

Folmer Patents

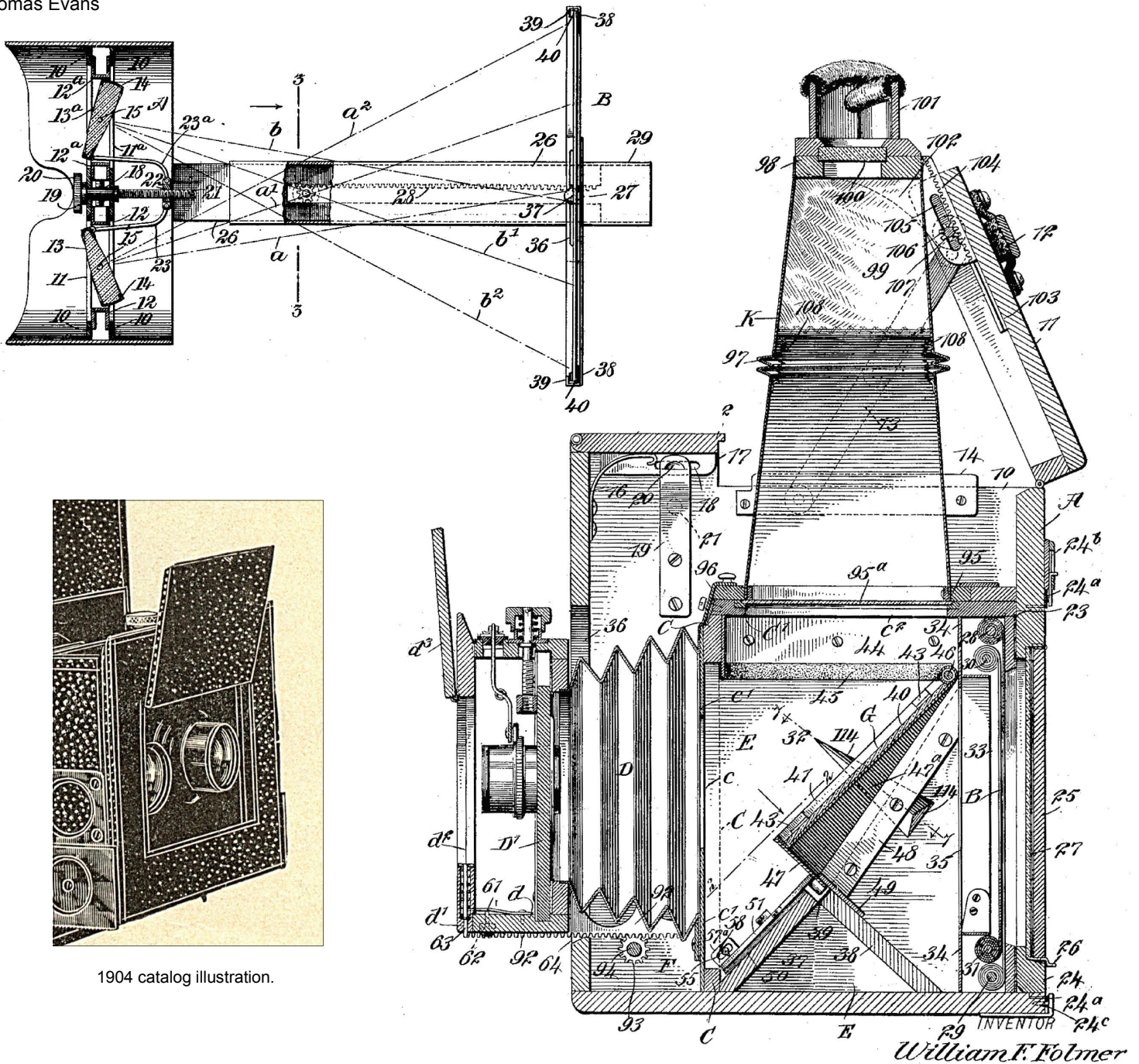
The patent (756,614) for the Stereo Graflex camera was applied for August 20, 1903, and was granted April 5, 1904. Just prior to this patent, Mr. Folmer patented a Stereoscope (patent 749,046, application May 2, 1903, granted January 5, 1904) which incorporated devices for adjusting the distance between the viewing lenses and also their angle relative to the eyes, in order to accommodate differences in the viewer's eyesight. It seems quite possible that it was while working on the Stereoscope patent that Mr. Folmer had the idea for a Stereo Graflex that would incorporate, in essence, a stereoscopic viewer within the focusing hood. This speculation may be supported by noting that the patent for the Stereo Graflex also included a device for increasing or decreasing the distance between the stereoscopic lenses at the top of the focusing hood and the ground glass, to accommodate differences in eyesight.

I suspect that the 1904 production run of the Stereo Graflex left out many things in the patent in order to facilitate getting the camera into production, and a few of these, such as the stereoscopic lenses and the coupled diaphragms, were added later.

In the detail of the camera patent, it looks like the knurled knob is a device for lens rise and fall, and that there is also a coupled aperture device coming out through the top of the lens standard box.

Incidentally, the style in which these patents are written may be conducive to defending them in court, but it makes them difficult to read. The summary at the end of the patent, the claims section, is especially repetitive and monotonous, leaving nothing open to conjecture. I find the claims section easier to comprehend if I imagine that I am reading something written in the strangely repetitive style of Gertrude Stein.

Thomas Evans



1904 catalog illustration.

25666

By Robert Goldman



Shown here is a pre-1915 Stereo Auto Graflex, serial number 25666, made by the Folmer & Schwing Division of Eastman Kodak. It is fitted with an early and rare interocular focusing assembly.

The assembly consists of multiple parts. There is a lensboard equipped with horizontal square channels at the top and bottom. The channels hold a pair of lens mounting panels, each holding one lens. Light seal at the top and bottom is accomplished by the fine fit of the lens panels in the channels. Light would have to make three 90-degree turns to enter the body of the camera. On the inside and outside vertical edges of the lensboards, there is either velvet or felt material attached to the back of the lensboards, to fill any possible gap on the sides. Interocular adjustment is accomplished by means of a center-mounted thumb wheel with a left-hand thread on one side and a right-hand thread on the other. A scale marked from 3-3.5 inches is attached at the lower front. When changing interocular distance, the lock screw on a male/female sliding bar is loosened. As one would expect, manufacturing quality is high, so there is no slop in the fit of any components. Two horizontal cutouts in the lensboard provide clearance for each lens to move. Vertical movement of the entire assembly is handled in the same fashion as a non-interocular adjustable lensboard, by means of a vertically mounted rack and pinion at the bottom center. As a side note, even 3" is pretty wide. By current standards, this camera would be considered better suited to the field than the studio.

