

Thomas W. Bradt

Amateur Photographer

Glass Plate Images

1904-1910

David J. Kenny



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Original glass dry plate negatives digitally scanned and
restored by David J. Kenny

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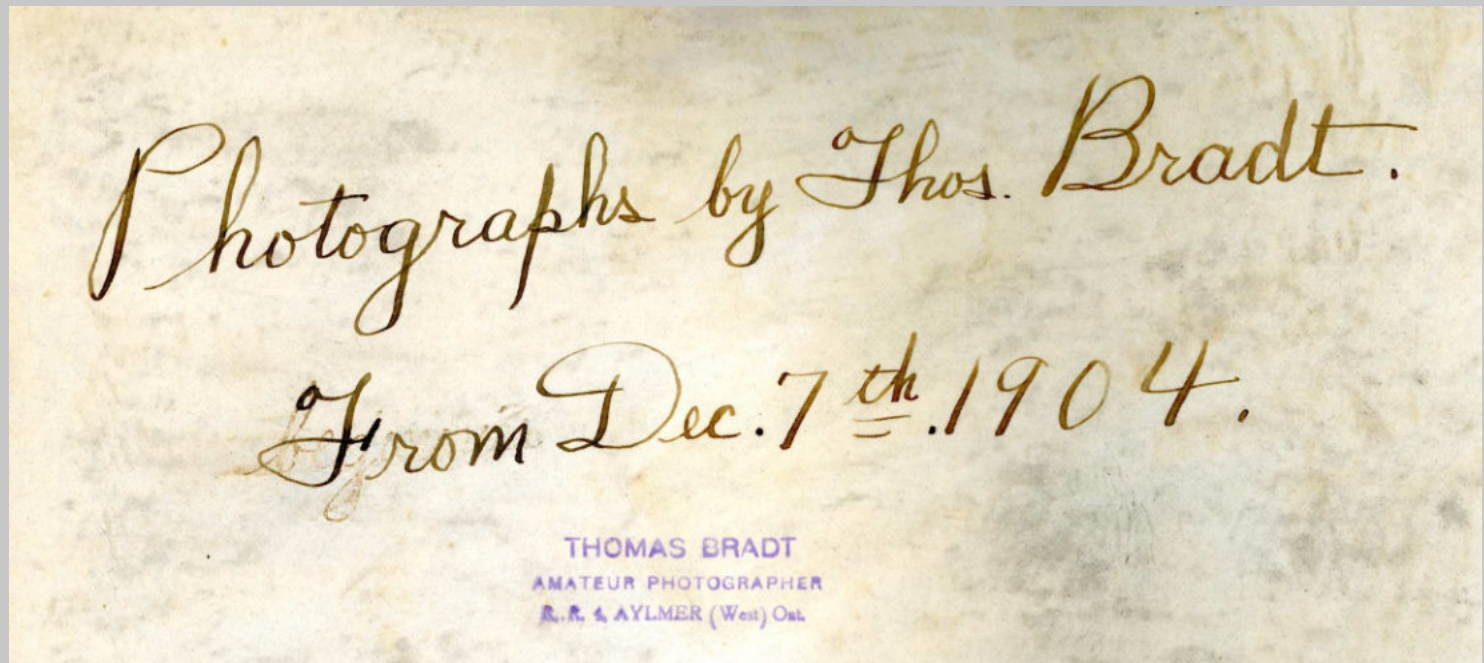
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For H. James (Jim) Kenny, a member of the PHSC in the 1980s and 1990s who developed and printed in both black and white, and colour.

Front image: Plate 14. Thomas Bradt, May 1, 1905. *Hands are placed to squeeze a rubber bulb pneumatic shutter release.*



Thomas W. Brant was born July 6, 1886, on his family's farm near Springwater, Ontario, Canada. Thomas lived there with his parents, two younger brothers, Irving and Walter, and sisters Margaret and Mary. Between 1904 and 1910, when he was 18 to 24 years old, Thomas exposed over 250 4x5 in. photographic glass plates and produced prints for their family album, neighbours and friends. When the family moved in 1911, the negatives remained in the farmhouse for decades until my father Jim Kenny acquired them from Irving Bradt, his neighbour.

These are the images of a young man with a love for photography that lasted his entire life. Bradt's vernacular photography offers personal views of farm and small town life over a hundred years ago. He had a number of cameras, developed his own negatives and prints, and read widely. Bradt's photos of his 'room' are a window into his interests and magazines of the day. His collection of Indigenous artifacts shown in Plate 64 come from farm fields in the area. The subjects of his photographs knew Thomas and would break from their activities to be photographed.



Plate 11. Ice cutting on White's pond. January 17, 1905.

The collection was stored in a wooden box, with most glass plates in individual glassine envelopes and their original cardboard boxes. Envelopes were numbered and many were described and dated in India ink. Some negatives were missing due to breakage or misadventures. The Bradt family allowed me to access Thomas' album that contained the numbered prints of images with missing glass plates. The plate numbers and captions are directly from Bradt's notations and not in order. Notes in italics are by the author. The short technical section is for analogue camera enthusiasts, or those who simple love local history.

No.	59
Name	Shakers Lewis's Pond
Order	
Remarks	
Retouched	
Order Finished	
Reorder	
Reorder	



Plate 59, Skaters on Lewis' pond, 1906.



Plate 64. Relics of North American Indians. Photo by Thomas Bradt, Orwell, Ontario. Arrowheads, a small axe head and shards of pottery are shown in this 1908 image.



Plate 142. My room 1910. There is much to be learned from this self-portrait. Thomas is dressed in his Sunday best and his rapidly-filling family album of prints is centre-most in the image. He read an eclectic range of periodicals such as *Country Life in America*, *Boy's Own Annual*, *Yachting*, and an increasing number of photography books, notably *The Camera*, and *The Photographic Times*.



Plate not numbered. *Schooners in Hamilton Harbour (circa 1906).*



Plate 25. The SS City of Grand Rapids, owned from 1905-1907 by the Cleveland, Rondeau and Port Stanley Navigation Company. Launched in 1879, it was sold and moved to Tobermory, Ontario where it caught fire in late 1907. It sank in the harbour and is now part of a recreational dive site.



Plate 26. The Port Stanley loading. The ship is SS Marquette & Bessemer No. 2. It carried railway cars full of coal, steel beams and iron castings between Conneaut, Ohio and Port Stanley, Ontario. This plate was exposed in 1905 or 1906. The ship sank in December 1909 with the loss of 30-38 lives. The wreck has never been found.



Plate 27. Port Stanley beach taken the same day. While adolescents wore full coverage bathing costumes, the same rules did not hold for the young boys bathing au naturel in the water. The SS Marquette & Bessemer No. 2 is docked in the distance.

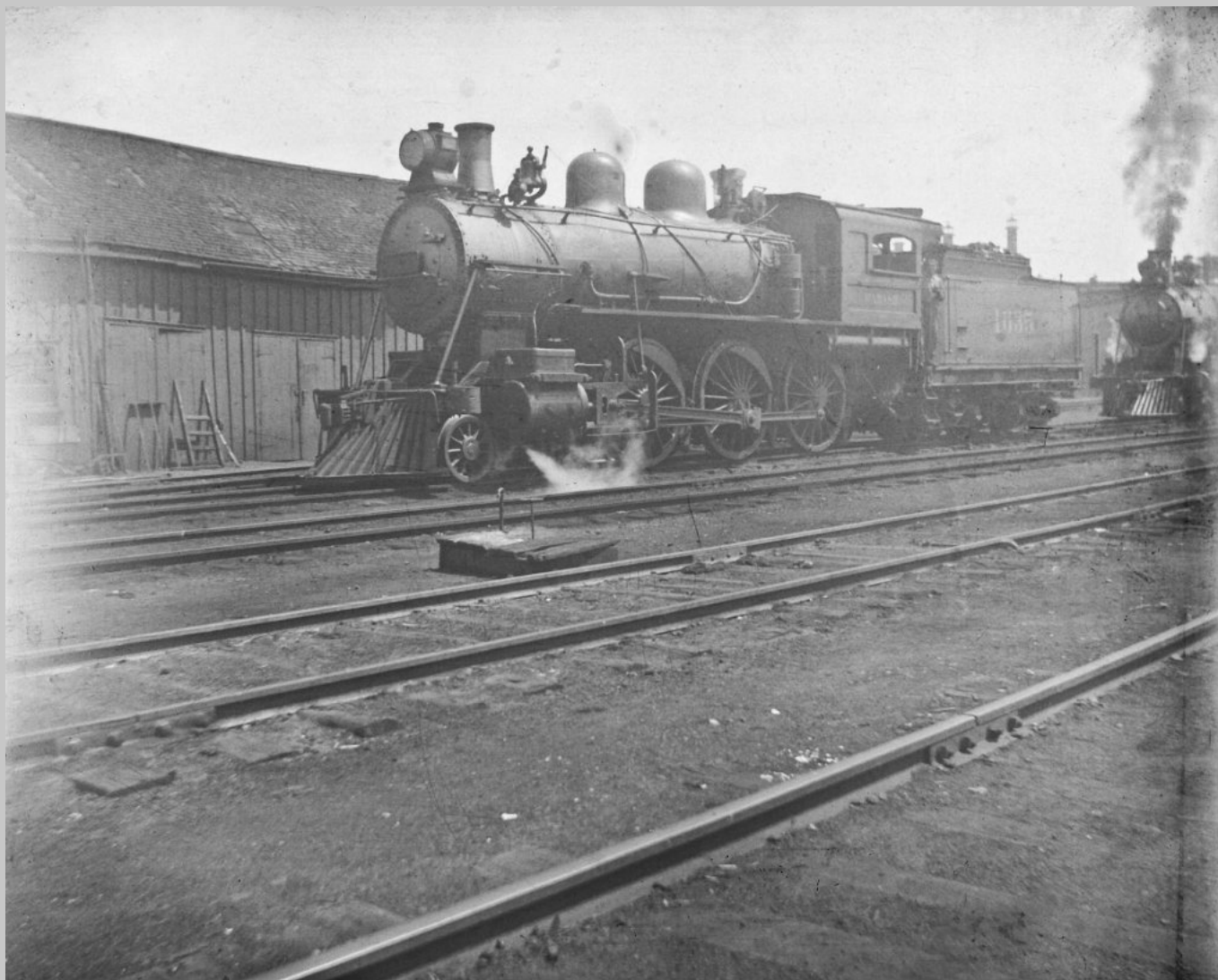


Plate 69. Wabash Express August 1, 1908. *The Wabash Railroad served the American mid west and leased rail access to extend their service from Detroit through Ontario to their eastern terminus in Buffalo. This is Wabash 1635, a steam locomotive with a 2-6-0 wheel configuration (2 leading and 6 drive wheels).*



Plate 68. Pere Marquette #16. Here shown crossing the (now Athletic Park) trestle in Northwest St. Thomas, Ontario. Steam locomotive 16 was also a 2-6-0 configuration. Pere Marquette Railroad eventual become part of the Chesapeake and Ohio line.



Plate 70. Grand Trunk Railway roundhouse in St. Thomas. Grand Trunk later became part of the Canadian National Railway line.



Plate 261. Mail. *While mother delivers mail, her daughter holds the reins. The tassel throw on the horse is to fend off flies.*



Plates 128 & 129. *White's dam series. Cement mixer (above) and water pumping (below).*





Plates 133 & 143. *The men who built it, and
White's dam with water flowing.*





Plate 39. Well Driving. *Both images taken the same day. The steam engine in the background is pounding the casing through the sandy soil of the area. See Plate 40.*



Plate 40. *Steam pounding the well.*



Plate 37. Irving may be showing his birthday present, a Stevens Ideal Model 44 single shot .22 calibre rifle. His mother, sisters and brother all present.



Plate 12. Catfish Creek, March 29, 1905. Notes state: 20 fish with a dip net.

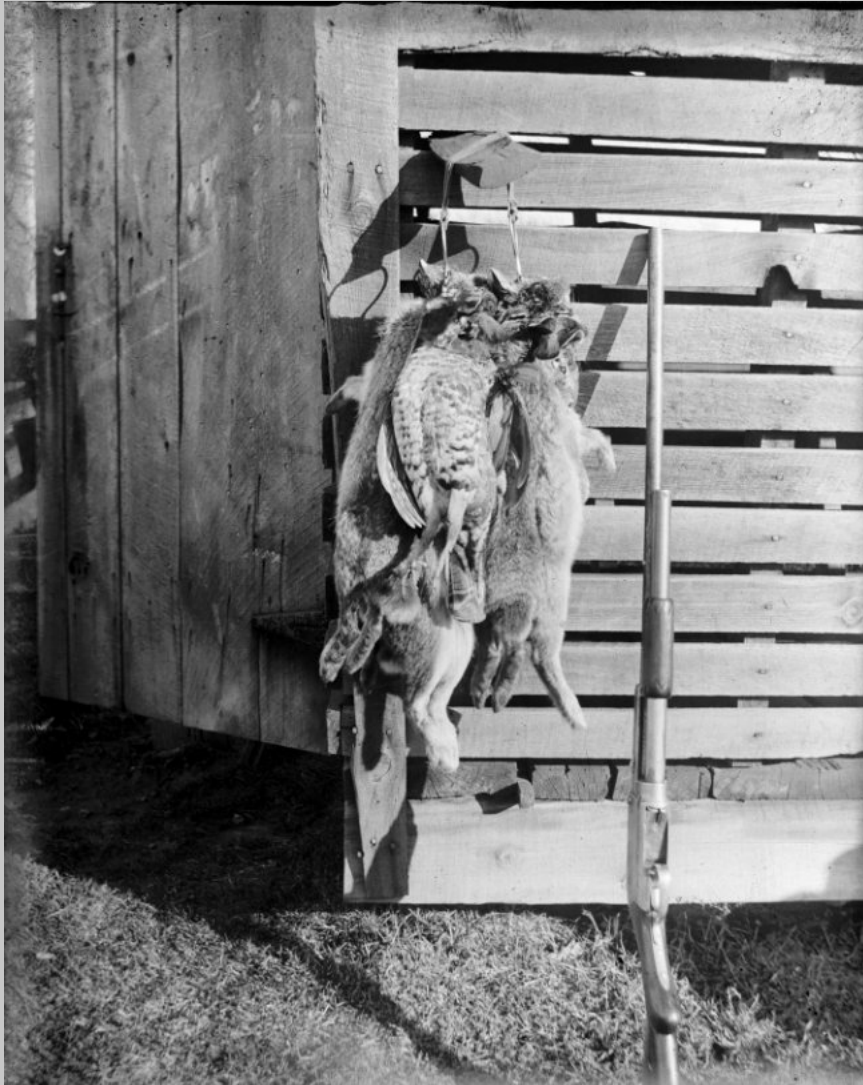


Plate 79. Game. *Single barrel shotgun with rabbits and pheasant.*



Plate 78. Walter with Skunks. *Thomas took the effort to drape a sheet on the side of the poultry shed to get the perfect picture of three dead skunks.*



Plate 73. Maggie and poultry. *Thomas' sister feeding geese. The long exposure time required to expose glass plate negatives could lead to blurring. Here the geese running for feed are blurred while the rest of the image is sharp.*



Plate 247. Sunday photograph, same ladies are with the cows in Plate 246.



Plate 180. View of farm from windmill. Thomas printed this image as a post card and gave it to Irving for Christmas 1910. Image from Don Cosens Collection, M5 D1 Sh3 B1 F5 1. St. Thomas Archives, St. Thomas, Ontario.



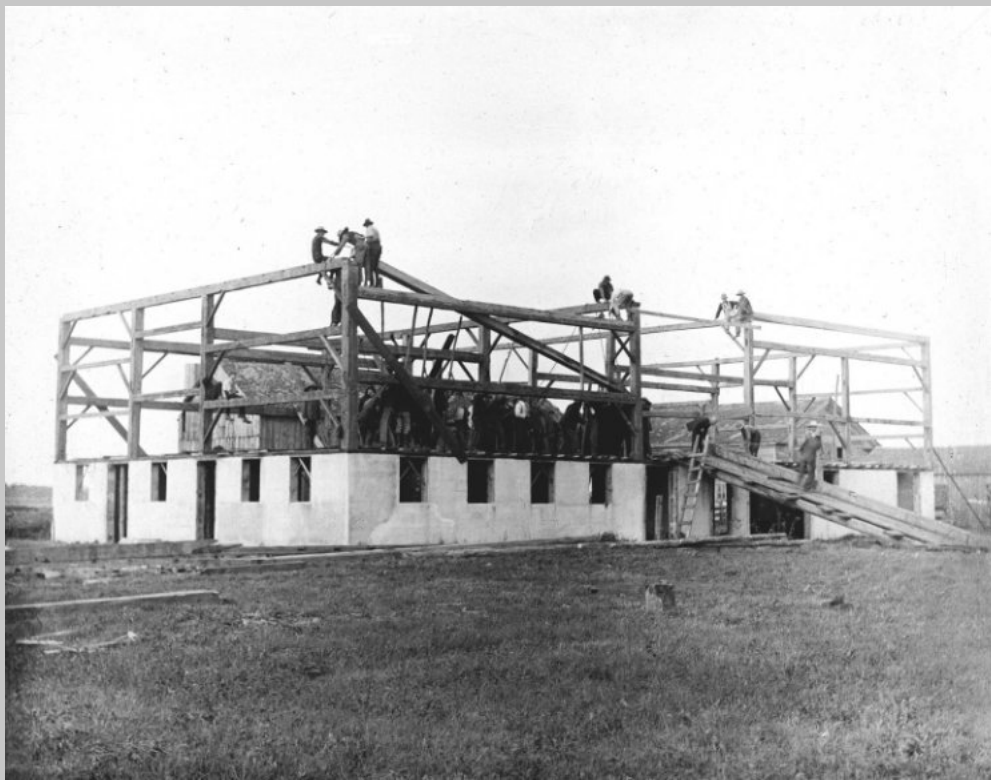
Plate 51. Fish that Irving (L) caught.



Plate 55. Apple packers. *Don't miss the little head peeking from between the two boys at the table.*



Plate 171. Threshers. Steam engine and power drive belt behind men.



Plates 212 & 213. *Mann barn raising and cooks.*



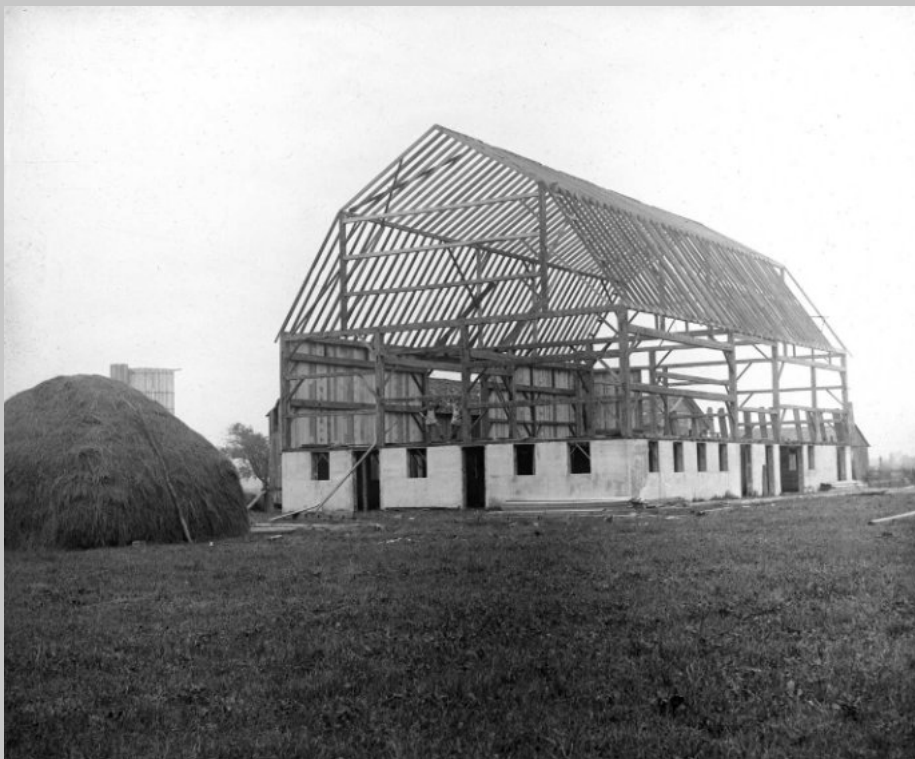


Plate 214. Mann barn framed and cement block making (not numbered).





Plates 236 & 237. (L) cultivator and (R) seed drill, lower image same rigs from front.





Plate 238. E. Learn and L. Kenny. *Sunday best.*



Plate 220. *Silo filling, corn cutting box.*



Plate 248. Sawing wood (*L-R, Margaret, Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Bradt*).



Plate 251. *Mary on side delivery rake.*



Plate 252. *Loading hay.*



Plate 241. Milk house with cooler. *The piping was immersed in cold water to reduce the temperature of the fresh milk.*



Plate 246. *Family with cattle, taken the same day as Plate 247.*



Plate 127. *Girl with Teddy bear.*



Plate 218. *Man's best friend.*



Plate 154. Aylmer High School. *Built 1890, it was also called the Aylmer Collegiate Institute. The cannons were made in 1806 for the war of 1812 and mounted in 1899.*



Plate 165. School garden Springwater, view from South, September 6. 1910. *Thomas attended the Springwater School.*



Plate not numbered. Sweets Corner Church, Dedication Day, June 19, 1907. Now Sweets Church 5356 Rainham Road, Regional 3 Rd., Haldimand, ON.



Plate 217. *Talbot Street Aylmer, looking West circa 1909.*

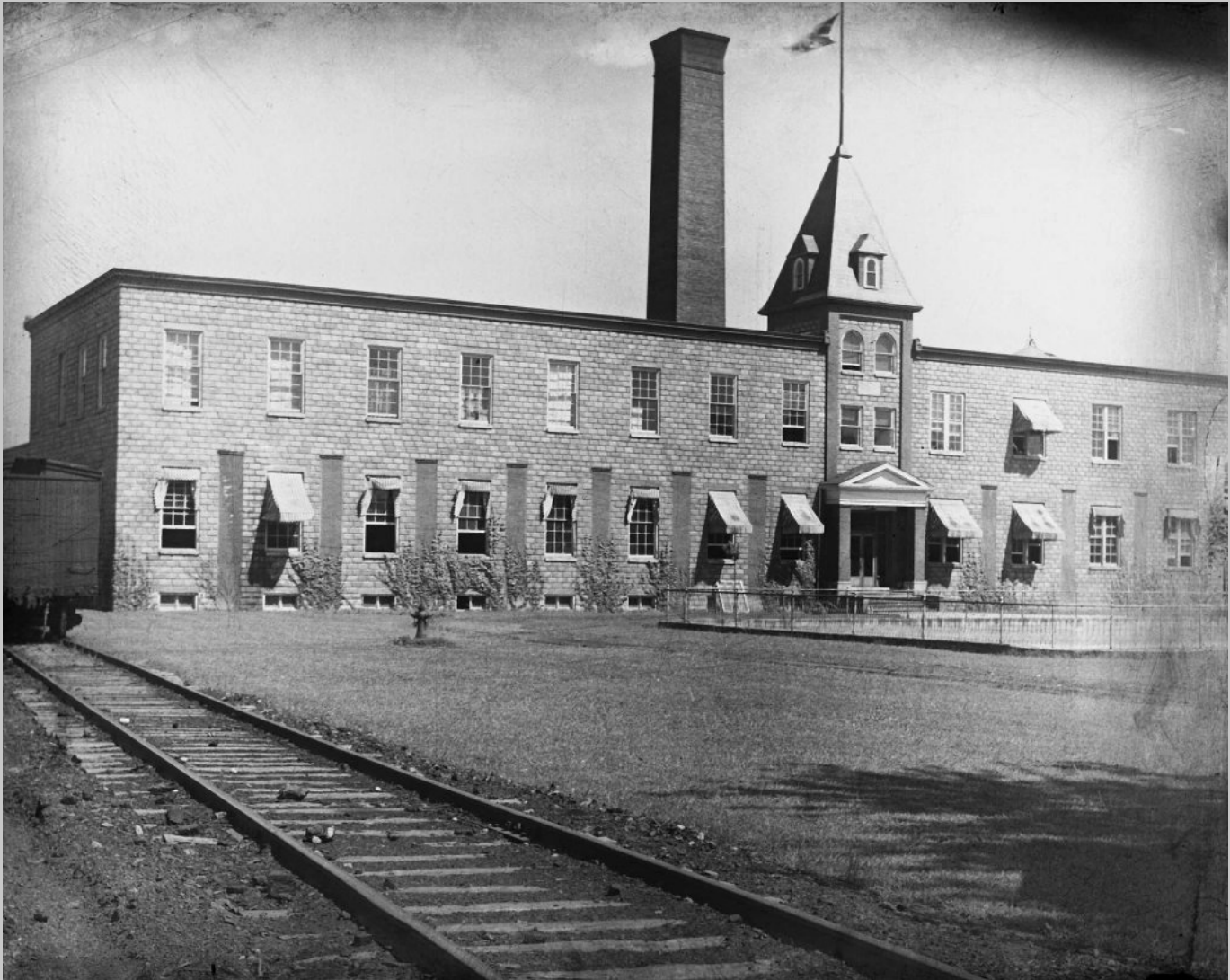


Plate 152. Condenser plant. *The 'Alymer Condensed Milk' factory was built between 1905 and 1910. The plant was sold to the Carnation Company in 1916 and its slogan, 'from contented cows' was emblazoned on the (later) white painted facade.*

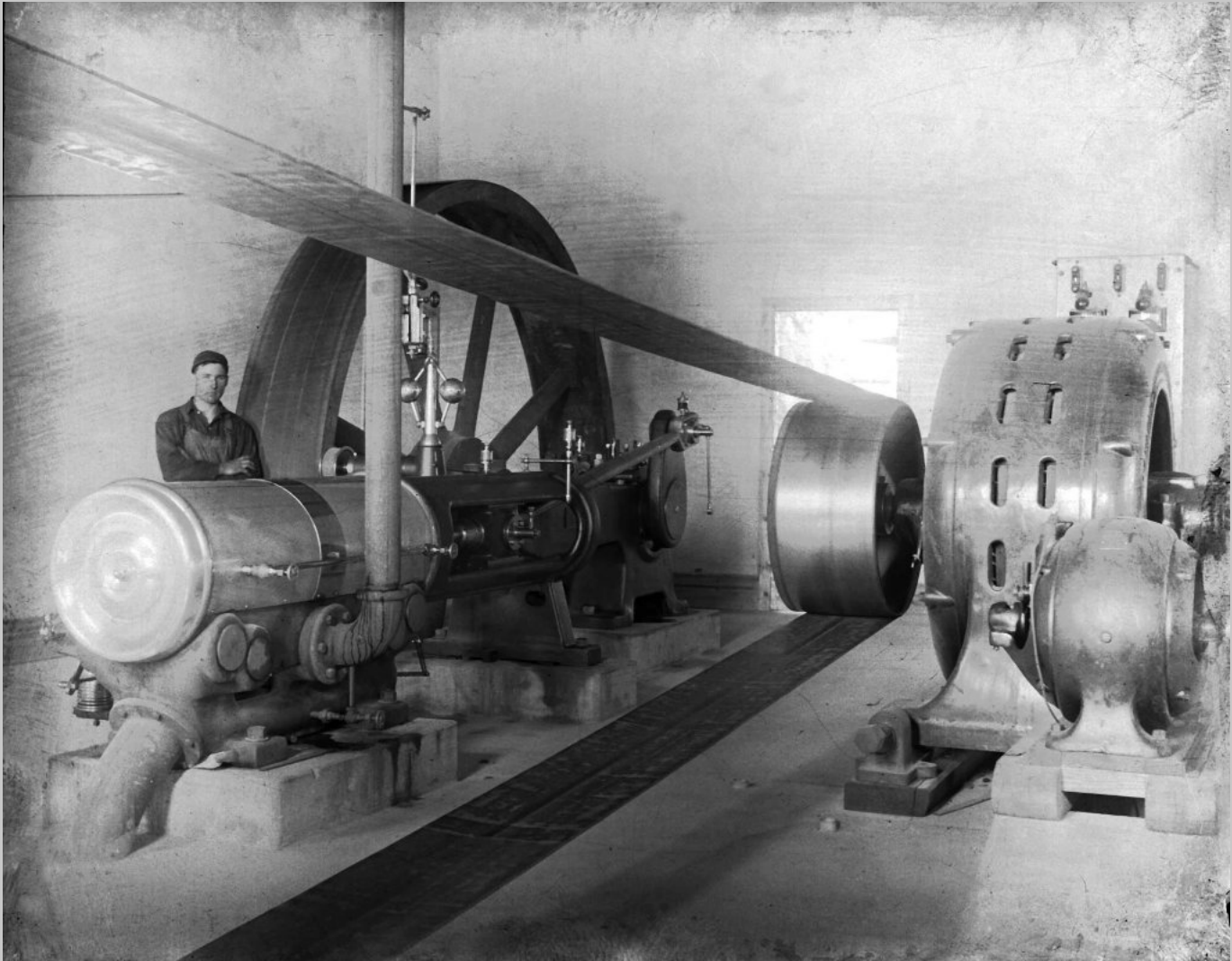


Plate 153. Electric plant Aylmer. *This is either a 2,000 or 3,000 light generator. Both were purchased in 1900 by the Aylmer Electric Manufacturing Company. In 1901 the Town purchased the company and formed a Public Utilities Commission in 1907. The belt and the two balls of the centrifugal governor would have been a blur when the equipment was operating.*



Plate 151. Parlor. *The black circle is vignetting, a camera effect. The piano is by Gerhard Heintzman and made in Toronto. A kerosene lamp is on the side table between the piano and a platform rocking chair.*



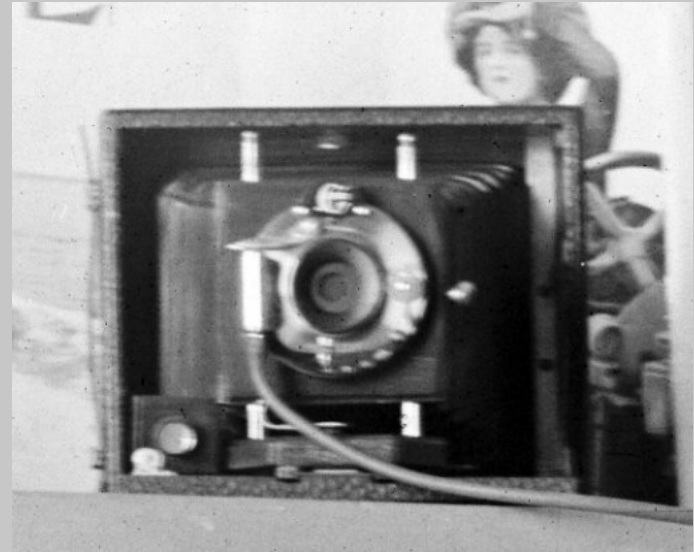
Plate 148. My room 1910. This view shows two of Thomas' cameras. Top row (L) a No. 3 Kodak Folding Brownie camera, (R) a Model A Century camera (both described later). His photography library included: Camera Craft, American Photography, Amateur Photographer (a name he applied to himself), Photographic Monthly, Wilson's Photographic Magazine, and Photographic Annual 1908.

Technical Information

This monograph is devoted exclusively to images from Bradt's collection of 4x5 inch glass dry plate negatives, taken when he was 18 to 24 years old.

The earlier wet plate process involved mixing a flammable liquid with light sensitive chemicals in the dark, and exposing the photosensitive coating within a few minutes before the emulsion dried. Professional photographers welcomed the end of preparing their own plates and by the 1890's a dry plate industry was well established. Prodigious numbers of dry plates were manufactured for over thirty years and the fortunes they generated produced the Eastman Kodak empire and led to developments as diverse as moving pictures (see Lumière Brothers) and automobiles (see Stanley Steamer). The photosensitive dry plate drove the rise of amateur photography due to its ease of use and ability to be stored.

In 1888, George Eastman, seeing the rise of amateur photography, further expanded the market by producing the Kodak Brownie box camera, preloaded with a 100 exposure roll of film. All processing and printing was done by Kodak, and a legion of recreational snap shooters was born. Kodak then began to manufacture small rolls of film on a cellulose acetate backing. Thomas Bradt had more than one 4x5 glassplate camera and his No. 3 Folding Brownie model A, (Plate 148) was a 1905 model that used roll film to produce a 3 1/4 x 4 1/4 inch celluloid negative. Bradt's negatives were then contact printed as enlargers were rare among amateur photographers.



Upper left. An open Kodak Folding Brownie camera similar to the one (shown closed) in Plate 148. Roll film negatives began to appear in Brandt's collection following the purchase of his Kodak Brownie Camera. Upper right. Enlargement of the actual Model A Century camera with leather bellows shown in Plate 148. The pneumatic shutter release tube is attached to a bulb (not shown). His glass plate cameras were used to photograph scenery, neighbourhood workers, families, and church groups.

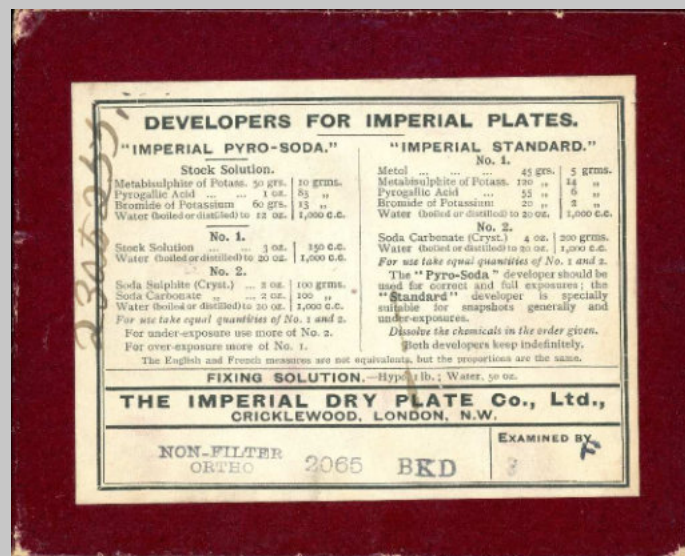
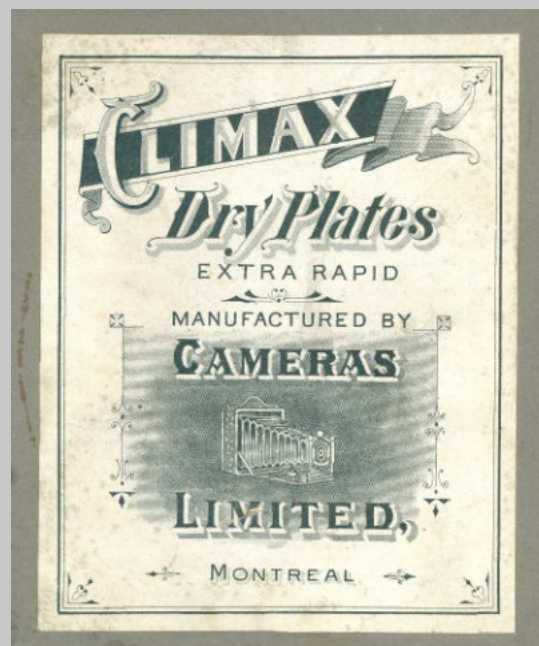
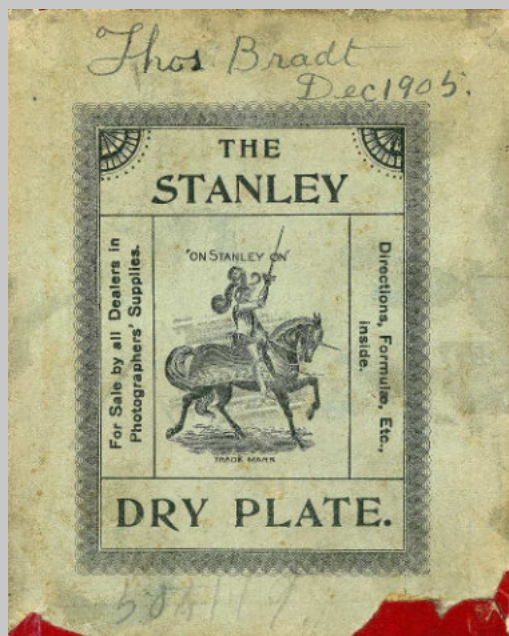
Thomas Bradt bought his original dry plates and developing paper from Sandham & Roberts, St. Thomas. Mixed trading was common and Sandham & Roberts advertised themselves as a source for electrical, sporting goods, cameras and supplies. Between 1904-10 photographic supplies and cameras were also offered locally by Edgar C. Harvey, a druggist and W.J. McMurtry, a hardware store proprietor. McMurtry's newspaper advertisement listed solio, dekte, aristo, platino and velox paper in all sizes as well as films and plates, photographic chemicals and cameras. In addition, the T. Eaton Company Ltd. shipped a broad range of mail-order cameras and supplies across Canada.

Right, current view of 379 Talbot St., St. Thomas, site of Sandham & Roberts first store in 1905. Facing page, a selection of Bradt's glass plate boxes and printing out paper. Clockwise, Stanley and Climax plates from Montreal and Imperial plates from the U.K. with processing instructions. Cyko paper was produced by the Ansco Company, New York.



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In 1911, Thomas moved with his family to a new farmhouse just north of Aylmer. In 1915, at the age of 29, Bradt went to Indiana to attend Bethany Christian College and began his ministry. A few years later he returned to the family farm and became a Church of Christ Minister who served a number of churches in Mapleton, Poplar Hill, Windmill Point, Selkirk and Sweets Corners. Thomas left the Ministry at the age of 49. Always interested in photography, by 1935 he completed correspondence courses in colouring photographs and photographic journalism from the National Art School in Chicago and Universal Photographers Inc. in New York. Now, with a new skill set, Bradt established himself as an Artist Photographer in Aylmer. The Reverend Thomas Walton Bradt passed on September 10, 1940 at the untimely age of 54 following a prolonged illness.



I would like to thank Ronald Bradt and Susan Hilliker who lent me their family album to verify the plate numbers and description, and for permission to use Thomas' signature and Plate 218 from their family album. All other images are from the author's collection of glass plate negatives. Judith Kenny took her usual role in editing and post-production. Jean Bircham, Elgin County Branch Ontario Genealogical Society, reviewed microfilms of local newspapers.

References

Pat Zimmer, "Profiles from the past." *Aylmer Express*, February 13, 1991, 15.

The Millennium History of Aylmer. Aylmer Rotary Club, Aylmer Ontario, 2000.

These negatives, made by a previously unknown young Canadian photographer, are presented here for the first time. See Also: Jacqueline McIsaac, "Cameras in the Countryside: Recreational Photography in Rural Ontario," Scientia Canadensis, 2013, 36 no. 1, 5-31 and Brain Wallis, "Reconsidering American Photographic Portraiture, Encounters with the Howard and Carole Tanenbaum Photography Collection," True to the Eyes, Paul Roth and Gaëlle Morel eds. 2018, Hirmer Verlag, Munich and Ryerson Image Centre, Toronto, 148-9; David Kenney, "The Stanley gelatin dry plate: its Canadian connection," Photographic Canadiana, 2021, 47 no.3, 4-8.



J. Kenny

David J. Kenny is a retired Professor of Dentistry at the University of Toronto. Like Thomas Bradt, Kenny's interest in photography dates back to his late teens. From the time he worked with his father printing these glass plate negatives he knew it was important to ensure Bradt's images would not be lost. They show the life and interests of a well known and trusted young man in a rural community. Kenny is pictured with 4x5 Century Camera Model B with Automatic Shutter and Rapid Rectilinear Lens.

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