

Photo industry mourns Kodak

January 20 2012, by Clement Sabourin

Photographers, professionals and amateurs alike, are mourning the end of an era after Eastman Kodak, which produced the cameras and film many started hobbies and careers with, filed for bankruptcy.

While Kodak could still recover after court-supervised restructuring and selling off [assets](#), the company that did more to popularize photography in the 20th century than any other is unlikely to claw back the ground taken over by digital cameras and memory sticks.

From the simplicity of its Brownie cameras to the brilliant colors of its Kodachrome film, Kodak was a constant presence in the lives of three generations of amateur and professional photographers around the world.

That will be sorely missed, said Henry Posner, corporate communications director at B&H Photo, New York's Mecca for camera shoppers.

"Everybody in the photography industry is impacted," he said. "You can't be a professional photographer or an avid amateur and not feel the ripple of it."

"When I started photography ... Kodak was what you put in your camera. From an emotional point of view, this is a serious situation.... I hope Kodak comes out healthy and strong and keeps making available every product our customer can buy."

Kodak founder George Eastman began experimenting with film rolled

around a spool in the 1880s, and launched [Eastman Kodak](#) in 1892 in Rochester, New York.

To sell the film, the company developed a simple low-priced camera, the Kodak Brownie, that introduced millions to [photography](#).

"You push the button and we do the rest," Kodak's advertisements told consumers, and millions took up the challenge.

Eventually, the company's cameras, film, slide projectors and home videos came to preserve the memories of generations of Americans and others around the world.

In 1932, the year a depressed Eastman killed himself, the company began selling the first filmstock for amateur movie makers. It also developed home 8 millimeter movie projectors, all of which gave way to the Super 8 movie technology of the 1960s.

And "Kodak Moment" -- the company's advertising catchphrase for its film -- became embedded deep in the US vernacular.

At its height in the 1980s, the company had 145,000 workers, and was seen as the Apple or Google of its day, a leading innovator able to attract the most creative scientists to become.

NASA lunar orbiters in the 1960s brought back some of the earliest images of the moon's surface on Kodak film, and the first astronauts to walk on the moon documented their historic expedition with a shoe box-sized Kodak camera.

Kodak also furnished the film for countless Hollywood movies, including 80 Oscar-winning "Best Pictures," and it won nine Academy Awards of its own for scientific and technical excellence, according to

the company website.

But when digital cameras began to appear in the mid-1990s, the company -- which had already years earlier developed its own digital technology -- was unprepared and lost the market to more nimble Asian producers.

No one needed film anymore, and Kodak fell behind in the race to sell the cameras themselves.

It was an ominous sign last year when the [company](#) stopped producing its Kodachrome film, long the standard of qualify photographers.

For many, it was like losing a limb.

"Photographers developed a type of seeing depending on the kind of film they're using. So, if you're a color shooter and you've been working on Kodachrome for 30 years, you see on Kodachrome," said Karen Probasco, editorial account manager in New York for the renowned photo agency Magnum.

"So what happens when it goes away? It changes the way you process," she said.

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