this example **Figure 10**, the end numbers 459 indicate production in April 1959. Three examples I have seen all end in 459, suggesting that there was no production of the Graphic 35 Electric before or after 1959.

Figure 10: The serial number is just below the film plane.

The next model

The Iloca Electric was the most sophisticated camera made by the company and was accordingly expensive. To reach a wider market, the company developed in prototype, the Iloca Auto-Electric with full exposure automation, the same electric drive and body structure but with a lower specification shutter and a fixed f/2.8 lens. **Figure 11** The prototype did not reach production before the Iloca company folded but was subsequently slightly modified and marketed by Agfa as the Agfa Selecta-m.

What went wrong?

Figure 11: Prototype Iloca Auto-Electric. Photo courtesy of Peter Coeln, Westlich, Vienna.

With such sophisticated and novel specifications, you might expect that the camera would have been in great demand and that examples today would fetch prices comparable with those of contemporary Leicas. This is not the case.

Several factors militated against the survival of the camera and of the company. A clue is that the Iloca factory closed in mid-1959, while the Graphic 35 Electric was being sold in the US until 1963. According to a report in the German newspaper *Die Zeit* on 8 April 1960, the factory closed because the Zeiss Group, a major competitor for Iloca in the camera market, in 1959 purchased Friedrich Deckel AG, the manufacturer of shutters for the Iloca cameras, and was unable to or declined to honour outstanding orders for the Compur shutters.

Iloca was using Compur shutters for the Iloca Automatic and the Iloca Rapid III as well as the Iloca Electric and its name variants, so the halt in production resulted in unfilled orders, staff retrenchments and ultimately bankruptcy. According to the same newspaper report, the company planned to buy 1200 shutters in August 1959 and 2000 in September. Most of these would have been used in the lower-cost cameras.

The short production period for the Iloca Electric probably explains the shortage of accessory lenses and the price premium paid on the collector market for the Iloca branded camera.

A random sample of three Graphic 35 Electric cameras shows serial numbers 80 1743 459, 80 2436 459 and 80 2532 459. Courageously extrapolating from this small number, it might be concluded that all Graphic 35 Electric cameras were made in 1959 towards the end of the 1958-59 production period and stockpiled in the US for later sale. Again, looking at the central 4-digit number, the figures show a range of almost 800, suggesting that perhaps 1000 of these cameras were imported. Any orders for delivery beyond 1959 would, of course, not be filled.

In the US then, the camera, even with its sophistication and features, would be an orphan and would have struggled to compete with better known cameras for the advanced amateur. **Figure 12** shows the 1959 prices in Australia for several competitive cameras, and it's likely that the price relativities reflect those prevailing in the US as well. The Hanimex Iloca Electric cost more than the Voigtlander Prominent Mk II with f/2 Ultron and almost as much as a Leica IIIg. The Japanese Olympus Ace with competitive features could be bought for about one-third of the price. The prices shown are in Australian Pounds; The Australian dollar was adopted in 1966.

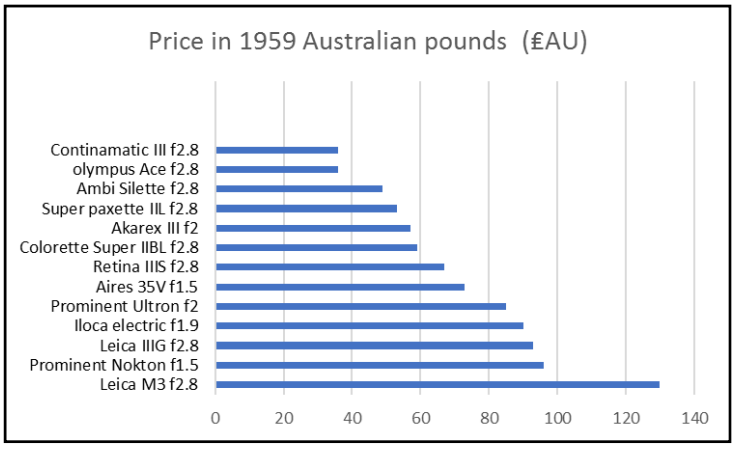


Figure 12: Australian Price comparison for cameras with similar specifications.

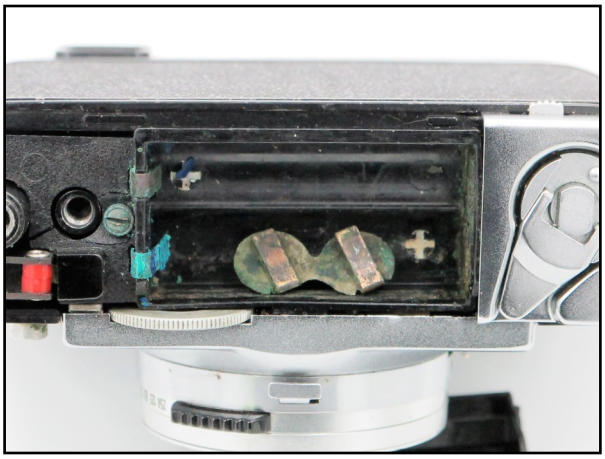


Figure 13: Corroded battery terminals typical of many surviving Graphic 35 Electric cameras.

Other aspects of the Graphic 35 Electric would have reduced sales. The weight, compared for example with a Leica, would be a factor, and the availability of the advertised wide-angle and telephoto lenses would have been patchy at best. While the auto advance could be a positive factor, it was noisy and slower than a lever wind. Moreover, when the batteries failed, there was no way to advance the film until a new set of batteries was inserted.

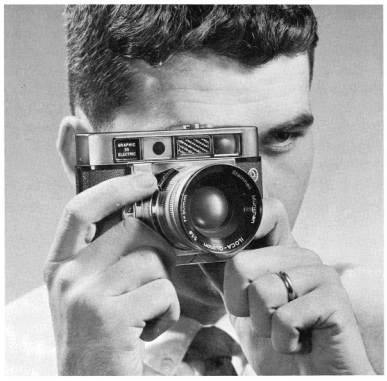
At the time, most batteries would have been of the carbon-zinc variety with lower capacity than today's alkaline batteries and with a greater tendency to leakage and rupture, leading to corrosion in the battery compartment. A large proportion of Graphic 35 Electric cameras surviving today show evidence of this. **Figure 13** Once the terminals are corroded, the motor becomes unreliable, and the camera is useless without repair. Spare parts supply from Germany would have ended with the closure of the Iloca factory in 1959.

The Graphic 35 Electric is a landmark camera which deserves a place in history for the innovation of an electric drive, its build quality and classic styling, for its lens interchangeability and other advanced features, including exposure automation. Its downfall was price, along with market forces in Germany leading to the closure of the Iloca factory.

Editor's note: Michael is interested in following up on the actual production numbers for this camera and would like to *build a database of serial numbers for the Graphic 35 Electric. If you have one, particularly one with a serial number outside the range in the article, you might let him know the serial number at* mfp0101@gmail.com .

THE OTHER BIG "NEW" FROM GRAFLEX... GRAPHIC · 35 ELECTRIC

...only 35mm with Built-In Power Drive... automatically winds film and cocks shutter



No sooner had we announced the new Graphic 35 Electric than we were literally swamped with orders. Your prompt, eager response speaks well for the future of this first, really different 35mm camera in years. It is precision-engineered, and designed . . . a fitting complement to the Graflex line of truly fine cameras.

The Graphic 35 Electric has built-in customer appeal, making it a marvelous camera for demonstration. A real exclusive is the completely self-contained powerful electric motor built into the film take-up spool. It winds the film, cocks the shutter and permits sequence or single exposures. As soon as the shutter closes after an exposure, the electro-motor advances the film one frame and cocks the shutter automatically for the next exposure. Two little photoflash penlight batteries fitted into an insulated receptacle in the bottom of the camera provide the power for the motor. Approximately 1000 exposures can be made from one set of batteries. The electric motor switches off automatically after each exposure, and batteries can be changed at any time even with film in the camera. Immediately after the last shot, motor automatically cuts off.

Despite the innovation of a built-in motor with batteries, the housing design does not differ from a modern 35mm camera . . . an indication of the thoroughness of design that preceded this camera.

Once you place the Graphic 35 Electric in your customer's hand, one of the hardest parts of your sales task will be over. Each outstanding feature is easily demonstrated. The correct exposure can be obtained without taking the eye from the combination Viewfinder-Rangefinder window. The exposure meter pointer is visible in the viewfinder window, at the top. Turning the Exposure Setting Dial centers the pointer for the correct exposure setting. An Exposure Meter Indicator is also located on the chrome-plated top of the camera for convenience when the camera is mounted on a tripod. The coupling of shutter speed and aperture permits the changing of either without affecting the correct exposure setting.

The Graphic 35 Electric has complete lens interchangeability—not just elements—for various focal lengths. A simple, positive bayonet mount gives "switch-in-a-second" ability to normal, wide angle or telephoto lenses. For wide-angle photography, a precision 35mm Steinheil Culmigon f/4.5 lens can be selected. For distant shots, there is the famous 135mm Rodenstock Rotelar f/4.0 lens. No finer lenses can be obtained anywhere.

The field of view of the normal, wide-angle and telephoto lenses is indicated by a bright frame line in the Viewfinder. There's no parallax problem as parallax correction is automatic with each lens.

Depth of field is quickly and easily read by two moving red arrows that are automatically positioned regardless of the lens used.

The Graphic 35 Electric uses the latest Synchro-Compur M-X Shutter with built-in Self-Timer. Speeds range from a full second to 1/500 plus Bulb.

Here is a 35mm camera that is wrapped in sales-appeal. It carries the Graflex reputation for the finest, precision cameras. It will take a back-seat to no other 35mm camera.

If you want your unit sales volume to go up, be sure you place your order today . . . either with your Graflex salesman or direct to your usual Graflex Sales Office.

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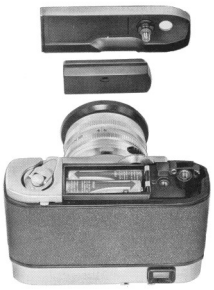
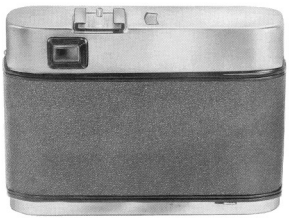


Penlight batteries and electric motor completely self-contained . . . a miracle in compactness.



The Graphic 35 Electric is designed so that every motion is purposeful, permitting the photographer to concentrate on the subject and not the camera.

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December issues

Dealer publication: Trade Notes November-December 1959.

THE PRESS GRAFLEX

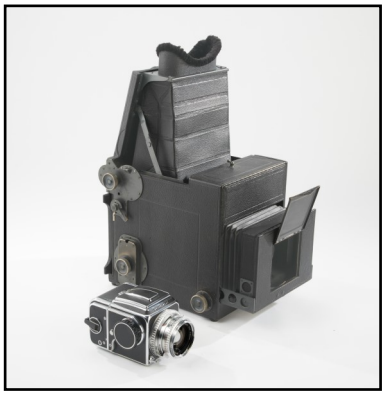
By Jim Chasse

When I found a camera collection for sale many, many years ago, I saw my first 5x7 Press Graflex. I was fascinated by it for its huge size, and being a very early single lens reflex camera. Lucky to find it, I purchased it.

Years later, my next 5x7 Press camera was from W.D. Services, as an upgrade, but still with no accessories that fit only the camera.

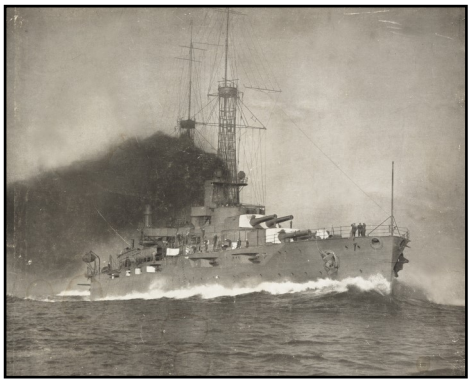
When a good friend and Photographic Historical Society of New England (PHSNE) member, who favored Graflex cameras, did a show and tell, I saw my third Press Graflex. It was in the original leather case and had the accessories used in this article. When his impressive collection came up for sale in a PHSNE auction, I acquired his like-new Press Graflex.

The Press Graflex was marketed for the news photographer from 1907-1923. Mine, serial number 115,234, was made around 1920-1921. It is fitted with an f/6.3 Bausch & Lomb Zeiss Tessar lens mounted on an "F" board, and secured with the patented Graflex sliding locks.



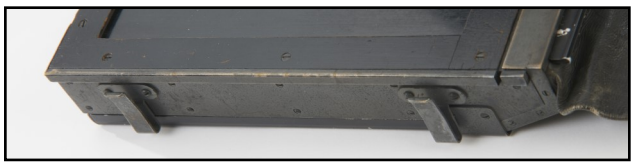
Compared to a Hasselblad to show its size, it was a true heavyweight (giant).

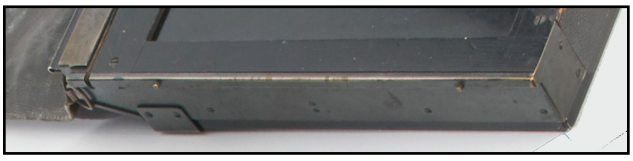
Capable of great photographs, this copy of an 11x14 enlargement showing a 1907 U. S. Battleship on speed trials, was taken at water level with the Press. A very brave naval photographer to be sure.



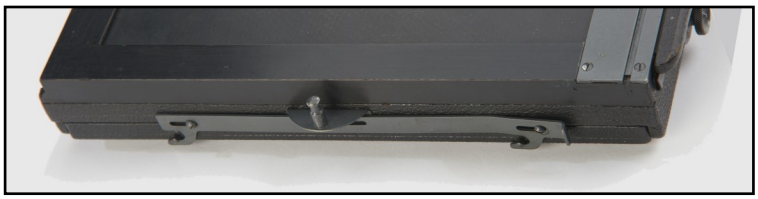
The removable spring back accepted a standard Graflex-style 5x7 sheet plate or film holder and a film pack adapter. Unique to the camera, when the spring back was removed, a special "bag mag" could be installed, holding 12 sheets of 5x7 film in sheaths. Two pins on the bottom and two spring clips on the top held it in place. A roll film back (mine, Model 1922) had two pins on the top and a single large pin on the bottom.

Spring back.





Press Graflex with late model cut film magazine, and top left, clips to attach to camera, and bottom, pins for attaching.

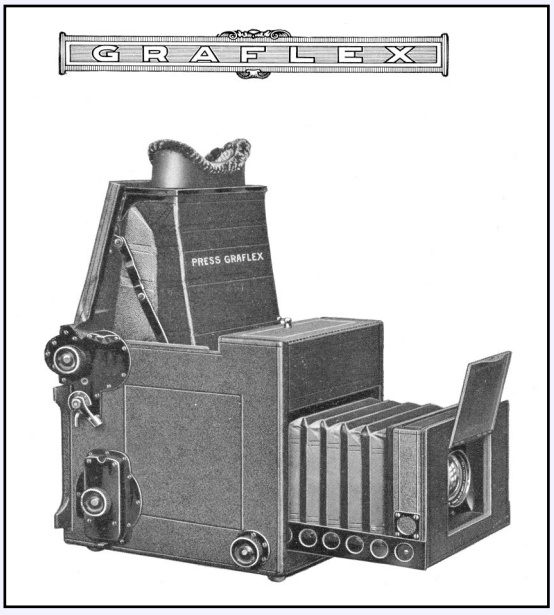


A 5x7 roll film back model 1922 (above) has two pins on top and a single large pin on the bottom.

Shutter speeds were 1/5 to 1/1,500 second, and the carry handle is the sturdiest of all Graflex camera handles I have seen. It was sturdy, and very well made and included a leather viewing hood with a fur-lined eye shield.

I guess we are only the temporary keepers, as I have watched so many collections go to auction over the years.

Enjoy them while you can.



THE PRESS GRAFLEX

1907-1923

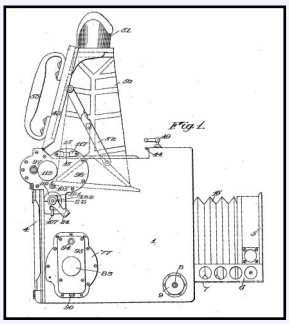
When Jim Chasse wrote the article about his Press Graflex, we were reminded that no specific article had been written about this unique camera.

Best described by Richard Paine in his book A Review of Graflex, "Despite its primitive appearance (very similar to the earliest Graflexes of 1904), it was popular into the 1920s. It served its intended purpose well, probably because of its professional film size, big versatile lens enclosure, ample bellows, and broad range of shutter speeds which could be seen from above without tilting the camera."

Some basics:

Number produced: From 1915 (when production records were first available) until 1925, seven batches totaling over 900 cameras were listed for production. After removed from cata-

logs in 1925, 50 additional cameras were made (Serial numbers 145669-145718). Also, nearly 30 cameras have been recorded prior to 1915. Because production was recorded in batches, due to the dispersion of numbers, there is no logical way to determine batch size, but it appears that quite a few were made.

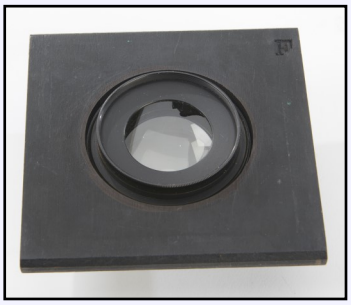


Patent 923,827, applied for and granted a year after the camera was introduced. On later-made cameras, the bottom plate listed five additional patents, all earlier than the camera patent. Interestingly, the patent stamped on the early aperture plate is for the earlier Auto Graflex (number 843,140).

5x7 film size, 7½-14" focal capacity range, 1/1500 focal plane shutter. It was the fastest shutter ever made by Graflex, but not really needed at the time, because of the slow speed of films.

Most catalog illustrations show gold embossing on the hood, although no samples have so far been found.

The name "Folmer & Schwing Co." (1905-1907) was stamped on the aperture plate, but was continued during the Folmer & Schwing, Division of Eastman Kodak era, so using the aperture plate name to date the camera is not reliable.



Lensboard – 4x4", "F" board.

Weight - 10½ pounds, and only matched in 1907 by the 8x10 Revolving Back Cycle Graphic (with a 30-inch maximum focal length), also at 10½ pounds.

Shutter curtain – early examples used rubberized cloth, suggesting that it may have been available when introduced.

Curtain aperture plate, part number 15172, is found in lower left corner of aperture or name plate. Numbering started around 1919 and sometimes is confused with the camera's serial number.

Backs - spring – used Graflex-style plate and film holders, and film pack adapters.
roll film – special back.
plate and film magazines – special backs.

Lenses -1907 B&L f/6.3 Zeiss Tessar.
1923 f/4.5 Kodak Anastigmat No. 34.

Cost - 1907, with one plate holder and a B&L f/6.3 Zeiss Tessar $169.50.
1923, with a plate or film holder and a f/4.5 Kodak Anastigmat No. 34 lens, $226.50.

In their words in 1907 --

"Press Graflex focus, permits a wide range of lenses for fine situations, or the use of long-focus lenses for track or field work.

The curtain is wound by one complete turn with a large milled head button. The number indicating size of the exposing aperture, reflected upward by a right-angle prism, is always in full view of the operator, obviating the necessity of turning the camera on its side. The curtain of the Focal Plane Shutter being of the Auto type is re-enforced with tape edges, with struts of three-ply stock, which will stand any high-speed work. The curtain roller bearings in the side plates are bushed, giving longer bearings. These are more durable and cause less friction than the ordinary kind. The winding and releasing mechanism of the shutter is made of steel, case hardened, which will stand the strain of high-speed work.

The focusing hood is large and spacious, giving a full view of the field, with a complete eye shield fitting the contour of the face, permitting the operator to view the image on the focusing screen, right-side up, with the greatest ease. The camera is opened ready for focusing by pressing a small lever placed conveniently near the right thumb, when carrying the camera. The cover operating the focusing hood is likewise opened automatically, and the construction of this cover is such that the camera may be carried ready for use while it is open. The lens cover opens automatically the moment the front is racked out."

Although reading the Press patent (923,827) gave me a headache, a few things were learned:

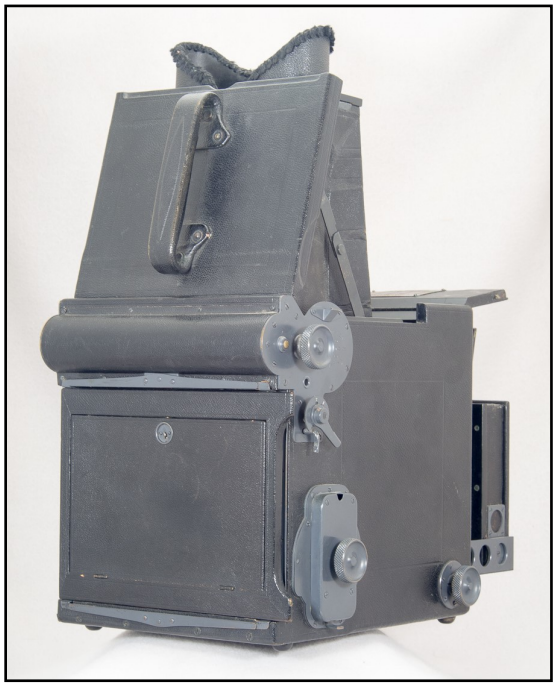
> The camera was to be used "for instance, by press or newspaper photographers, as well as in less exacting capacities."
>
> A "resilient part" is a spring.
>
> The method of attaching the top of the spring back was not used on the camera. Also, the focusing screen door was hinged at the bottom in the patent and at the top on the camera.
>
> "As best shown, in the present instance, the camera is constructed for the use of photographic plates rather than film…"
>
> The fixtures for attaching accessories were not enumerated in the patent.

As set out, the Press was a simple and long-lasting camera. Only one mystery remains unresolved, namely, why did Folmer create a new system for attaching the spring back and old technology for attaching accessories?

In dog and Graflex years, the time between the patent application for the slide lock in 1905, and the patent for the camera in 1908, should have allowed the company to design a camera that used the slick new slide lock system.

From the time spent on the patent, it would appear Folmer liked the ideas presented, but they were never used on other cameras. Possibly he kept the system for mag bags and roll holders to support items previously sold. In conclusion, the mystery remains, but readers are asked to make this paragraph interesting.

Here is Jim Flack's beautifully restored Press Graflex, number 15,457 Ca. 1909-1910. From paperwork received with the camera, it may have been restored in the 1930s, and probably by Graflex, at their factory.



BOOK REVIEW

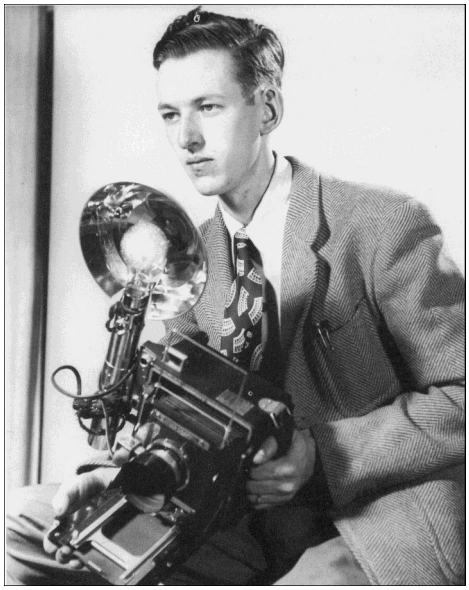
Through the Lens of Ed Westcott, Catalog of the 2005 exhibit made possible through a partnership between the Ewing Gallery of Art and Architecture, the University of Tennessee, and the American Museum of Science and Energy, Oak Ridge. 180 pages. Available at the museum, and some images have been scanned and are available at http://photosofedwestcott.tumblr.com/.

Images of America, Oak Ridge, by Ed Westcott, copyright 2005, 128 pages, Arcadia Publishing (www.arcadiapublishing.com).

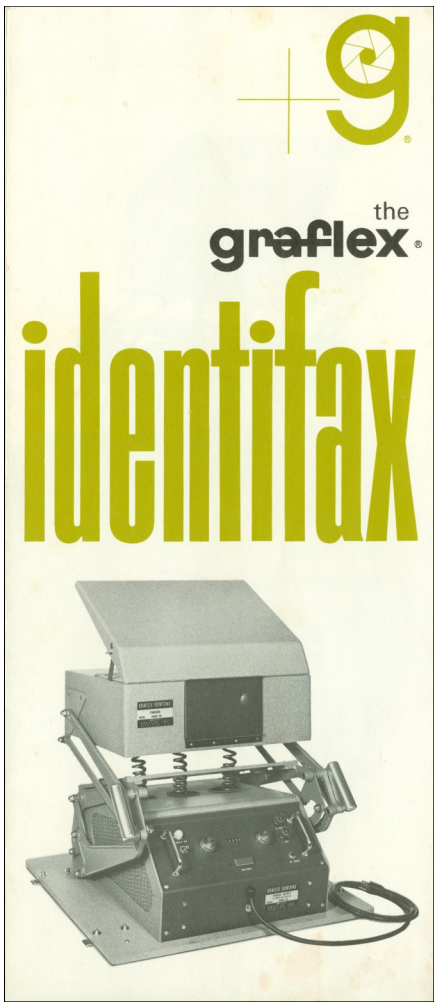
In the mountains of Eastern Tennessee is the city of Oak Ridge. The history of the Oak Ridge area is one of change, first with relocation of the Native American Cherokee, then the relocation of 2,900 families to build the Tennessee Valley Authority hydroelectric Norris Dam, and in 1942, when the U.S. Federal government removed 1,000 families to make room for the government's secret Manhattan Project reservation, to produce an atomic bomb. In 1942, after having several military names, a 9,000 acre part of the 59,000 acre reservation became the city of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, with a population of 75,000 (mostly at the Manhattan Project).

A visit to the museum is well worth the trip, and the photographs in these books are well worth a look. Drum roll....as most of the pictures were taken with Graflex cameras by Ed Westcott, the official U.S Army Corps of Engineers photographer of the Project and the City, from 1942 through 1945.

20-year-old Ed Westcott with his Speed Graphic modified for aerial work.



With his Anniversary model Speed Graphic in 1943.

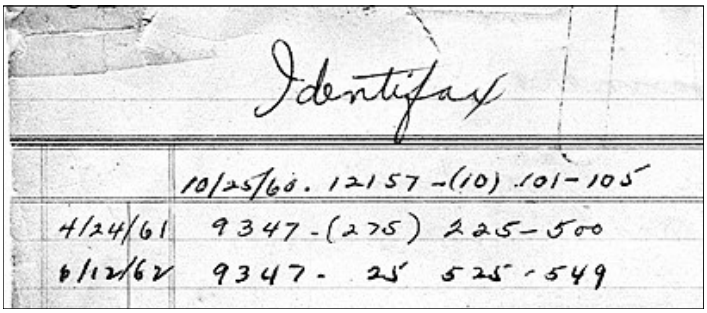


GRAFLEX IDENTIFICATION CAMERAS

By Ken Metcalf

While looking for information on a Graflex audio visual accessory, I found a 1965 brochure for the Identifax camera. A search in the serial number book turned up about 300 of these cameras, plus a page of Photorecord cameras. So, the number of identification cameras shown in the prior article should be revised to 3,000 total. Also, according to the 1943 U.S. Air Service Command, they had 520 Photorecord outfits "on hand."

Now that the thinly disguised error corrections and updates are out of the way, here is some information on another yet undiscovered identification camera.



According to company records, slightly over 300 cameras were produced in 1961 and 1962 and were still being offered for sale in 1965. Here are some features of the "upright" model.

- Standard 35mm black and white or color film, with 800 pictures on a 100-foot roll of film. Film was available in standard 20 or 35 cassettes, or 100-foot rolls could be loaded into Identifax cassettes.
- Predetermined settings for selected films.
- Focus: "Fixed at 42 inches. Identifax had a retractable, built-in 42-inch tape. Light beam aimed at subject's lips assured centering him [or her] in picture area. Fingertip control raising and lowering device.
- Ease of operation: "You push the button and camera does the rest – trips shutter, flashes light, advances film, counts the exposure and prepares for next shot."
- Lighting: "Two electronic flash lamps provide soft, flattering [!] cross-lighting. The 1/1000-second exposure provides sharp pictures, and 'stops' a moving applicant. 100-watt second output – recycle time 10 seconds (roughly the same output as a model 283 Vivitar).
- Specifications: Camera with power pack – 52 pounds. Lens – 35mm f/8.3. Shutter – rotating disc, X contact for flash. Dimensions: 18" high, 21" long and 25" wide.

Subject: Identifax - Model No. and Serial No.

The name plate of the Identifax has provision for the model number as well as the serial number. Cameras will bear the designation C-1, and the lower part or base will bear the model designation S-1. The serial numbers of each will start with 101.

Regarding the phrase "upright model," Les believes, based on a portion of an August memo from Tim Holden, that "upright" model came with a stand, the other was tabletop (as shown). That's somewhat supported (pun intended) by Tim's comment about the lower half being "S-1," S for Stand? Only a guess.

Les had numerous conversations with Tim Holden, and fortunately one was about this camera. "Tim did talk about it, 'It was big, awkward, heavy to haul around, and while we spun our wheels demonstrating it to the bosses of the local Precincts and Motor Vehicle Departments, but we never could get to see the buyer. We also didn't try very hard.

Other companies had ongoing, familial relationships with the comptrollers, and it would have taken a lot of capital and effort to break into that market. This was at a time when Graflex profits were from AV equipment, so we made modest overtures, but the bosses didn't want us spending the record profits on something that would have been a marginal success at best, and we got tired of hauling that damned thing around.'"

If the camera or a brochure for it is ever found, it will be a noteworthy conclusion to the long-running story of Graflex identification cameras.

GRAFLEX ADS, COURTESY GEORGE DUNBAR

1948

1949

1947

1944

Graflex Journal

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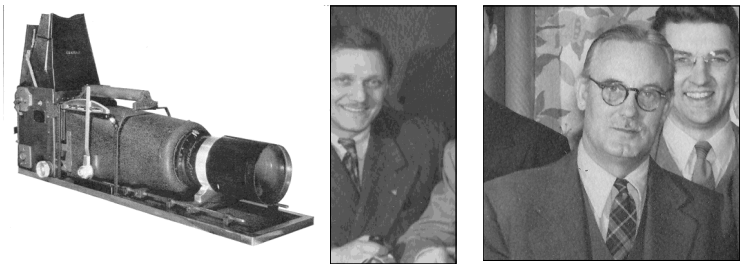
Black and white by regular mail, $3.50 per issue, billed annually.

MASTHEAD PICTURE PHOTO CREDIT

John Fleming and Pacemaker Speed Graphic, Melbourne, Australia.

JOHN ADAMS LETTER TO TIM HOLDEN, JUNE 1, 1983

*Ed : **John Adams**. According to Graflex's Trade Notes, Mr. Adams was the manager of the Graflex New York office in 1951. When W.D. Services was incorporated in California in 1974, John Adams was listed as one of four directors. **Joe Sprague.** Mr. Sprague was Graflex's Chief Engineer, although possibly not at the time this letter was written. .*



Left to right: Big Bertha, John Adams, and Joe Sprague.

"I don't know too much about the Big Berthas, except some stories concerning me. How I'd get a frantic call from Bob Keough on a Saturday morning saying that their BB was out of focus, and could I check and adjust it so they could take it to the Yankee Stadium or Ebbits Field. On Saturdays we had no mechanic but I would do the repair and adjustments. One time at the Yankee Stadium I went along to make captions for a NY Times photog. (Shapiro?) Hod and I were up there, and the photog asked me to do it. Very reluctantly I said I could go. When we got up there and were setting up, someone from the NY Mirror came over frantically, knowing that I was out there, how I don't know, because he was around the 3rd base line, and I was at the main box in back of the catcher. They said that the 40" Big Bertha was stuck (shutter). I was upset about it, because I knew that we had just overhauled it for around $80, and how could it be out. Shapiro didn't want to let me go, as he said I came to help him. Finally the other photogs shamed him into it, and besides the game hadn't started.

So I went over quickly, and sure enough the shutter was jammed. What the photog had done was put the BB on its film back end and with the extremely heavy weight of the lens and barrel - it just jammed the back-end in. So having only my handy knife that had a screw driver end, I took out the million small screws that held the back and pushed the back out straight, re-assembled the back with the million screws and got it in working order. I bawled out the photog for what he had done, explaining that it wasn't designed to be treated that way. Then I ran back to my job shortly after the game started. This made me a hero with all the press in NYC, and an expert on any camera repair.

Like Joe Sprague, I tried to avoid touching a camera because of the many complications and no tools, but never-the-less my reputation was made. I have long found that press photogs were the most loyal to friendship guys in the world. I am extremely proud of my Life Membership in the NPPA.

As far as I know, Joe Sprague made the first Big Bertha, and later made the modifications to it, so they could focus from 1st to 2nd to 3rd and home plate with a gear shift lever. I first met Joe when he shared space at the Ackley? machine shop, or I guess their manufacturing facility in NYC. I had two ideas that I wanted to develop and someone suggested I talk to Joe Sprague. I was with Carl Zeiss, and Dr. Bauer told me to go ahead and explore the possibilities. Joe thought one was good but explained the other one would be so costly to make that the price would keep it from selling. The STA STRAP sold to the tune of about 20,000, at .75. It was no big deal but I enjoyed it. Anyway the next time I saw Joe was after he had joined Graflex. He was a great guy, who could pat a young virgin on her rear end, saying "that's what I like about you," and all he would get was a titter. If I or anyone else tried that we'd get our face bashed in. He was on his way to NYC to see me and hit the papers together when he was in Boston, like a good Graflex man, working his way down."