



# GRAFLEX Journal

SHARING INFORMATION ABOUT GRAFLEX AND THEIR CAMERAS

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## FEATURED

F&S Reversible Back Cycle Graphic Special by Thomas Evans.....	1
Photography by the Yard: A Contemporary Journey into Cirkut Photography by Drew Tanner.....	3
The Speed Graphic in New Zealand by Jacob Brookie.....	6
3¼x4¼ Folding Graflex Engineering Models by Ken Metcalf.....	8



## F&S REVERSIBLE BACK CYCLE GRAPHIC SPECIAL

By Thomas Evans

The Reversible Back Cycle Graphic Special was made for only three years, from 1904 to 1906. It was intended to be a professional version of the popular Reversible Back Cycle Graphic, which had been introduced in 1900 or 1901. The RB Cycle Graphic had been a significant development from the original Cycle Graphic of the 1890s, which had a fixed back, and had a solid brass bar as a focusing rail for the front standard to move forward and back on. This early Cycle Graphic was developed from the larger Graphic and Graphic Sr. cameras. The 1898 Folmer & Schwing catalog describes the early camera as: "The Cycle Graphic is especially designed for wheelmen, tourists and amateurs who desire a thoroughly practical, compact camera."

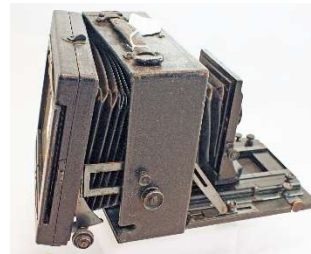
The Graphic cameras of the 1890s, and the Reversible Back Cycle Graphic of early 1900s, were well-made and well-finished cameras. The 1898 catalog gives this description: "The camera when open presents a very handsome appearance, as the bed is highly polished mahogany, with lacquered brass trimmings, offset with black leather coverings, making a perfect contrast."

The chief innovation of the 1900 RB Cycle Graphic, beyond the reversible back and more robust construction, was the introduction of a telescoping, framed focusing rack, which provided a sturdy base for the triple-extension bellows. This was described in the 1901 catalog: "Telescopic bed is made very substantial, reinforced with angle brass; front section

may be drawn out to any position and held securely with milled head nut; back section is fitted with our fine rack and pinion connecting with both sides of track and provided with milled head nuts which lock track rigidly when lens is focused." Replacing the central, solid brass bar with the telescopic frame also allowed the camera to be closed with a larger lens, the front of which could extend into the open area of the frame.

The 1904 catalog, introducing the 'Special' version of the camera, gave this description:

"The Reversible Back Cycle Graphic Special is the most complete and highest-grade Cycle Graphic ever produced. For compactness, practicality, beauty of finish and all qualities that go to make an ideal instrument, this box is unique. It is provided with double shifting front and double swing back with fine rack and pinion adjustments, both front and back focus, large front frame with extreme rise of lens board, falling front, reversible back, Graphic focal plane shutter, Model B, reversing with the back and fitted with all possible adjustments for convenience, simplicity and precision."

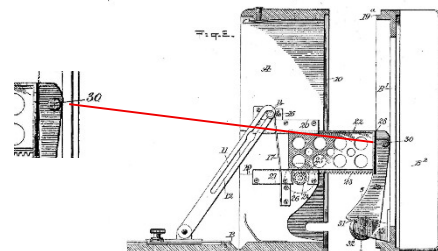


RB Cycle Graphic Special back swing and tilt.



RBCG Special front tilt and shift.

William Folmer patented the unique method of providing rear tilt and swing in this camera, U.S. Patent 804,802, issued November 14, 1905. In the patent, he described the purpose of his invention, which was to provide a camera with a rear extension that could be adjusted not only for vertical tilt and lateral swing, but which could also be adjusted "along the diagonal axis of the focal plane, whereby in certain special situations a more correct rendering of perspective without foreshortening is obtainable." Because the usual means of providing tilt or swing has fixed pivot points, the diagonal tilt adjustment is not possible. The pivot points of this back are made by pins (30 in Patent Figure 2) resting in semi-circular cut-outs, and this allows for more flexible movements.



William Folmer U.S. Patent 804,802 showing extension bars and tilt device providing back tilt and swing.

In addition to the usual rise and fall of the lens board, the front standard also provided shift from side to side. The most significant departure in the design was the inclusion of a back that could be tilted and swung. The two knobs, on either side of the body, could be turned to extend the back, with a smaller knob to lock the settings. They operated independently, so each side of the back could be moved to a different degree, thus providing swing movements. A separate knob controlled tilt, forward or back, equipped with a locking knob.



The latch that secures the reversible back.



Removable focusing panel showing 'turn buttons'.

Images from c 1900 4x5" RB Cycle Graphic.

The camera was sold with a reversible focal plane shutter. In 1904 this shutter was of the original Graflex type, which had two curtains that had an adjustable width of the opening between them. In 1906 the focal plane shutter was the later type, with a one-piece curtain which had a series of different-sized slits. The focal plane shutter provided speeds up to 1/1000<sup>th</sup> second and facilitated the use of lenses mounted in barrels.

The RB Cycle Graphic Special represented a marked departure in appearance, apparently borrowing from the increasingly popular Graflex line of cameras.

From the catalog description: "It is built of the best quality, carefully selected stock, lock jointed and reinforced, and is covered with the finest Morocco leather. All the metal parts are of gun metal finish and the woodwork is ebonized." Rather than the highly polished and lacquered mahogany inside the camera, all of the wood was stained black. Rather than highly polished and lacquered brass, the hardware was given a gun metal finish, which was a silver-plating that was then dulled. In later catalogs, this black and gunmetal finish was said to have a more professional presentation.

The focusing panel on the RB Cycle Graphic Special was spring-actuated, so that Graphic type dual cut-film and plate holders could be used. The focusing panel was removable to facilitate the attachment of a roll film holder, of the Eastman-Walker design, or a Graphic Plate Magazine, of the 'bag mag' design.

The camera was usually sold with a Bausch and Lomb Rapid Rectilinear lens in Automatic Shutter, but it was also offered with several more-advanced anastigmatic lenses, including the Goerz Series III, Cooke Series III, B&L Plastigmat, B&L Zeiss Protar Series VIIa, and the Voigtlander Collinear Series II lenses. Many of these lenses provided a doubling of effective focal length by removal of the front component of the lens, which the Cycle Graphic cameras, with their long bellows, were well-



With B&L Telephoto Adapter

equipped to make use of. Due to the sturdy construction of the focusing rails, the camera was also very well-fitted for the use of other long-focus lenses and the early type of adjustable telephoto lenses.

While the RB Cycle Graphic was offered in four formats, 4x5", 5x7", 6 1/2 x 8 1/2", and 8x10", the RB Cycle Graphic Special was only offered in two formats, 5x7" and 6 1/2 x 8 1/2". The RB Cycle Graphic Special was more expensive than its more colorful sister camera. In 1906 the 5x7" RB Cycle Graphic with Zeiss Protar VIIa lens cost \$140.50 (\$168.50 with an attachable Auto Graflex Focal Plane Shutter), while the 5x7" RB Cycle Graphic Special with the same lens and shutter cost \$182.00. \$168.46 in 1906 was equivalent in purchasing power to about \$5,987.00 today, and \$182.00 was equivalent to about \$6,467.00 today; therefore, the difference in cost was equivalent to about \$480.00 in today's dollars. \*



Front standard with CZJ lens.

This price difference may have led to fewer sales for the RB Cycle Graphic Special, but whatever the reason, the RB Cycle Graphic Special was no longer listed in the catalog in 1907. The purchase of the Folmer & Schwing Mfg. Co. by Eastman Kodak, and the subsequent move from New York City to Rochester, N.Y., probably played a part in the decision to drop this innovative and capable camera.

The polished-mahogany with lacquered-brass hardware version, with a new revolving back, remained in production until 1922, and served as the basis for the Cirkut No. 6 and No. 8 panoramic cameras.

The 5x7" Reversible Back Cycle Graphic Special that I examined did not have the focal plane shutter, and it did not have the removable focusing screen, which suggests that the camera was available with customer-chosen options.

The camera is substantial and ruggedly built. It is 8 3/4 x 8 3/4 x 5 3/8 inches in size and weighs 7 1/2 pounds without the Focal Plane Shutter. With a tripod, and a dozen glass plate or cut film holders, it would have added a bit of healthy exercise for the average cyclists heading out into the countryside on a bright spring day.

\*\$100.00 in 1906 was equivalent in purchasing power to about \$3,506.72 today, or 35.53 times as high. \$182.00x35.53=\$6,466.46. 5.53x\$168.50=\$5,986.81. 6,466.46-5,986.81= \$479.65 difference.

Folmer & Schwing, 1898, *Photographic Apparatus, Magic Lanterns and Supplies*, Manufactured by The Folmer & Schwing Co. No. 271 Canal Street, New York.

Folmer & Schwing, 1899, *Photographic Apparatus, and Supplies*, Manufactured by The Folmer & Schwing Co. No. 271 Canal Street, New York.

Folmer & Schwing, 1901, *Photographic Apparatus, and Supplies*, Manufactured by The Folmer & Schwing Co. 404 Broadway, New York.

Folmer & Schwing, 1904, *Graflex and Graphic Cameras. Photographic Apparatus and Specialties*, Manufactured by The Folmer & Schwing Co. No. 407 Broome Street, New York.

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## PHOTOGRAPHY BY THE YARD: A CONTEMPORARY JOURNEY INTO CIRKUT PHOTOGRAPHY

By Drew Tanner

Today, in 2025, if you want to start making images with a vintage Graflex camera, it can be a rabbit hole, but the path is relatively straightforward. You find the model you're interested in, repair its bellows, shutter, or back if needed, order film, choose a development method, and you're on your way. Online forums, tutorials, and a few skilled repairers are available to provide help and guidance along the way.

There is one camera in the Folmer & Schwing family, however, that turns this relatively direct path into a warren of rabbit holes requiring deliberation, fabrication, and significant investments of time and energy: the Cirkut panoramic camera.

### Discovering the Cirkut

The Cirkut is a rotating panoramic camera. A wind-up clockwork motor in the film back simultaneously rotates the camera and pulls the film past the lens to make one continuous panoramic exposure. Introduced in 1904 and offered through the 1940s, the Cirkut family of cameras came in various sizes: the No. 5, No. 6, No. 8, No. 10, and rarely, the No. 16. The number refers to the maximum width of roll film the camera would accept. The most popular model was the No. 10, of which McBride estimated 1,500 were made. The No. 10 could take film up to 10 inches wide in rolls up to 20 feet long, though 6-foot rolls were most common.

Histories of the Cirkut have appeared in the *Graflex Journal* before—most recently by Ken Metcalf in 2023 and Bill McBride in 2009. McBride's detailed essays also ran in the newsletters of the International Association of Panoramic Photographers with the IAPP counting dozens of Cirkut photographers among its ranks. Those articles provide a relatively thorough historical record.

What I want to share here is not another history lesson, but my own experience—more than 120 years after the Cirkut camera's introduction—of learning to use one, and of finding myself drawn deeper and deeper into the peculiar challenges and rewards of "photography by the yard."

I got my start in photography as a writer and photojournalist at a small family-owned newspaper in Pocahontas County, West Virginia, between 2004 and 2013. There I met Doug Chadwick, a long-time panoramic photographer. Around 1979 Doug had been working with photographer Mark Crabtree on a project to preserve and show Cirkut photographs made by Rufus "Red" Ribble. Born May 14, 1878, near Blacksburg, Virginia, Ribble moved near Mount Hope, West Virginia, in the 1920s and began a career as coalfield photographer. Through the 1950s, Ribble used a No. 8 Cirkut Outfit to photograph West Virginia's miners and coal communities. Ribble's sweeping group portraits of miners became treasured keepsakes in families throughout the coalfields. Inspired by that tradition, both Doug and Mark built their photographic careers making their own Cirkut panoramas and swapping ideas, tips, and tricks over the decades. For nearly 40 years, Doug traveled the country with his Cirkut photographing legislatures, political conventions, car clubs, reunions, as well as landscapes around his home county.

In 2016 Doug approached me about taking on some of his traveling panoramic assignments. I shadowed him photographing the Ohio Senate, and he showed me his darkroom setup—a long sink, a home-built contact printer, and a roller transport processor, as well as an Epson scanner and printer as he gradually moved toward a digital workflow. But with young children and a demanding job as marketing director at a historic theatre, I soon realized I couldn't make the travel work to take on Doug's panoramic shoots.



When Doug passed away suddenly in January 2023, it felt like a door had closed for good. But that spring, Mark contacted me: would I be interested in Doug's workhorse No. 10 Cirkut? I was floored. Mark shared that Doug had purchased the camera in the early 1980s in New York. While the two of them had well over a dozen Cirkuts over the years, Mark noted that Doug's No. 10 was one of the best running and one of only a handful that could be relied upon for jobs. The camera's serial number of 117810 places its date of manufacture around 1921. To inherit such a camera felt like both an honor and a responsibility. On his porch in Morgantown, Mark walked me through the basics and sent me home with a box of spools, leaders, and expired aerial film.

Film—and what to do about it—was the first of many rabbit holes.

## Film for the Cirkut



Kodak produced Cirkut film for more than a century before ending production around 2011. In 2025 you have only a handful of options, and none are straightforward.

**Fresh film:** Ilford is the sole manufacturer still offering new film in Cirkut sizes through its annual Ultra-Large Format sale: 100-foot rolls of 10-inch FP4 and 8-inch HP5. But these rolls are getting prohibitively expensive. By 2025 the cost of a single roll has crested \$1,000. I was fortunate to buy into a 2024 order for HP5, but I tend to reserve it for low-light situations.

**Expired aerial film.** The most affordable and available option is aerial film, which was produced in a roll 9.5 inches wide and 250–500 feet long. Kodak produced Plus-X, Tri-X, Super-XX, Panatomic-X, and others. These emulsions differ significantly from their pictorial namesakes: aerial ASA ratings are calculated differently, contrast is higher, and sensitivity often extends into the near infrared—useful for photographing through haze from an airplane. A 30-year-old roll of Tri-X I was given is heavily fogged but still usable for tests when developed in Dektol. More promising are 20-year-old rolls of aerial Plus-X.

**Agfa Aviphot Pan 200.** The most promising aerial stock I've found is Agfa Aviphot Pan 200. The film has been rebadged under various names (Rollei Superpan, Catlabs 320, JCH Street Pan, etc.). Expired rolls of Aviphot from 2012–2014 occasionally surface on eBay, and I've managed to secure a few. Rated around ISO 50 in my process, it produces clean negatives well-suited to alternative process contact printing. With an 89B filter, it even delivers striking infrared effects.

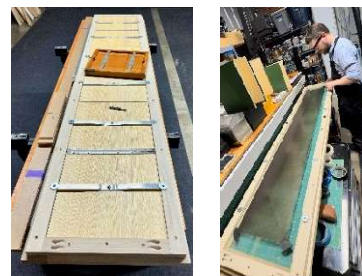
All of this film requires being loaded onto Cirkut spools and attaching the paper leader in complete darkness. A pair of infrared goggles is incredibly helpful on this front.

## Developing

Even before exposing my first negative, my journalist instincts had me interviewing veteran Cirkut photographers about their darkroom methods. Some stood in total darkness and tray-developed or sea-sawed film through dishpans holding a couple gallons of chemistry. A few modified 70mm reels to fit Jobo tanks.

The method that caught my attention and appealed to my work style, however, was to develop the film lengthwise in a piece of black ABS plumbing pipe. This method was practiced by just a couple of photographers

I spoke with, but it appealed to me for a few reasons. First, this method makes the most economical use of developer without the need to hunt down a working Jobo processor.



Dishpan and tray development takes 8 liters of developer or more. With tube development, I could get by with as little as 1-2 liters, depending on the developer used. Secondly, like the Jobo method, it allowed for processing with the lights on.

So, to the hardware store I went to get pipe and fittings: a couple of threaded caps and inserts, plus a 45-degree elbow to facilitate filling and emptying the tube in its horizontal position. Using some scrap 1x6 lumber and two pairs of small casters, I cobbled together a roller base to cradle the tube. I also constructed a seven-foot sink lined with PVC shower pan liner to accommodate it.

After years of making tintypes but little else, re-entering the darkroom at this scale felt like a rediscovery. Pulling a six-foot negative from my homemade processor is an experience that never gets old.



## Printing



Printing is perhaps the most satisfying part of the process. Silver gelatin contact prints are possible, but mural paper is costly. Instead, I've gravitated to alternative processes like Vandyke Brown and Kallitype whose tonal qualities and historical resonance somehow feel right for Cirkut images in 2025.

This required another round of fabrication: 12×72-inch acrylic trays, a matching contact frame, and a custom UV LED light box. A six-foot contact print invites the viewer into the image differently than any smaller format. You don't simply glance; you walk the length, scanning detail the way you'd take in a landscape in

person. At times, the level of detail evokes the three-dimensional effect of a stereoscope.

## Drying

Drying Cirkut film and prints presents its own challenges. Traditional drying cabinets are hard to find and generally aren't tall enough. At first, I hung negatives from the garage door track, which was effective, but provided no protection from dust. Eventually I built a cabinet 14 inches square and six feet tall, framed in 2x2s and skinned with aluminum flashing. A HEPA-filtered fan circulates clean air, allowing negatives to dry dust-free and prints to dry flat in about an hour.

## Storage



Archival storage is another puzzle. Conservators often struggle to flatten century-old Cirkut negatives stored rolled in their original boxes. Determined to avoid that fate, I ordered a roll of archival tissue paper and fashion sleeves for each negative. Both negatives and unframed prints now live in 14×60-inch barrier-board boxes from Gaylord Archival. Flat storage takes space, but it preserves the work and makes the subsequent work of printing and framing much more manageable.

## Lenses & Gears



The Cirkut is as much machine as camera. Each focal length requires a gear set to synchronize film movement with the rotating body at a given focus distance. My No. 10 came with a generous assortment, but many Cirkut beginners must track down missing sets, commission 3D prints, or have gears machined.

A Turner-Reich triple convertible was standard on the Cirkut, but later process lenses are most often used by Cirkut photographers: Goerz Red Dot Artars, Schneider Repro-Clarons, Ilex Process Paragons, Kodak Copying

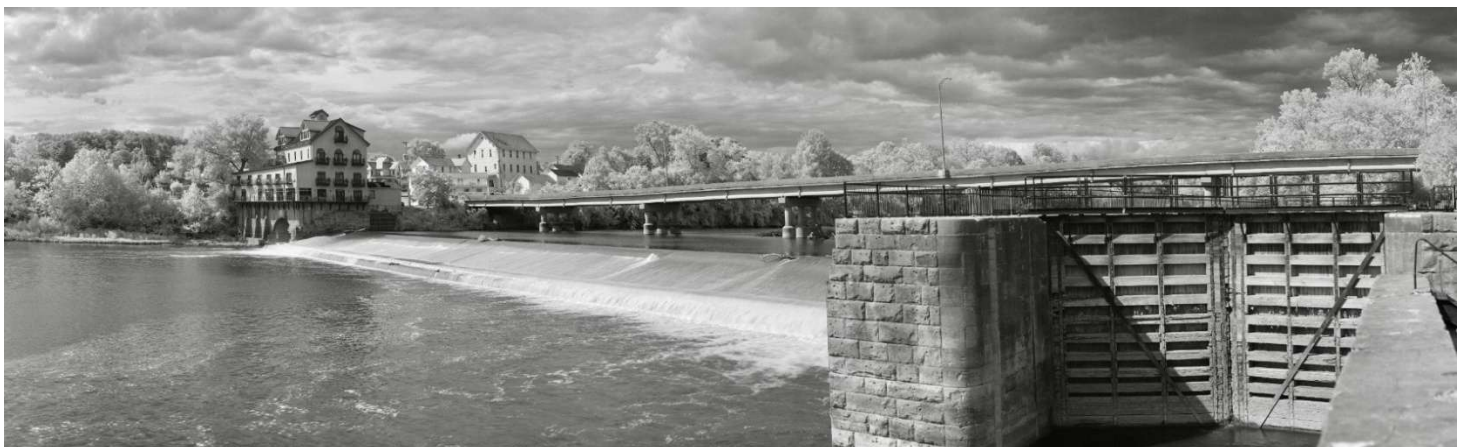
Ekstanons. These sharp lenses cover the format beautifully. My everyday choice is a 16.5-inch Repro-Claron; for reach I use a 24-inch Artar; for wide views, a 8.25-inch Dagor mounted in back of the lens board—the practical limit before the camera bed intrudes into the frame.

## Framing

Finally, what do you do with a six-foot print once you've made it? That's the next rabbit hole I'm about to explore. I've purchased frame stock from an out-of-business frame shop and a couple of vintage Stanley 400 miter vises. A 60-inch mat cutter is leaning in the corner of my garage. My winter-time project will be making frames and cutting mats for my first round of Cirkut photographs. In some ways, these images seem to defy conventional framing; they want to stretch across the wall, commanding the viewer to step back, then move close, then walk along with them. The physicality of the object matches the physicality of the process.

## Conclusion

Today, I'm enjoying being part of that legacy of panoramic photography and finding my own path with it. I've also discovered a small but very supportive circle of contemporary Cirkut photographers who are each working to preserve this format in their own unique ways. You can find several of us on the public Facebook group, "Cirkut and Panorama Cameras by Kodak." Photography with the Cirkut has reignited my love affair with film photography in a big way. Every strip of film that winds through the Cirkut camera connects me not only to Doug Chadwick and the lineage of Cirkut panoramic photographers, going back to Red Ribble or Eugene Goldbeck, but also to the engineers who perfected the Cirkut camera, and to the communities and landscapes that have found themselves stretched across yard-long photographs over the past century. It keeps reminding me why I fell in love with the medium of film photography in the first place. You can view my work online at [drewtanner.com](http://drewtanner.com).





## THE SPEED GRAPHIC IN NEW ZEALAND

By Jacob Brookie  
[oldfilmuser@gmail.com](mailto:oldfilmuser@gmail.com)

Graflex cameras have become icons of press photography thanks to a combination of their historical market domination with newspapers and photo agencies, as well as Hollywood's extensive use of them as period film props. Some Graflex advertising even showed the camera in front of a world map, inferring world-wide fame and reach. But many iconic North American cameras had lesser impacts in other parts of the world. For example, Polaroid did not have a truly global reach until the late 1950s and Kodak designs like the Signet are uncommon in European markets. This article introduces the use of the Speed Graphic in New Zealand and reveals its later release to the local market, and information about how these cameras were viewed. It is not a comprehensive study but hopefully provides the Graflex enthusiast with a new perspective on these famous cameras.

After the Second World War, New Zealand suffered from a lack of camera imports. Even the keenest of photographers struggled to buy new equipment, and upgrading your camera was often a case of purchasing whatever you could find. New Zealand was not alone in this difficulty, in England a combination of a war-damaged economy and import restrictions impacted the camera industry until the late 1950s. But England had domestic camera makers like *Micro Precision Products* who made a Graflex-inspired press camera and *Reid* who made a Leica clone. New Zealand, who made one model of camera in the 1890s and none since, lacked this industry.

Adding to these woes was the 50% sales tax added to new camera imports in the 1940s. This tax could be

**Modern Camera Can Take Pictures In Dark**

Claimed to be one most up-to-date cameras available, the Speed Graphic, recently imported from America by Mr. D. Totman of Whangarei, has all the modern refinements resulting from wartime advances in camera and lens construction.

The Graphic is a civil version of the wartime model, which was used universally by the American and Allied of Information Service cameramen. There are three separate lenses providing normal, wide-angle and telephoto focus, with separate shutters for each lens.

Night photography is provided for with a self-contained flash apparatus using batteries. The lens speed may be up to 1/1000 of a second for photographing high-speed subjects.

Enlarged photographs can be taken with the double extension so that a postage stamp can be enlarged up to the full 5in. x 4in. film or film pack.

An ingenious arrangement using a speed-lamp by one of the shutter leaves provides a flash 1/10,000 Of a second.

With this attachment it is possible to photograph people in complete darkness without their knowing that they have been photographed.

1948 *Northern Advocate*

claimed back if photographic equipment was of a type not frequently bought by amateurs, but this required paperwork and the photographer still had to pay the tax up front when buying their camera (Hugh Perry, Pages 18, 39). I have encountered 1920s press cameras with notes saying they were serviced into the 1940s, so older equipment must have stayed in use for some time.

New York's cigar-chomping Speed Graphic aficionado Weegee often told how a photographer wearing a decent suit while carrying a professional-looking 'press camera' was let through police lines without question, and New Zealand news photographer Alan Sayers wrote of a similar effect when he was a cadet photographer in 1939. Just as in New York, New Zealand press photographers were reluctant to switch to 35mm cameras, even when Sayers used a Leica to secretly photograph the inside of a cathedral, his colleagues stuck with 3x4 and 4x5 cameras. Sayers wasn't a big fan of the larger cameras, calling the Graphic "the cumbersome monstrosity used by press photographers in those days!" (Sayers\*). According to Sayers, after his cathedral scoop of 1940 (He disguised himself in the choir to snap a photo of a new Archbishop!), many papers ordered 35mm equipment within weeks (Sayers\*). But recollections from other photographers showed that the Graphic was used for some time afterwards, especially by older photographers who did not trust the smaller cameras. Sayers himself was using a Speed Graphic in 1947, so the switch to small cameras was not sudden (Sayers\*).

One of the reasons for this was that New Zealand's newspapers lacked the communication technology found overseas and had a historical reluctance (for the most part) to publish photographs (Hardwicke Knight, Page 147). We didn't use radiophoto or wirephoto until the late 1940s (Grant, Page 266), and photos were once driven a combined trip of 1,000 miles in some instances to get them to print (Beattie, Chapter 11). A big camera and a small one would get their photos to print at the same time. Papers also had to switch to courser halftone screens to publish 35mm photographs to avoid grain- so there could have been some reluctance there (*The New Zealand Herald Manual of Journalism*, Page 176).

But how many of these 'press cameras' were Graphics? A 1925 advertisement proclaimed the Graflex SLR to be 'the camera the press photographers use' (Greymouth Evening Star, 1925), and photos of press photographers at work support this. But Speed Graphics were much rarer. A 1948 newspaper article states that R. Totman, a Royal New Zealand Airforce Photographer, introduced the Speed Graphic to New Zealand. There were probably earlier Graphics in the country (They were listed second-hand in newspaper classifieds at the time, and some photographers remember using them before this date.), but the arrival of American journalists and armed forces photographers into New Zealand during the war would have raised the profile of the Speed Graphic immensely. I have encountered one Anniversary Speed Graphic with Royal New Zealand Airforce markings. But not all press cameras were Graphics, as New Zealand press

photographer Horace McLachlan used a British Van Neck camera in the 1940s (Sayers\*).

By the late 1940s, R. Totman began advertising a "Speed Graphic Camera Service" in New Zealand through his firm *Northland Photography*, suggesting that the Graphic was still quite new. In fact, it was advertised as the most "up to date" camera of its time and was introduced as a civilian version of the wartime model (*Northern Advocate*, 1948). Some of these ads even state that the camera works without mains power, meaning that a home portrait could be made even during a power cut (these were common at the time, especially in the rural communities of Northland). This was most likely a reference to the flashbulb and speedlamp, as most 1930s/1940s New Zealand studios were lit by electric mains lamps. The Speed Graphic was such a rarity in New Zealand that Totman's first civilian model was displayed with pride in a shop window when it wasn't out taking photographs! (*Northern Advocate*, 1948).

New Zealand photographer Peter Bush records that when he started as a press photographer in the early 1950s, most staff used the Rolleiflex. His paper, *The New Zealand Herald*, was just beginning to purchase Speed Graphics, and they were reserved for senior photographers, due to their cost (Peter Bush, *A Life in Focus*, Page 25). He wasn't wrong about the Graphics being hard to come by: A look in 1950s catalogues from large local photo retailers *Quillars* and *Civic Cameras* does not reveal a single Graflex! Instead, press photographers were given the option of a Linhof Standard Press or an MPP Technical Camera with a rangefinder (no mention of the Micropress at that time).

Bill Beattie, senior photographer for *The Weekly News*, recalls that when he started in press photography in the late 1920s, standard equipment consisted of a whole-plate Century camera and a quarter plate Graflex SLR (Beattie, Page 8). Beattie covered provincial life, and his cameras were often strapped to packhorses which forded rivers and negotiated mountain tracks (Beattie, Page 32). When smaller cameras were introduced, the heavier Graflex sometimes stayed home. But Beattie never abandoned the "press camera" and was later photographed with a Super Graphic while on assignment (Beattie, Back Cover). Havelock Williams, a well-known photographer also active in the 1920s, used a Graflex SLR when in the field (Havelock Williams, Page 93,142).

Histories of New Zealand photography suggest that the papers kept using large-format "press cameras" long after they were phased out internationally, perhaps because 35mm equipment was harder to source (Eggleton, David). Photography historian Hardwicke Knight wrote in 1971 that New Zealand press photographers "almost invariably used Speed Graphics until not long ago" (Hardwicke Knight, page 148). A book on Australian press photography notes that even into the late 1960s, some junior photographers were issued Speed Graphics and were trained to look for one good "shot" without relying on a 35mm cassette

(Anderson and Young, 2016). It is not known if New Zealand used this same training technique.

Amateurs in New Zealand seem to have made the switch to smaller formats by the middle of the 1960s. The New Zealand Photographic Society's *Camera in New Zealand* book of club photography was published in 1967, and most photographs had an accompanying note listing the camera used. There was a plethora of Pentaxes and Prakticas, as well as lots of Rolleis, but not a Graflex to be seen! (*Camera in New Zealand*, 1967) Some entries used cameras which were twenty years old at the time, so you would have expected to have seen at least one, especially as Century Graphic advertising was aimed at those wanting to promote themselves beyond the "snapshot class." The classified columns of New Zealand newspapers had the occasional listing for Century Graphics as late as the 1980s, so we know that at least some of them were used in New Zealand.

Regardless of the model, Graflex cameras are comparatively rare in New Zealand, with the "Speed Graphic" style models rarer than the earlier SLR types. The very occasional MPP Micropress is seen for sale- but I have never encountered a Busch Pressman or a Burke and James press camera. Intriguingly, a Linhof Standard Press has just come up for sale with a history of being bought locally in 1980, strange as this model was first for the American market.



Whenever I read an online post of an American collector finding a \$30 Crown Graphic at a yard sale, I can only go green with envy, for such discoveries hardly ever happen in New Zealand! I own four Graflex models, a Graflex Model B, a 4x5 Anniversary Speed Graphic, and 4x5 Pacemaker Crown Graphic and a Super Graphic, but I always have my eyes open for more of them.

I use Graphics at community events, often using a Lomograflok to take instant photos. The cameras attract plenty of attention, and even camera-shy people want to be photographed by the camera they saw in the movies. The Graphic pair are still "press cameras" in a sense, as I use them to take photographs of community volunteers for the local newspaper. Are these the last analogue press cameras still taking press photos in New Zealand? Perhaps they are.

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## 3¼x4¼ FOLDING GRAFLEX ENGINEERING MODELS 1933-1935

By Ken Metcalf



"The George Eastman Museum [GEM] holds the world's leading collection of photographic .....technology. Consisting of more than 22,000 objects from the earliest days of photography to today's integrated, handheld digital devices." (<https://www.eastman.org/technology>)

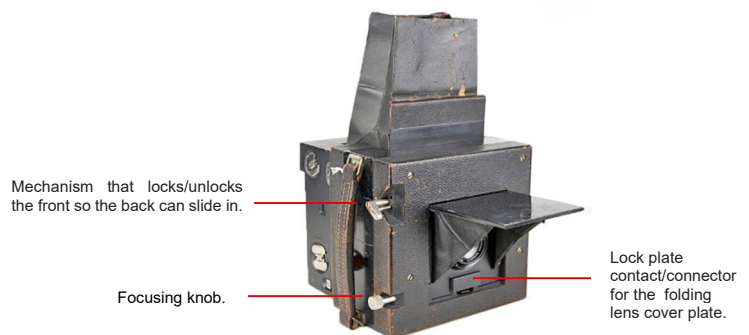
A large part of the original GEM collection came from the Kodak Patent Museum, which was started in 1923, and donated to the GEM from 1989 through 2011.

In 1974 Graflex formally discontinued "production of all major photographic cameras." Most of the Graflex cameras, including the various prototypes and engineering models, came from the company's collection, first as a loan in 1963, which was then turned into a gift in 1974. The 1974 date on many of the items was the year they were accessioned into the current format, so 1974 is the accession year, and not the year of the gift. They were most likely housed in the company headquarters in Pittsford, NY, at 3750 Monroe Ave.

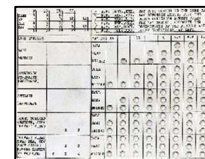
To me, these two GEM cameras are interesting points on the Graflex timeline. First, as noted in their *A History of Graflex* "The depression of the early thirties was taking form by late 1929. This continued for three or four years during which the production of the whole country sank to a low ebb. During this period, the financial position of the company was strengthened and the future given assurance through the development of new and improved products."

Although the future of Graflex was the Graphic-style camera, the company apparently initially believed there would be a need for an additional Graflex-style camera.\*

Here are some details about this camera.



One oddity is the use of a chart to judge exposures while Graflex was, at the time, selling an exposure meter.



Another oddity is a helical mounted lens on an SLR camera. GEM Curator Tod Gustavson believes it was just used as it was available.

As the only comparable format camera in their catalog was a fixed back Serial B (right), I believe it was a good decision not to put this camera into production.



\* In 1933 Graflex listed 13 SLR and two Graphic cameras. In 1936 the only change was the addition of one Graphic camera, a 3¼x4¼ Speed Graphic.

## 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 a not-for-profit publication. As such, we believe we qualify as a 501(c)(3) educational publication.*

Masthead picture by Drew Tanner, American-Melody cruise ship, Marietta, Ohio. Vandyke Brown print.

A comprehensive YouTube video of a 2x3 Series B Graflex.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJ\\_GupEFyFQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJ_GupEFyFQ)

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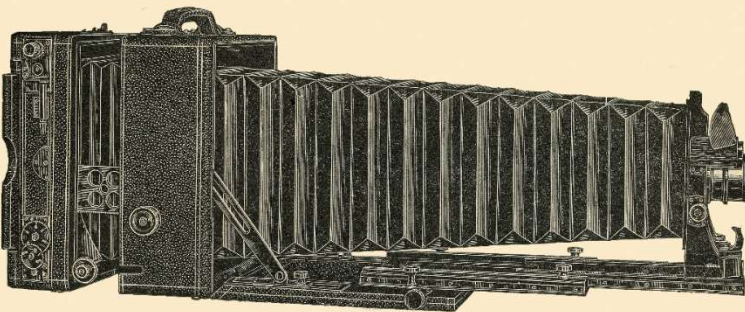
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## Reversible Back Cycle Graphic Special

*Folmer's Patent, June 21, 1904*



Folmer & Schwing Mfg. 1904

Picture taken in Sweden of Norwegian contemporary artist Vegar Moen with his 5x7" Home Portrait Graflex. Mr.Moen shoots with both a Press and Home Portrait Graflex, and the Home Portrait is fitted with various fast, high-end Aero Ektar, Dallmeyer, Hugo Meyer, Voigtlander Petzval lens, and he uses Fomapan 100 & 400 film.

The second 2020 issue of the Graflex Journal presented more information about him and his work.

