

The PHSC E-MAIL

Volume 7-5, Supplement to *Photographic Canadiana*, October 2007

The Photographic Historical Society of Canada

Wednesday, October 17th Meeting...

Our speaker for October is Elizabeth Brayer of Rochester, N.Y. A writer and editor since 1970, she has a long list of awards and accomplishments including being nominated for the Pulitzer Prize for her book *George Eastman: A Biography*. The topic of the evening's presentation is appropriately: "The Prodigious Life of George Eastman."

Brayer's interests run to historical research with an emphasis on architecture. Delving into the history of the George Eastman House eventually led her to join the GEH as an Historical Consultant. An artist, community service worker, mother of five and a grandmother of ten, she will present a very lively Power Point presentation on Mr. Eastman.

Meetings are held in the Gold Room, (basement) of the North York Central Library, 5120 Yonge Street.
Handy TTC Subway stop and underground parking.

A Book Review:

Appropriately, it seems the right place to offer a book review which will better present our speaker and the biography which she will introduce to our audience.

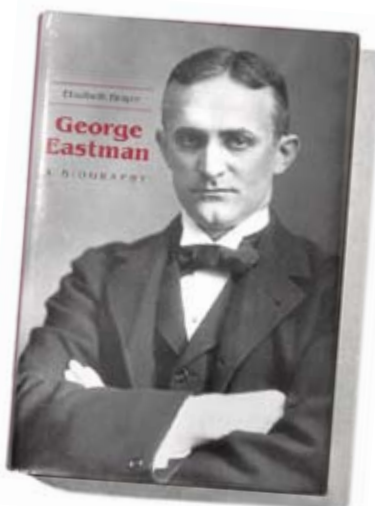
George Eastman: A Biography

by Elizabeth Brayer

University of Rochester Press,
Rochester, NY. , 2006 reprint,
637 pp. Illustrated, \$39.95 US.

Eastman was one of the great American inventors and businessmen of the late 1800s and early 1900s. As secretive as he was successful, it was difficult to get a balanced view of the genius of Kodak and his accomplishments which go far beyond his tremendous impact on the world of photography. Elizabeth Brayer became involved in writing this major biography of Eastman when she began researching George Eastman House as a sidebar to an article on the architecture of Rochester in the late 1970s. This research led to another nearly 50 articles on George Eastman House over 1979/80. As a result, Brayer became an historical consultant in the mid 1980s during the restoration of George Eastman House and its gardens.

The consulting job gave Brayer access to the Eastman correspondence carefully preserved at the Eastman Kodak offices in Rochester. And from there she broadened her network and efforts resulting in publication of her dramatic biography of Eastman by The Johns Hopkins University Press in 1996. To tackle the biography of such a complex individual, Brayer carefully organized her material into broad subjects in roughly chronological order. This leads to some minor redundancy but makes the book a pleasure to read. There is something for almost every one in the story of Eastman's



**SUNDAY, OCT 14TH
PHSC FALL FAIR AT THE
SOCCER CENTRE
OPENS AT 10 AM**

PHSC Monthly Meetings

are held on the third Wednesday from September to June in the Gold Room, of Memorial Hall in the basement of the North York Central Library, 5120 Yonge St., North York, Ontario. The meeting officially begins at 8:00 p.m. but is preceded by a *Buy & Sell* and social gathering from 7:00 p.m. onwards. For information contact the PHSC or Felix Russo, 33 Indian Rd. Cres., Toronto, ON, M6P 2E9, Phone (416) 532-7780.

Programming Schedule:

October 17th, 2007

-Elizabeth Brayer, author of the sanctioned biography of George Eastman will enlighten us of his rise to power and his philanthropy in her PowerPoint presentation "The Prodigious Life of George Eastman."

November 21st, 2007

-program to be announced

December 19th, 2007

-Our Annual Christmas Party so bring along a wrapped gift to exchange with other members. For the program it is the popular Show & Tell Nite.

Ideas for monthly programs are most welcome. Please suggest speakers, topics and even interesting locations to visit. Contact Program Chair Felix Russo at (416) 532-7780 or e-mail felix@photoed.ca.

FOR PROGRAM UPDATES

www.phsc.ca

our new E-mail address is
info@phsc.ca

Robert A. Carter – Webmaster

life and career. Foremost for those interested in the history of photography is the detailed story of the founding and growth of Eastman Kodak. Brayer has added flesh to the many accomplishments so briefly noted in popular writings. Eastman's pursuit of quality and simplicity had an enormous influence on the evolution of photography as a medium for the masses, taking the then difficult art out of the hands of the dedicated specialists and placing it within the grasp of everyone. He made it possible for even the rawest novice to capture "a Kodak moment" of personal importance.

Eastman's interest in education, architecture, health, music, the theatre, transportation and travel abroad are also well covered in this story of one man's efforts and influence. His life is a wonderful tale of how to create and build a business. And once soundly on its feet, how to transfer power to loyal subordinates and focus on improving life for others in the community at large.

The story of his struggle with

emulsions and his strategy to solve the problem is a lesson and inspiration for all businessmen. I was astounded to learn that at one point he recalled dry-plates and stopped production for months until a particularly nasty problem was solved. This was in the days when the making of emulsion was far more art than science. Similarly, his decision to create a cheap camera for children in the face of objections from many retailers proved to be a sound decision, capturing as it did steady customers for his film and development services, and creating a future clientele for his more expensive products.

His fine eye for talent and willingness to give authority to young well educated individuals in general served him and Kodak well. A growing network of contacts kept him current on happenings world wide that he could use, or be prepared to take action against, to the benefit of his company.

Bayers enlightens the reader when she expands on the oft told tale of the roll film patent battle between Kodak and Ansco. She

explains Eastman's reasons for deciding not to buy out either patent holder Hannibal Goodwin nor his successor, the Ansco company, and why in the end Eastman agreed to an out of court settlement with so little time left before the patent expired.

The last chapters tearfully describe Eastman's slow decline in health and his eventual death. As methodical as ever, Eastman carefully wrapped up his various activities, said good-bye to friends and acquaintances and took a last look at his Rochester while still able. His end in March 1932 was as dramatic as the other milestones in his eventful and exciting life.

This well written biography of photography's first North American titan deserves a place on everyone's reading list and in everyone's library

The author will have books on hand to be purchased by those attending the evening's presentation and autographed by the author herself, Elizabeth Brayer.

-by Robert Carter

OBITUARY 1924 -2007



FRED SPIRA

Fred Spira, a noted photo historian and collector of photo gadgets has passed away at the age of 83. His name is synonymous with the New York Spiratone Company.

In 1979 John Durniak wrote in *Popular Photography*: "Henry Ford did not invent the automobile and Fred Spira did not invent photography, yet both had as much influence on their respective fields as the original inventors. What Ford did to our economy and culture with the Model A and Model T concepts, Spira has done to photography with his accessory lenses, close-up attachments and processing machines."

Spira's father, a Jew, failed in Vienna as a banker so he and a Christian friend opened a camera store. As the Nazis made inroads into Austria 14-year-old Franz Spira was barred from high school. He worked in the camera store, but out of sight in the back, with his father.

In 1939 Spira boarded a Kindertransport, one of the trains that rescued Jewish children by taking them out of the country. He was sent to England. Joined by his father in May 1940, they moved to New York. His mother arrived later.

The Spiras ran a small photo lab out of their apartment. It became profitable by word of mouth among Jewish immigrants on the West Side and by advertisements in photo magazines.

In 1946 the Spiras opened their store on West 27th Street. Spiratone became one of the first photo-supply companies to import Japanese accessories into the United States. By the late

1950s the company had grown into a multimillion-dollar business, occupying a vast loft space on West 27th Street and a showroom on the ground floor. It sold lenses, filters, lighting and darkroom equipment, but not cameras.

Mr. Spira persuaded major producers to standardize photographic accessories and to make them more affordable.

Spira was responsible for the widespread use of the fish-eye lens and for the proliferation of lenses that can be switched from one camera to another. He also got his system of interchangeable lens mounts accepted by makers in Japan, the USA and Russia.

In 2001, his son Jonathan and Eaton S. Lothrop Jr. wrote *The History of Photography as Seen Through the Spira Collection*. It was based on Spira's collection of 10,000 books and 20,000 photographic devices, some of which were in use only briefly. 🐼

Toronto Notes

Reported by Robert Carter

Gordon Brown is both a scientist and a photographer of the Ansel Adams large format school. Brown worked as a scientist for Kodak in Rochester - he came up with the "T-Max" name for the famous Kodak film - and he taught the well known Zone-system exposure technique favoured by Adams. Today he continues to do photography workshops and lectures.

Gordon augmented his very professional animated Power Point talk with a collection of vintage and rare digital cameras as well as some sample digital prints which illustrated the quality possible today from even a modest printer.

EASTMAN KODAK. As a Kodak retiree, Brown outlined the impact of the digital transition on this grand old firm. World-wide staffing has moved from a peak of 120,000 employees down to a modest 20,000 (60,000 to about 12,000 in Rochester). This reflects the parallel transition from vertical integration to outsourcing and collaboration with others to manufacture the Kodak ideas and products.

In our last Email newsletter (7-4), Bob Lansdale reported the sad demolition of the buildings on the old Kodak Canada campus in the Mount Dennis area of Toronto. Kodak Park in Rochester has suffered a similar fate with building implosions reducing the number of buildings from 218 down to 104. Brown noted that of the remaining buildings, only Building 38 is a coating factory and is running at 100% capacity to meet the dwindling demand for traditional film products. Black & White papers were discontinued when the last paper coating facility (in Guadalajara, Mexico) was closed.

Showing a picture of an apple orchard, Brown noted that he had the urge to be a modern day "Johnny Appleseed" and sow apple seeds in Kodak Park to restore it to its previous domain as orchards. The old vertical integration in Kodak was right down to owning their own coal and electricity generating facilities. People even joked that there were "Kodak cows" to ensure an untainted supply of gelatin (see Elizabeth Brayer's excellent biography of George Eastman to read of the first massive product recall at Kodak).

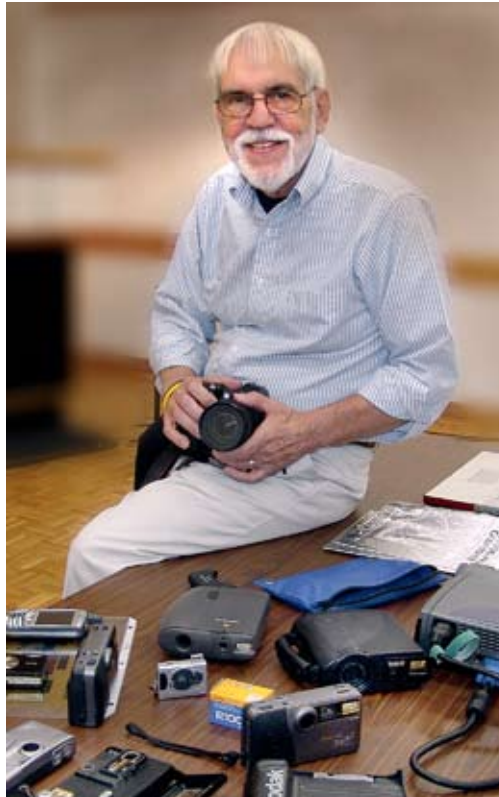
WORKFLOW. Gordon compared the traditional and digital work flows: With film, you choose the desired film, take the photographs, develop the negative chemically, print and correct with an enlarger, develop the print, label and file the negatives. The digital workflow eliminates the film choice (you could make similar decisions with camera settings), replaces the chemical development with transferring the image files to a computer, replaces the individual print corrections while enlarging with similar adjustments and more using image editing software, print the corrected image with a digital printer, and save image information in a digital asset management program.

HISTOGRAMS. In October 1980 the Journal of American Photography published an article on "Zone Histograms." The author used graphs to depict the proportions of information by "zone" in typical photographs that have a normal distribution vs low key and high key photos. A decade later this histogram concept appeared in Adobe Photoshop 1.0 and is one of the fundamentals of digital photography.

LIKE A NEGATIVE. Digital cameras provide images in a variety of formats. The better cameras today offer a "raw" file format which is like a traditional negative.

Raw files contain all the data collected by the image sensor with no unalterable adjustments. However; the format of the raw data file is not standard with each camera maker having one or more versions. To avoid file orphans, Adobe is trying to have its DNG format accepted as the standard.

SENSORS. Kodak has a long history in the digital arena with its research into CCD image sensors and manufacture of these cornerstones of the modern digital camera. Its interesting that Leica chose a Kodak sensor for its M8 rangefinder digital camera. The sensor has tiny lenses on each pixel so even the edge cells capture all the available light rays making it feasible to use older lenses on the M8, even 1930s screw-mounts. Other digital cameras resort to custom designed lenses that keep all rays perpendicular to the sensor, necessary since each sensor cell has a finite physical depth vs the surface sensitivity of film.



GORDON BROWN

Kodak designs and makes CCD sensors for high end cameras and camera backs including Hasselblad. The CCD sensor is more expensive to manufacture than the more recent CMOS sensors, but it has greater colour fidelity and is more light sensitive. Kodak still designs cameras - it's one of the top names in digital camera sales - but manufacturing is outsourced.

EARLY PIXELS. In pioneer colour photography the earliest plates and films used tiny filters like those in a CCD sensor. Gordon showed two commercially successful examples: The Autochrome invented in 1904 by the Lumiere Brothers. Grains of potato starch were dyed one of three colours and scattered on a B & W emulsion to capture the colour information. Spaces between the grains were filled with lamp black. Projecting white light through the reversally-developed negative and the grains gave a soft colour image. In 1935, Dufaycolor was marketed in England. It used a matrix of clear strips dyed red, blue or green and placed over a black and white emulsion in a 35mm roll format giving owners of novel miniature cameras the ability to snap and project colour transparencies.

BUT WILL IT LAST. Brown peppered his talk with cautions on preserving the photographic media – be it silver or silicon; paper or plastic. This included the hazards of airborne pollutants from unsuspected sources such as sulfur fumes in oil-based paints, “toning” black & white prints a brown colour when a nearby wall is painted, and ink fumes trapped under glass when a modern ink-jet print is hastily mounted and framed under glass “for preservation.” Another concern is the rapid changes in hardware and software leaving orphan formats and media whose images cannot be easily viewed or extracted. In comparison, early daguerreotypes and the odd pre-daguerreotype have survived. At the Harry Ransom Center in Austin

The following year, the first digital photo, taken with Sasson's camera was published - a boy and his beagle. The camera never went into production - this honour went to Canon with its RC-701 camera, used at the Los Angeles Olympic Games tryouts a decade later in 1986. Canon called it a “Magnetic Still Video” camera. The following year a Kodak venture company released the first “megapixel” camera using a 1.7 megapixel Kodak CCD that captured a 1320 x 1335 pixel B & W image. Intended for research and industrial applications, it sold for \$10,000 to \$40,000. Kodak's first professional digital camera was the 1.3 megapixel DCS100. The 13 pound system came with a Nikon F3 body modified to hold a B & W or colour CCD sensor. The camera came tethered to an electronics box housing a 200 meg hard drive. They sold 987 units over the period of 1991-1994 for \$20,000 to \$25,000 each.

In 1981, Sony offered its first Mavica still video SLR for \$10,000. The camera used two sensors to record each image. One captured colour data while the other captured luminance (B & W) information. It recorded 25/50 NTSC TV field/frame images on a miniature floppy disk. This camera became famous in 1989 when used to send images of the Tiananmen Square demonstration to the outside world. The Chinese government blocked all foreign mail but didn't anticipate Mavica's capability to send images via phone.

LOSE SOME, WIN SOME. Imagine the changes brought about when a young George Eastman moved the photographic world from glass plates and tripod mounted behemoths operated by individuals skilled in strange chemical processes to roll film and hand held cameras usable by almost anyone. We are experiencing a similar phenomena today as the world says good-bye to film and darkrooms and embraces the digital camera. We have lost some things - cameras that

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBERT CARTER



Texas, Gordon saw the famous photo taken c1827 by Niepce. He noted that it was an indistinct blur viewed directly, but when viewed at an oblique angle, the familiar image of Niepce's back yard appears.

EARLY DIGITALS. The first functioning digital camera was assembled in 1975 by Kodak engineer Steve Sasson using the Fairchild 100 x 100 pixel CCD sensor. The camera weighed in at 8.5 pounds and took 23 seconds to record an image on audio tape.

lasted decades, the magic of the darkroom, batteryless cameras, media viewable by eye, and known archival standards. But we have gained others - zero cost at the time of exposure, instant photo review, easily mixed photo parameters (B & W, Colour, ISOs), better image manipulation including post exposure negative rendition and invisible retouching (think dust spots, red-eye, etc.), exact duplicates and light in the “darkroom.”

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA

CANADA'S LARGEST
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Camera Museum for Toronto? – an editorial question

I've received a number of messages over the past month from Rolf Fricke in Rochester. He has a long connection to photographic history and the photo business world. Rolf is a former Regional Marketing Communications Director of the Professional Photography Division of Kodak in Rochester. He is also a cofounder of The (original) Photographic Historical Society in Rochester as well as the Leica Historical Society(s) in the USA (1968), UK (1959) Germany (1975) and Russia (circa 1999). I've come to rely on his reports and inside knowledge of photo history and current events.

Fricke's present concern is to preserve a major collection in Rochester. Frank Mehlenbacher is the grandson of Frank A. Brownell who, as a sub-contractor to the Eastman Company, designed and produced many of the late 19th century innovative cameras offered under the Eastman and Kodak labels. That collection is needing a future home that will honour the person of Frank A. Brownell.

Dr. Rudolf Kingslake wrote the following in his *The Photographic Manufacturing Companies of Rochester, New York*:

"F. A. Brownell Manufacturer produced fine wooden cameras for professionals and amateurs. In 1884 under the revised name of Frank A. Brownell, Photographic Apparatus, he contracted to make the new Eastman-Walker Roll Film Holders – metal parts being supplied by Yawman & Erbe. Over the years Brownell achieved a unique relationship with the Eastman Company by manufacturing cameras, developing a daylight-loading roll film and a line of cameras to be used with it. He designed and produced the popular Pocket Kodak camera – some 50 thousand of them. He is responsible for the cheap cardboard Kodak Brownie which made the Eastman Kodak Company a worldwide success. By 1902 Brownell employees exceeded one thousand. In October of that year Eastman purchased the assets of the Brownell Company and renamed its buildings as the Camera Works Division of the

Eastman Kodak Company. Frank Brownell retired in 1906 to enter the manufacture of gasoline engines for autos, boats and trucks."

Our attachment to Frank Brownell is that he was born (1859) in Canada

in Vienna, Ontario to American parents. At the age of sixteen (1875) he moved to Rochester to become an apprentice cabinetmaker. So we do have some affinity to this important pioneer in photographic history. –RL

The idea of creating a Museum of Cameras in Toronto, possibly as part of Ontario Place or some other appropriate institution has really fascinated me and the following considerations come to mind:

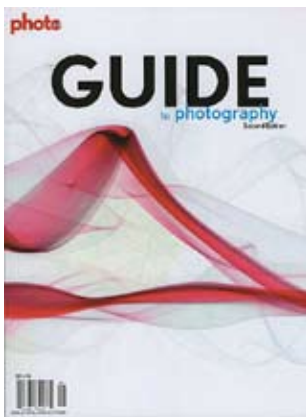
1. Frank Brownell was a Canadian, and all the many George Eastman's early cameras that launched Kodak on its path to worldwide success were designed and built by Brownell.
2. The George Eastman House museum does not, even remotely, give proper recognition to Brownell's enormous achievement – all the emphasis unfairly being on Eastman and Kodak cameras.
3. The George Eastman House has a huge collection of cameras, but only a smattering – the proverbial tip of the iceberg in the form of a hodgepodge of cameras, is on display in one single room on the main floor, the vast majority of the collection being stored in a basement vault that is not directly accessible to the public and that can only be viewed by special appointment.
4. Truly remarkable, considering the fact George Eastman produced millions of cameras, making inexpensive cameras accessible to the ordinary citizen. The emphasis at GEH, surprisingly, is overwhelmingly on images, to which far more space and curators are devoted than there are for cameras.
5. I do not know what is required for an institution to be named "The Royal Canadian Museum of cameras" but that would certainly become an attraction in Canada, a unique one at that, provided the cameras are displayed with design flair and highlighted properly for their various significance, origins and Canadian aspects (when appropriate). Images would only be displayed in relation to the cameras that took them or to represent the genre made possible by certain types of cameras as in photojournalism, art, etc. Let another museum or gallery feature images per se. In other words, the emphasis would be on cameras, their history, technology, applications, etc – not on images. The latter appear to have developed some sort of snob appeal over time among obfuscating art "experts." That is not to deny truly significant images – only the countless arty ones that are reminiscent of the fable of the Emperor's New Clothes.
6. The George Eastman House (GEH) began its collection with the substantial Cromer Collection that was spirited out of France just as WW II had begun. Once the proposed Canadian institution becomes known, cameras and collections will be contributed by citizens from all walks of life, as it had happened at the GEH which has had so many offers that many are turned down or only accepted for later sale and fund-raising. The outstanding camera collection of Brownell's grandson Frank Mehlenbacher, who lives in Rochester, includes numerous Brownell-made cameras and much Brownell memorabilia. It could become an ideal foundation for the proposed Canadian Museum.
7. As mentioned earlier, there are already significant Canadian contributions to photography, like the large number of popular cameras produced by Kodak Canada in Toronto and the high-end cameras produced by the former Ernst Leitz Canada Limited in Midland, Ontario. The Leica M4-2 produced there even saved the legendary Leica rangefinder camera from extinction that had already been planned by the parent company in Germany. So the Leica is flourishing again, thanks to Canadian ingenuity! Presumably there are others, less known Canadian entrepreneurs in this field.

I'll be having luncheon with Frank Mehlenbacher so I will have further discussion on these musings. He is interested in having proper recognition given to his grandfather Frank Brownell, which is why he has not bequeathed his collection to the GEH where it would likely be ignominiously added to the vast hoard in the basement. I hope you can stimulate the interest of other enterprising and patriotic individuals with the idea of creating a Royal Canadian Museum of Cameras, and I eagerly look forward to hearing from you. – Rolf Fricke 🍷

LOOKING FOR A DIGITAL CAMERA?

Bill Belier, a long time Leica enthusiast has disposed of his collection with the exception of a brand new Panasonic Lumix DMC FZ5 (SLR) equipped with a Leitz Elmarit lens giving 12 times optical zoom. Priced to sell, you can see Bill at the Fall Fair this Sunday at table 8. Check with him early before it gets sold.

GUIDE TO PHOTOGRAPHY at the Fall Fair



The latest edition of *PhotoEd's* publication for teachers and students of photography has 127 pages of text and images printed on high quality paper. The sections on History, Tools & Techniques, Digital Basics, Creative Ideas, and Explorations cover the beginnings of photography up to the latest digital techniques featuring Adobe Lightroom and Photoshop. Copies are available at your local Chapters and FROM the editor, Felix Russo WHO will have copies at our FALL FAIR this SUNDAY, October 14th.

Photographic Flea Market in Montreal

In Montreal on November 4th, 2007 is the 41st Photographic Flea Market to be held at the Holiday Inn Pointe-Claire, 6700 Trans Canada Hwy, Pointe-Claire, Quebec (Highway 40, exit 52). Save a dollar by printing your own ticket at <www.montrealcamerashow.com>

Still Looking for Playtner images!

Gary Fox has yet to receive any replies from our subscribers regarding his quest for images or information about Henry Playtner who opened the Canadian Horological Institute in Toronto in 1890 to train young men in the art of fixing watches. See



previous newsletter Vol 7-4. He is writing a book so needs everyone's assistance. Gary sends new images to encourage us when searching through local flea markets and antique shows. Contact Gary at <chi-gary@hotmail.com> or phone (613) 725-5745.

New Fund Raiser Takes Photo Approach:



Ev Roseborough brings to our attention a new approach in soliciting donations for charity funds. "It's the first time," says Ev, "I've seen a photofinishing envelope used for anything but photofinishing. This is a novel approach to fund raising – it's a historic first!"

The envelope arrives in the mail with proper name and address and would seem to be photographs from friend or family. But it turns out to be a solicitation for a charity fund using photos as convincing proof of their ongoing activities and success. But on close inspection with a magnifier the photos turn out to be screen-printed lithographs. -RL

