

Hidden pleasures of an antique camera

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Photography has always held a special place in my heart. The ability to capture a second in time and to have it for all eternity is wonderful.

George Eastman's early camera had a unique "Ko-Dak" sound to the shutter. George always thought that the letter "k" was strong, so was quick to spot the Ko-Dak sound.

When it came time to name his new camera, George did not call it an Eastman camera or a George camera. The world was introduced to the "Kodak" camera, and embraced it; as George knew they would.

His first camera was wooden and loaded with enough film for 100 pictures. When you wanted the film developed you sent him the camera, he would unload it and reload it for you, and send it back to you. As time went on, George could trust us with the light sensitive film.

I smile every time I see a disposable camera; they remind me so much of the first cameras ever to be sold.

In today's fast paced market, we only get the pictures back and Kodak gets to keep the camera. It's kind of sad that cameras are so disposable. Don't get me wrong they have their purposes. What would weddings be without disposable cameras?

The really early cameras are not easy to find anymore, as most of them are all in the hands of collectors or museums.

What you can find in the antique stores are the Brownie Leatherette Box Cameras. The next time you see one, look at it closely. The lens is mounted in wood, the view finder lets you take a picture horizontally or by laying the camera over you can take a vertical picture. The red window hole lets you read the number on the back of the film.

I am intrigued by is the two small tabs on the top (handle portion) of the camera.

The small one is for time laps photography. Take your fingernail and pull up on it. Click the shutter and it will remain open exposing the wooden mounted lens.

While it is in this position, slide your fingernail under the larger tab. A brass plate with a hole in it slides over the lens. This is an aperture setting. Pull up some more and you will find a different size hole, another aperture opening. Slide the tabs back down and all will return to normal.

The simple box camera was not so simple after all. A time exposure and three aperture openings. For all the sophistication of antique cameras it is nothing compared to modern digital cameras .

One more thing before you lay that camera back down, for George and I, click the shutter and let us all hear it say "Kodak".

Do you agree that just maybe our society has become a little too disposable. I sometimes miss the old days when cameras were still a mystery. As well as hearing my father and grandfather discussing how photographs were taken.

Way back when point and shoot were terms used for products other than cameras.

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About the Author

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