

## Robert Taft photography correspondence

### Section 34, Pages 991 - 1020

This correspondence documents the research Robert Taft undertook in writing his works on the history of American photography. It includes letters he wrote and responses. Correspondents include staff in historical and other collecting institutions, family members of early photographers and expedition members, publishers, and other people researching early U. S. photographers. It also documents some preservation work he did on early photographs. See Taft's photography research notes as Kansas Memory unit 228066.

Creator: Taft, Robert, 1894-1955

Date: 1926-1955

Callnumber: Robert Taft Coll. #172, Box 11-12, Photography-Correspondence

KSHS Identifier: DaRT ID: 221204

Item Identifier: 221204

[www.kansasmemory.org/item/221204](http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/221204)



## Robert Taft photography correspondence

LAURENCE M. MARKS & CO.  
49 WALL STREET  
NEW YORK

- 4 -

producers have been rewarded by a greater demand for their productions. It is believed that Eastman's motion picture business has about reached a saturation point, and in the future this division is expected to represent a source of recurring income.

A close second as a contributor to sales in the film division is the film sold to amateurs. It is believed that Eastman does about 85% of the domestic snapahot business. The only competition in this field is Agfa-Ansco, and the latter is a relatively small factor. Amateur roll film is sold to dealers all over the world at prices ranging from 18 to 20 cents per roll. There has been an increasing interest in amateur photography and many individuals are taking up the hobby of "taking pictures" so that the interest at the present time is greater than at any time in the company's history. Amateur photographic contests conducted by newspapers and camera clubs have also been instrumental in the increased sale of roll film and film packs. More leisure has also sustained sales and profits in the amateur film division.

Amateur motion picture film sales is the third most important in the film division. Sales fluctuate wider in this division than in the roll film division, but in recent years with the introduction of lower priced amateur motion picture cameras, this factor has been substantially overcome. The field, however, is still in its infancy and is now in a strategic position to experience growing sales since prices are more attractive. The amateur motion picture field is more highly competitive than the still picture field, although the position which Eastman occupies in this field is generally considered to be the most satisfactory. Motion pictures in color by using the "Kodachrome" film have taken the public fancy and are contributing substantially to the growth of the amateur motion picture film division.

The rapid development and extensive use of the X-ray within the last 15 years has brought this division to fourth ranking place in sales of the film division. Approximately 35,000,000 X-ray pictures are taken each year by dentists and doctors in the United States. This division continues to grow as X-ray equipment becomes more and more a part of essential equipment in the dental and medical profession. This division has the additional characteristic of showing little fluctuation with variation in general business activity.

Ranking fifth as a contributor to sales of the film division is the sales for professional, commercial and industrial use. This division is affected by industrial activity and sales are being relatively well maintained. With greater business activity, increased advertising by means of photographs is a substantial aid to profits in this division. The development of a picture-minded public is evidenced by the greater number of photographs appearing in the newspapers, magazines, display advertising and allied lines within recent years. The rapid development of tabloid picture papers and rotogravure sections of the large metropolitan newspapers and



## Robert Taft photography correspondence

LAURENCE M. MARKS & CO.  
49 WALL STREET  
NEW YORK

- 5 -

the recent establishment of "all photograph" magazines such as "Life," "Pic," "Look," etc. have aided the commercial and professional film division of the company.

The least important as a contributor to sales in the film division is the film used for photographing bank checks, newspapers, books, accounting records and other documents in the "Recordak." This division is relatively young and would appear to have substantial growth over the longer term.

In the photographic paper division, the sales for professional use are the largest, followed by sales for amateur use which includes the well known trade-marked brand "Velox." Another contributor to sales in this division is the paper used in photostat machines. Eastman probably does about 90% of the photographic paper business in this country and is the only raw photographic paper manufacturer in the United States.

Although there is little profit made in the camera division, it is the third largest contributor to sales. The most important contributor to sales is the amateur camera such as "Kodak" and "Brownie," followed by sales of cameras and projectors for amateur motion pictures and "Recordaks." Competition in amateur camera sales is received from foreign products. Among both professional and amateur groups there appears to be a preference for foreign lenses in the better type of camera, but it should be pointed out that Eastman also produces fine lenses but is handicapped by prejudice. However, the high cost of a foreign lens is an advantage to Eastman in some respects and many amateurs will not pay the higher price for the foreign product. The sale of cameras can be looked upon more as a service business which promotes the sale of film. Whether a Kodak or a foreign camera is purchased by an individual, it means film business, which will probably be Eastman film.

Eastman's cellulose acetate division, represented by Tennessee Eastman Corporation, although ranking fourth as a contributor to sales, is the fastest growing unit in the entire organization. This division was established 18 years ago, but it has only been since 1934 that it has contributed importantly to profits. The most important as far as sales are concerned is acetate rayon yarn and staple fiber, followed in order by plastic molding compounds ("Tenite"), and acetate sheets going into the manufacture of safety glass and as transparent wrapping material ("Kodapak"). The cellulose acetate manufactured by Tennessee Eastman is claimed to be the best acetate made in the world and it is interesting to note that the cost of production has been reduced to only half as much as it was a few years ago. Tennessee Eastman is now the second largest producer of cellulose acetate rayon yarn, being exceeded in size only by Celanese Corporation. Recently a campaign was undertaken to acquaint the public with Kodak's acetate yarn, although it had been known to the trade for many years. This campaign has met with marked success. "Teca," the new acetate rayon staple fiber, has found its way into many new developments in the textile field and has become



## Robert Taft photography correspondence

LAURENCE M. MARKS & CO.  
49 WALL STREET  
NEW YORK

- 6 -

an important product. The new crimped staple fiber is meeting favorable demand for the manufacture of both men's and women's outerwear. The markets for "Tenite" continue to expand due to increased use in novelty, automotive and specialized industrial fields. This division also furnishes material for the company's safety film. Although this division started out to insure Eastman Kodak of an ample supply of methanol (wood alcohol) for use in the manufacture of film, it has developed as well into a major rayon and plastic producer.

Eastman's management has always been firmly convinced that research is the foundation of its business. Research by George Eastman originated the company and for the first 15 years of intensive research the company received no profits from the money expended. During the next five years, research activities at least paid their own way, but since that time research has more than paid its way despite the fact that larger sums have been appropriated. The management's appraisal of the importance of research to operations of the company is apparent when it is realized that in the year 1931 the amount spent for research was \$750,000, or approximately one-half the amount spent for advertising. At that time it was planned to increase research appropriations to the amount spent for advertising, namely \$1,500,000, and there is reason to believe that present expenditures are above this figure in view of the expansion in the research building, now about twice its 1931 size.

Although many of the research problems investigated are purely of academic interest, they form the basis of practical commercial applications. The extensive list of over 3,000 synthetic organic chemicals has resulted in the development of a wide variety of sensitive and color films. In addition to the use of these chemicals in their films, the research laboratories of the country have a source of supply of rare and unusual chemicals of great purity which can be obtained only from Eastman Kodak. The research department has not only developed new products, but has improved and found new uses for many existing products. In both the professional and amateur field, new types of film have been developed combining higher speed and finer grain. Color motion picture refinement is of considerable importance to the company. New types of Kodaks, such as miniature cameras and photo electrically controlled cameras, have also been introduced for amateur consumption. The research staff in the United States alone numbers over 450 persons.

Employee relationship has always been on a high plane and the company since 1912 has had a "Wage Dividend Plan" whereby eligible employees are paid annual bonuses in amounts depending upon the total of common stock dividends declared in the preceding year. Other beneficiary plans of more recent years have been retirement annuities, life insurance and disability plans, and home building projects.

The earnings record of Eastman Kodak has been outstanding. Profits have grown from \$2,865,000 in 1903 to \$22,347,000 in 1937,



## Robert Taft photography correspondence

LAURENCE M. MARKS & CO.  
49 WALL STREET  
NEW YORK

- 7 -

the peak year for earnings. In 1938 profits dropped to \$17,339,000. From 1902 through 1938 the company earned an aggregate of \$506,762,000, or the equivalent of \$13,696,000 per year, which, on shares outstanding at the end of 1938, amounted to \$6.08 per share per year and on shares to be outstanding after rights to stockholders, \$5.53 per share.

A comparison of net sales, operating income and net income with ratios since 1932 is given in the following:

(Thousand Dollars)

	<u>Net Sales</u>	<u>Operating Income</u>	<u>Ratio Oper. Income to Sales</u>	<u>Net Income</u>	<u>Ratio Net Income to Sales</u>
1938	\$132,766	\$28,178	21.2	\$17,339	13.1
1937	136,115	34,247	25.2	22,347	16.4
1936	119,800	28,909	24.1	18,906	15.8
1935	105,083	24,859	23.7	15,913	15.1
1934	96,829	22,669	23.4	14,503	15.0
1933	85,258	18,577	21.8	11,119	13.0
1932	72,430	12,179	16.8	6,059	8.4

Even with rising cost of manufacture and substantially higher taxes, Eastman Kodak has been able to maintain its profit margins relatively well.

Eastman Kodak has been liberal with dividends and from its incorporation to the end of 1938 it has paid \$373,992,277 in common dividends out of \$493,297,465 available therefor, or 75.8%.

The past history of the price of the stock, compared with earnings and dividends, is given in the following table:

	<u>Earned Per Common Share</u>	<u>Dividends Per Com. Share</u>	<u>Price Range</u>		<u>Price Times Earnings</u>	
			<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>
1938	\$7.54	\$6.50	187	121	24.8	16.0
1937	9.76	7.50	198	144	20.3	14.8
1936	8.23	6.75	185	156	22.5	18.9
1935	6.91	5.75	172	110	24.9	16.0
1934	6.28	3.50	116	79	18.6	12.6
1933	4.78	3.00	90	46	18.8	9.6
1932	2.53	5.25	88	35	34.7	13.9
1931	5.78	8.00	186	77	32.1	13.3
1930	8.84	8.00	255	142	28.9	16.1
1929	9.57	8.00	265	150	27.7	15.7
Average					25.3	14.8



## Robert Taft photography correspondence

LAURENCE M. MARKS & CO.  
49 WALL STREET  
NEW YORK

- 8 -

Based on the shares outstanding after offering rights to stockholders, earnings in 1938 would have been equivalent to \$6.85 per share. It is estimated that earnings for the year 1939, based on the larger number of shares to be outstanding, will be around \$8.00 per share. It is expected that dividends in 1939 will be at least \$6.00, with the possibility of a larger distribution.

Price Range 1939 to April 13	186 - 139
Current Price	142
Current Price Earnings Ratio	
based on estimated 1939	
Earnings of \$8.00 per share	18.0

Profits of Eastman Kodak Company generally are dependent upon the purchasing power of the public. Profits therefore parallel business activity. Majority of the sales of Eastman Kodak are in the United States and Canada, these having ranged between 58% in 1934 to 69% in 1938. In 1938 profits per common share declined almost 23%, whereas aggregate industrial earnings declined about 45%. Comparing Eastman Kodak's earnings decline with the industrial groups, the only major groups having a better showing were automobile tires and rubber goods, beverages, aircraft, foods, drugs, retail trade and tobacco. Much of the better showing can be attributed to the sales volume in the general photographic business, which has taken on factors of growth due to the interest in amateur photography. The principal factors responsible for the lower earnings are attributable to higher manufacturing costs and expenses of operation and the greater expenditures incurred in research and development work. So far in 1939 sales have shown an increase over the corresponding period in 1938. The latter half of any year is seasonally better for profits than the first half year due to the greater demand for products in the amateur field from vacationists and tourists, and also that four more weeks are included in the company's last half year, the company operating on a 13 period fiscal year.

The fact should not be lost sight of that Eastman's business is not completely dependent on the buying power of the public since many products are necessities. Fundamentally, Eastman Kodak is in the photographic industry and will probably always be in that field as one of primary interest, but the advantages which have been taken by the management to make the most of allied and associated products have given a wider diversification to the business. Being an intense believer in research, Eastman continues its program of development which eventually will mean higher profits. Not only can an investment in the common stock be considered an investment in the photographic industry, but also as an investment in the rayon industry, the plastics industry and the chemical industry, all of which do not appear to have reached their full growth.

The information herein contained has been obtained from manuals, statements and reports of the company. We have no personal knowledge of the same and assume no responsibility for its accuracy.

LAURENCE M. MARKS & CO.



## Robert Taft photography correspondence



DIVISION OF REFERENCE

The National Archives  
Washington, D. C.

May 11, 1939.

Mr. Robert Taft  
Department of Chemistry  
The University of Kansas  
Lawrence, Kansas

My dear Mr. Taft:

This is in reply to your letter of April 11, 1939, addressed to Dr. R. D. W. Connor, in which you ask for information concerning photographic material in The National Archives, and also whether the complete original manuscript reports of geographic surveys of the West are now housed in The National Archives.

It is regretted that we have very little information about our photographic collection to add to that which is already published in the Fourth Annual Report of the Archivist of the United States. This collection is not well organized at the present time and is relatively insignificant in amount, and we are making no effort to obtain additional materials of this nature until suitable storage facilities shall have been completed. However, we have a few photographs of the construction of the Washington Monument and of various public buildings in Washington before 1839 which may be of interest to you.

We can supply copies of photographic prints at an approximate cost of one dollar per negative and of archival negatives at a cost of about twenty-five cents for each 8 x 10 inch print.

You may be interested to know that the Brady collection, which is the most valuable photographic collection of the War Department from an historical point of view, is in the custody of the Office of the Chief Signal Officer, Department of War, Washington, D. C. If you desire reproductions of any of these photographs, it is suggested that you communicate with that office.

As regards manuscript reports of the geographic surveys of the West, many reports of surveys made under the direction of the Secretary of War have been transferred to The National Archives from the Department of War. Our collection is not complete, however, and there is no catalog of it available. We also have a manuscript report entitled "Progress Report upon Geographical and Geological Explorations and Surveys West of the 100th Meridian...by 1st Lieutenant George M. Wheeler, Corps of Engineers, in Charge", which was published in 1874, and manuscript monthly reports of surveying parties of the regular United States Geological Survey for the years

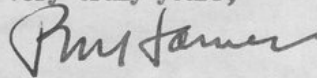
## Robert Taft photography correspondence

-2-

1882-1890. Among the records of the Department of the Interior which have been transferred to The National Archives, there is much correspondence relating to the Hayden and Powell surveys and some relating to the King survey, but most of the extant original records of these surveys are still in the custody of the Geological Survey of the Department of the Interior. The records of the Pacific Railroad surveys, 1853-1854, were transferred to the Department of the Interior in 1865 and have not yet been deposited in The National Archives.

If we can be of assistance to you in the future, please do not hesitate to call upon us.

Very truly yours,



P. M. Hamer, Chief  
Division of Reference.



## Robert Taft photography correspondence

### The Minneapolis Journal

THE NORTHWEST'S GREATEST NEWSPAPER

MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

May 22, 1939

Professor Robert Taft  
Department of Chemistry  
University of Kansas  
Lawrence, Kansas

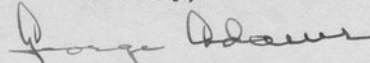
Dear Mr. Taft:

This is in reply to your letter of May 15 and your question as to whether half-tones were used regularly in all issues of The Minneapolis Journal from July 4, 1896 and especially through the remainder of 1896:

A check of the file of The Journal for 1896 shows that half-tone cuts appeared regularly, generally on Saturdays. They appear in the issues of: July 11, 13, 18 and 24; August 1, 8, 15 and 27; September 2, 5, 12, 19, 24 and 26; October 1, 3, 10, 16, 17 and 24; November 7, 14, 21 and 28; December 3, 4, 5, 12, 18, 19, 28, 29 and 31.

This seems to indicate that as usual New York is credited with something for which the credit belongs in the middle west.

Sincerely,

  
George H. Adams

GHA:GK

## Robert Taft photography correspondence

May 17, 1939

Mr. George H. Adams  
The Minneapolis Journal  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Dear Mr. Adams:

Thank you for your letter of May 15th and for the photographs of the Journal for July 4, 1896. As I have pointed out in my book, there were attempts to use half-tones in newspaper work as early as 1880, but their use did not become common practice with New York and Chicago papers at least until 1897. The Journal's use of half-tones as early as July 4, 1896, of course, clearly antedates the efforts of New York and Chicago papers and I am therefore glad to have the information sent in your letter. Do you know if half-tones were used regularly in all issues of the Journal from July 4th on, especially through the remainder of 1896?

Many thanks for your interest and for the additional information.

Sincerely yours,

RT/cdo

Robert Taft.



## Robert Taft photography correspondence

### *The Minneapolis Journal*

THE NORTHWEST'S GREATEST NEWSPAPER

MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

May 15, 1939

Mr. Robert Taft,  
Professor of Chemistry  
University of Kansas  
Lawrence, Kansas

Dear Mr. Taft:

An article in the December issue of *The AMERICAN PHOTO-ENGRAVER* has just been called to my attention. In it you are quoted as stating:

"The year 1897 really marks the advent of half-tone illustration as a regular feature of American newspaper journalism. On January 21, 1897, the New York Tribune published on its front page a half-tone illustration of Thomas C. Platt, newly elected senator from New York. Within the next month some two dozen half-tone illustrations were used by the Tribune." .....

I wish to call your attention to the fact that half-tone cuts were used in *The Minneapolis Journal* beginning with its issue of July 4, 1896. I am sending you, under separate cover, photographs of two pages of that issue, each containing one half-tone illustration.

William Krussow, now foreman of *The Journal's* engraving room, at that time an apprentice, provides the following explanation of the ingenious method by which the printing was done:

Before 1896, half-tone cuts had been used in magazines but not in newspapers. Half-tones were made only on a 100-line screen, which, even at present, is too fine a screen for general use in newspaper printing. Under stereotype practices of that period, the impression of the original form was made by beating the wet matrix into the form with a heavy stiff-bristled brush, and the matrix was then dried while still on the form under a steam table. Compared with present day face-treated dry mat and power moulding machine methods, this procedure was very crude as far as transferring detail from the composing room form to

## Robert Taft photography correspondence

- 2 -

Mr. Robert Taft

May 15, 1939

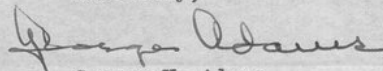
the press plate was concerned, and consequently it was impossible to pick up and transfer the image in a 100-line screen half-tone cut.

W. H. Webster, then mechanical superintendent of The Journal, solved the problem by printing directly from cuts. A bending machine was set to curve cuts to fit the contour of the press plates. When a cut was needed, a piece of blank zinc the identical size of the half-tone cut was moulded into the page matrix. When the page matrix was put into the casting box, this piece of zinc was taken out of the mat and the half-tone substituted and secured in its proper place by an ingenious arrangement of springs, which not only held the half-tone cut in proper position during the casting process, but also insured its being welded securely on the outside of the press plate in printing position, the cut becoming a part of the cast. It was necessary to make several duplicate cuts because each replate called for a new cut. The process was used until about 1903.

I thought this might be of interest to you, since you have carried on so much research in this field.

It may also interest you to know that The Minneapolis Journal, February 27, 1936, published what we believe was the first spot news picture in color. We followed that with a number of other color reproductions, half-tone color reproductions, of actual news pictures taken in most cases not more than six or eight hours before press time.

Sincerely,

  
George H. Adams

GHA:GK



## Robert Taft photography correspondence

William M. Sweeny  
126 Franklin Street  
Astoria, Long Island, N. Y.

May 26, 1939.

Prof. Robert Taft,  
University of Kansas,  
Lawrence, Kansas.

My dear Professor Taft:--

Recently I have been reading your most interesting book: "Photography and the American Scene."

Re the daguerreotype of Andrew Jackson, published in the Democratic Review, September, 1845, I have a copy of the engraving. I note that you say on p. 67: "Brady may have been the operator sent to make the daguerreotype." It may interest you to learn that the late James Edward Kelly, the sculptor, told me that Brady told him that he (Brady) did take the daguerreotype, at the Hermitage, in 1845. Brady was at that time in the employ of Anthony, Edwards & Co.

As you state, Brady was employed by Anthony, Edwards & Co. I have a photograph of my father taken in 1861, published by Anthony, Edwards & Co., which states on the back of the photo. "From a negative by Brady."

You speak of the picture being reversed in the daguerreotype. I discovered this from a daguerreotype of ~~my~~ father taken in 1848, in my possession. I probably would not have found this out but for the fact that my father who lost his right arm in the Mexican War, appeared from the daguerreotype to have lost his left arm. Of course, when I had the



## Robert Taft photography correspondence

daguerreotype copied I had to caution the photographer to reverse the picture.

I have a very early photograph<sup>x</sup> (about 1854 or 1855) a view of the Hancock House, Boston, Mass., which was published in a book called: "Homes of American Statesmen." I presume you know of the book.

I also have a very fine daguerreotype of Genl. Zachary Taylor, taken probably in 1847 or '48, as it shows him in the uniform of a Major-General.

Very truly yours,

*William M. Greeny*

<sup>x</sup>It is labeled: "An original sun picture."



## Robert Taft photography correspondence

2413 "M" STREET,  
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA,  
JUNE 27TH, 1939.

PROFESSOR ROBERT TAFT,  
DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY,  
UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS.

DEAR MR. TAFT:

I HAVE COME ACROSS A LITTLE BOOK ENTITLED  
"TREATISE OF HELIOCHROMY", BY REV. L L HILL AND  
PUBLISHED IN 1856. A RATHER CAREFUL READING OF THIS  
BOOK RAISES UNUSUAL QUESTIONS; WOULD YOU FAVOR ME WITH  
AN ANSWER TO SOME OF THESE QUESTIONS.

IN 1850 THE STARTLING DISCOVERY OF HELIOCHROMY  
WAS PUBLISHED BY NEWSPAPERS. IN 1850 L.L. HILL REFUSED  
TO DISCLOSE TO OTHERS EXACTLY HOW HE MADE THE PICTURES.  
HE BECAME BRANDED AS A FAKIR. I UNDERSTAND THAT HE IS  
STILL CONSIDERED SUCH TODAY.

IN 1856 THE ABOVE MENTIONED BOOK WAS PUBLISHED  
IN WHAT APPEARS TO BE EITHER AN ATTEMPT AT VINDICATION  
OR THE FURTHER PERPETRATION OF A HOAX.

THE BOOK APPEARS TO ME ON ITS FACE TO HAVE BEEN  
WRITTEN BY A VERY SINCERE AND CAPABLE MAN. IN CHAP 16,  
ENTITLED "DESCRIPTION OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS" IS A DESCRIPTION  
OF THREE NATURAL COLOR PHOTOGRAPHS OF HIS OWN HOUSE, HIS  
OWN VILLAGE, AND HIS OWN PORTRAIT. UNFORTUNATELY I DO  
NOT FIND THE PICTURES IN THE BOOK.

THE BOOK ALSO CONTAINS "CERTIFICATES". THERE  
IS A STATEMENT MADE BY THE "COMMITTEE ON PATENTS AND THE  
PATENT OFFICE" AND APPARENTLY PRINTED IN THE RECORDS OF  
THE UNITED STATES SENATE. AMONG OTHER "CERTIFICATES" IS  
A LETTER BY S.F.B. MORSE, THE INVENTOR OF THE MAGNETIC  
TELEGRAPH. THE BULK OF THESE CERTIFICATES WERE DATED  
ABOUT FOUR YEARS, ON THE AVERAGE, PRIOR TO THE DATE OF  
PUBLICATION OF THIS BOOK.

THE BOOK ALSO CONTAINS MINUTELY DETAILED DESCRIPT-  
IONS OF THE EXPEREMENTS HE WRITES THAT HE CARRIED OUT, AS  
WELL AS A COMPLETE DESCRIPTION OF THE MATERIALS AND PROCESSES  
THAT HE CLAIMS RESULTED IN SUCCESSFUL NATURAL COLOR PHOTO-  
GRAPHS.

I QUERRY WHETHER HIS FORMULA HAS BEEN SUBJECTED  
TO AN IMPARTIAL EXTREMELY CRITICAL MODERN LABRATORY  
ANALYSIS UNDER CONDITIONS OF PRECISE TEMPERATURE, CHEMICAL  
AND "CLEANLINESS" CONTROL.

\* | \*



## Robert Taft photography correspondence

I UNDERSTAND THAT PRECISE CONTROL AND UNUSUAL PURITY OF MATERIALS ARE TODAY NECESSARY FOR THE SATISFACTORY MAKING, TAKING, AND DEVELOPEMENT OF COLORED PHOTOGRAPHS. THE REVEREND HAS WRITTEN, "

"1. IN THE CHOICE OF CHEMICALS I AM SCRUPULOUSLY NICE. I SET IT DOWN AS A RULE NOT TO USE A SINGLE CHEMICAL UNLESS I AM SURE OF ITS GOOD QUALITY.

2. I AM VERY PARTICULAR AS TO THE CLEARNESS OF BOTTLES, DISHES, &C., USED IN MAKING AND MIXING CHEMICALS. A LITTLE NEGLECT HERE WILL DEFEAT EVERY OTHER PRECAUTION. THIS IS A HINT OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE. IT CANNOT BE NEGLECTED WITH IMPUNITY.

3. I AM EQUALLY PARTICULAR IN CLEANING THE PLATES. THE POLISH IS NOT OF SO MUCH CONSEQUENCE; BUT AN ABSOLUTELY CLEAN SURFACE IS INDISPENSABLE. WHAT I MEAN BY A CLEAN PLATE, IS ONE FREE FROM SUCH IMPURITIES AS WILL INJURE THE CHEMICAL EFFECT. ----

4. THE CHEMICALS I MAKE IN QUANTITY - EXACTLY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FORMULA, AS I HAVE GIVEN FOR THEM.

5. I AVOID HAPHAZARD EXPERIMENTS. I MAKE UP MY MIND AT NIGHT WHAT EXPERIMENT TO TRY NEXT DAY, AND I STICK TO IT TILL I HAVE FOUND THE BOTTOM OF THE IDEA, OR TILL I AM OBLIGED TO ABANDON IT. NO PROGRESS CAN BE MADE IN ANY OTHER WAY.

6. I ADOPT, AS A THING OF NO SMALL IMPORTANCE, THE PRINCIPLE - "CREEP BEFORE YOU WALK." HENCE I BEGIN TO WORK IN THE DIRECT WAY - VIZ. - BY SUPERPOSING A COLORED PRINT, AND EXPOSING UNTIL I GET A PICTURE WITHOUT A DEVELOPER. IN THIS WAY I LEARN WHETHER MY CHEMICAL COATING WILL GIVE COLORS. THIS ASCERTAINED, I CAN PASS TO THE DEVELOPER, THE QUICKENING PROCESS, &C.

7. PERSEVERANCE, I HAVE FOUND, IS A CARDINAL VIRTUE IN AN EXPERIMENTER. THE MOMENT WE GET DISCOURAGED, ALL PROGRESS IS AT AN END. I HAVE PRESEVERED FOR ABOUT NINE YEARS IN THE FACE OF DIFFICULTIES SUFFICIENT TO APPAL STOUTER MINDS THAN MINE, AND ALL MY SUCCESS HAS DEPENDED UPON MY FIXED PURPOSE NOT TO BE FOILED.

THE FOREGOING STATEMENT OF MY FORMULA, ITS EXPLANATION, AND MY METHOD OF WORKING THE FORMULA, I HAVE GIVEN IN SUCH A WAY AS TO AVOID CONFUSION, AND AT THE SAME TIME TO IMPART ALL NECESSARY INSTRUCTION. I HAVE THE FULLEST CONFIDENCE IN THE SUCCESS OF ALL WHO BRING TO THE PROCESS THE AID OF SKILL, INDUSTRY, AND PERSEVERANCE."

IT SEEMS TO ME MOST ILLOGICAL THAT A FAKIR WOULD GO INTO GREAT DETAIL AS TO HIS PROCESSES FOR PRODUCING COLORED PHOTOGRAPHS AND PUBLISH LETTERS FROM MANY PERSONS WHO UNDOUBTEDLY WERE THEN LIVING AS TO THE TRUTH OF HIS DISCOVERY, AND ALSO THAT A PUBLISHER WOULD PRINT A BOOK PURPORTING TO CONTAIN THREE COLORED PHOTOGRAPHS, WHEN ~~PHOTOS~~ COLORED PHOTOGRAPHS COULD NOT BE PRODUCED.

HAVE YOU PERSONALLY MADE A CRITICAL PRECISELY CONTROLLED LABRATORY TEST OF REV. HILL'S PROCESSES. DO YOU KNOW OF ANYONE IN RECENT TIMES WHO HAS DONE SO. DO YOU KNOW OF ANYONE WHO MADE A LABRATORY ANALYSIS OF THE COMPOSITION OF MATERIALS FOUND ON THE PICTURES PRODUCED BY REV. HILL. HAS SUCH A PERSON STATED THAT REV. HILL'S PICTURES WERE HAND COLORING AND THE PROCESS A HOAX.

THE BOOK APPEARS TO ME TO BE SUCH A SINCERE ATTEMPT AT SELF-VINDICATION FOR CAUSE, THAT I AM EXTREMELY CURIOUS TO

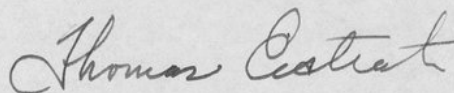


## Robert Taft photography correspondence

KNOW FOR CERTAIN WHETHER REV HILL WAS AN EXTREMELY BRILLIANT FAKIR THAT RISKED THE VINDICATION OF HIS REPUTATION BY WRITING THIS BOOK AND DESCRIBING A PROCESS THAT HE COULD SAY WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL IF PROPERLY CARRIED OUT BY THE USE OF PURE CHEMICALS, CLEANLINESS AND EXPLICIT FOLLOWING OF INSTRUCTIONS, AND YET SUCH A PROCESS THAT WAS A FRAUD THAT NO ONE COULD SUCCESSFULLY CARRY OUT.

THERE MAY BE A CHANCE THAT SOME AUTHORITY IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE PUBLICATION OF THIS BOOK UNDERTOOK TO FOLLOW REV HILL'S PROCESS AND FAILED BECAUSE OF NEGLECT TO PRECISELY FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS - AND THEN DREW AN ERRONEOUS CONCLUSION THAT WAS ACCEPTED BY OTHERS SO THAT REV. HILL SUNK INTO OBLIVION AS A FAKIR.

COULD YOU SATISFY MY CURIOSITY,  
VERY TRULY YOURS,



THOMAS EISTRAT

YOU ARE WELCOME TO A FULL DESCRIPTION OF ALL HIS PROCESSES,  
SHOULD YOU DESIRE THEM.

## Robert Taft photography correspondence

July 6, 1939

Mr. Thomas Eistrat  
2413 M Street  
Sacramento, California

Dear Mr. Eistrat:

I was much interested in your letter of June 27th concerning the work of L. L. Hill. I have never seen the book to which you referred, although I have made a considerable search for it. I am familiar, however, with some of its contents, especially the letter of Morse's and the records of the committee on patents. I doubt if Morse was a competent authority to pass on the merits of Hill's process.

Morse had had no contact with practical photography for about ten years when the letter was written and judging from his letter, his recommendation dealt chiefly with his opinion of Hill as a man. The only contemporary of Hill that I can recall off hand, who was a practical photographer, and who examined Hill's work directly, was the noted Philadelphia photographer, M. A. Root. Root, writing in 1864, says: "The daguerreotype which fell into my hands, after the publication of Mr. Hill's book, was examined by me under a strong magnifier, and proved to be only an ordinary colored daguerreotype - the dry colored powder being undeniably and distinctly visible on the face and hair." I believe, too, that a committee of the National Photographers Association was appointed in the early 50's to examine Hill's claim and brought in a report somewhat similar to Root's. The published records on the Hillotype I have described in my recent book, Photography and the American Scene, which you can look up in more detail if you are interested in this phase of the matter.



## Robert Taft photography correspondence

As far as I know, there has never been any modern laboratory test of Hill's process. Judging from Hill's competent contemporaries, such a test would be useless, but to settle the matter without a shadow of a doubt, the process, as you suggest, should be subjected to a fair and impartial trial.

I wonder if you would be willing to lend me your copy of Hill's book so that our photographic bureau could make me a photostatic copy for my records? It is possible, if you are not contemplating making a laboratory trial of Hill's process, that we would undertake the project ourselves.

Many thanks again for your kindness in writing.

Sincerely yours,

RT/odo

Robert Taft.

## Robert Taft photography correspondence

2413 M STREET  
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA  
JULY 12, 1939

PROFESSOR ROBERT TAFT  
UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS  
LAWRENCE, KANSAS

DEAR DR. TAFT:

I AM HAPPY TO SEND YOU FOR YOUR PERUSAL AND  
PHOTOSTATING, SHOULD YOU DESIRE IT, MY COPY OF  
L.L. HILL'S BOOK, "TREATISE ON HELIOCHROMY". I AM  
SENDING IT TO YOU TODAY VIA RAILWAY EXPRESS.

MAY I ASK THAT YOU READ THE ENTIRE BOOK,  
PARTICULARLY THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR, BEFORE  
YOU CRITICALLY ANALYZE HIS FORMULAE FOR COLORED  
PICTURES. MY FIRST REACTION TO THE BOOK WAS THAT  
IT WAS WRITTEN BY AN EGOTISTICAL MAN WHO MADE SEVERAL  
MISSTATEMENTS OF SUCH A NATURE AS TO DISCREDIT ITS  
AUTHOR. UPON READING THE ENTIRE BOOK AND TAKING INTO  
CONSIDERATION THE TYPE OF BOOK THAT SUCH A MAN MIGHT  
HAVE WRITTEN IN THE MIDST OF SUCH CRITICISM AS HE  
WAS SUBJECTED TO, I FIND MYSELF LEFT WITH BUT TWO  
ANSWERS. HE WAS EITHER DEMENTED AND PERPETRATED AN  
UNUSUAL FRAUD, OR, HE WAS A GREAT MAN UPON WHOM HISTORY  
HAS INFLICTED TO DATE A GREAT INJUSTICE.

PERSONALLY I AM VERY MUCH IMPRESSED BY THE APPARENT  
SINCERITY OF THE BOOK, THE AUTHORS PERSEVERENCE, AND  
THE AUTHORS APPROACH TO THE SUBJECT IN A RATHER METHODICAL  
MANNER. I DO NOT EXPECT A BOOK WRITTEN WITHOUT THE AID  
OF PRECEDENT BEHIND IT, AND IN THE YEAR 1856, TO READ  
LIKE A BOOK WRITTEN ON THE SUBJECT TODAY.

I DO NOT HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF PHYSICAL-CHEMISTRY,  
NOR ORGANIC NOR OF THE ELECTRO-CHEMISTRY OF GASES, SUFFICIENT  
TO STATE THAT HILL'S PROCESSES WILL NOT WORK WHEN SUBJECT  
TO RIGIDLY ACCURATE LABORATORY CONTROL USING SIMILAR  
SUBSTANCES TO THOSE HE USED. I HOPE THAT YOU MAY HAVE  
THE OPPORTUNITY TO POSITIVELY DETERMINE THE AUTHENTICITY  
OF THE PROCESSES. AT THE RISK OF BEING ENTIRELY SUPERFLUOUS  
I AM ENCLOSING WITH HILL'S BOOK A COPY OF BURGESS'S "AMBROTYPE  
MANUEL", WHICH MIGHT BE USEFUL AS AN INDICATION OF WHAT THE  
CONTEMPORARIES OF HILL CONSIDERED PURE CHEMICALS.

SO FAR I HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO BORROW A COPY OF YOUR  
EXCELLENT BOOK, PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE AMERICAN SCENE. THE  
CALIFORNIA STATE LIBRARY RECENTLY ACQUIRED A COPY - BUT THE  
"HOLDS" ON IT WILL PREVENT MY BORROWING THIS COPY FOR SOME  
MONTHS. AS I AM NOW GOING THRU LAW SCHOOL I CANNOT AFFORD

\* | -



## Robert Taft photography correspondence

TO PURCHASE A COPY OF YOUR BOOK AT THE PRESENT MOMENT. SHOULD YOU CARE TO LOAN ME A COPY I WOULD PROMPTLY RETURN IT IN GOOD CONDITION. I AM VERY INTERESTED IN THE THEORY OF LIGHT AND COLOR AS WELL AS IN EVERYTHING PERTAINING TO L.L. HILL.

AS TO L.L. HILL, I HAVE FOUND NO MENTION OF HIM IN THE CALIFORNIA NEWSPAPERS OF THE 1850s; NOR IN THE BOOK PUBLISHED IN 1863, THE SUNBEAM; NOR IN ROBERT HUNT'S ACCOUNT OF THE HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY FROM "A MANUEL OF PHOTOGRAPHY", 4TH ED., 1854, AS PUBLISHED IN THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION REPORTS OF 1904; NOR IN ROBERT HUNT'S DESCRIPTIONS AS PUBLISHED IN "UTLEY'S DICTIONARY OF THE ARTS, MANUFACTURES, AND SCIENCE, 1873 AND EDITED BY ROBERT HUNT; NOR IN CURRENT ENCYCLOPEDIAS. THERE IS NO MENTION OF HIM IN EDWARD LINE MORSE'S BOOKS, "SAMUEL F.B. MORSE, LETTERS AND JOURNALS". HOWEVER, I BELIEVE A CAREFUL SEARCH OF NEW YORK LIBRARIES WOULD BRING MATTER TO LIGHT; AS TO WHETHER IT WOULD CONCLUSIVELY PROVE ANYTHING I WOULD BE DUBIOUS.

YOU MENTION MR. M.A. ROOT WRITING IN 1864 THAT THE COLORED PHOTOS WERE FAKED. HE IS MENTIONED ON PAGE 80 OF THE "TREATISE". WOULD YOUR "COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHERS ASSOCIATION APPOINTED IN THE EARLY 50'S TO EXAMINE HILL'S CLAIM BE THAT MENTIONED IN THE "TREATISE" ON PAGE 28. DID MR. M.A. ROOT IN 1864 EXAMINE A PICTURE WHICH WAS CLAIMED BY HILL TO BE A TRUE "HELIOCHROME"; HILL OUTLINES IN HIS "TREATISE" A PROCESS FOR TOUCHING UP DAQUERREOTYPES IN COLOR.

WITHOUT A PRECISE IMPARTIAL MODERN LABRATORY TEST, I AM SO IMRESSED BY THE APPARENT SINCERITY OF THE BOOK AND THE CHARACTER OF THE AUTHOR THAT I AM BIASED IN FAVOR OF THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE RESULTS CLAIMED BY HILL. I AM EXCEEDINGLY CURIOUS TO KNOW THE ACCURATE UNBIASED IMPARTIAL ANSWER.

MANY THANKS AGAIN FOR YOUR KINDNESS IN WRITING.

SINCERELY YOURS,

*Thomas Eistrat*  
THOMAS EISTRAT

AT THE PRESENT MOMENT I AM SEARCHING FOR DATA ON "AUTO-TRANSFUSION, USES AND APPARATUS"; AND ON ECONOMICAL APPLICATIONS OF GASES FOR THE PREVENTION OF EXPLOSIONS. I AM QUITE SURPRISED AT THE DEARTH OF MATERIALS ON THESE SUBJECTS. THE LATER SUBJECT IS ONLY SCANTILY COVERED BY THE U S BUREAU OF MINES PUBLICATIONS AND THE N.F.P.A.; THE FORMER SUBJECT IS BUT SCANTILY COVERED BY MEDICAL TEXTS AND ARTICLES. SHOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN EITHER OF THESE SUBJECTS, I WOULD BE GLAD TO POINT OUT MY QUEST AND FURNISH YOU MY DATA. AS TO MY EDUCATION: B.S. IN ELECT. ENGR., UNIV. OF CALIF. 1932.

## Robert Taft photography correspondence

2413 "M" STREET  
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA  
JULY 31, 1939

PROFESSOR ROBERT TAFT  
DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY  
THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS  
LAWRENCE, KANSAS

DEAR DR. TAFT:

MANY THANKS AGAIN FOR YOUR COURTESIES  
AND FOR ~~FOR~~ YOUR LETTER OF JULY 27TH.

YOU WRITE THAT YOU HOPE THAT SOMEONE  
MAY BE PUT TO WORK IN THE FALL TO WORK ON HILL'S  
PROCESS AND GIVE THE METHOD A PRECISE LABRATORY  
TEST. I REMAIN EXCEEDINGLY CURIOUS AS TO THE OUTCOME  
OF THE HOPED FOR TESTS.

I RATHER IMAGINE THAT YOU READ THE  
"TREATISE" FROM COVER TO COVER. I REMAIN EXCEEDINGLY  
CURIOUS AS TO YOUR PERSONAL REACTIONS TO THE BOOK.  
I WAS FORTUNATE A WEEK AGO FOR A FEW MOMENTS TO GAANCE  
AT YOUR RECENT WORK, "PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE AMERICAN  
SCENE" AT THE EASTMAN KODAK STORE IN SAN FRANCISCO.  
THE CLERK WAS MOST ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT YOUR GRAND  
BOOK. I AM SORRY THAT YOU DID NOT HAVE HILL'S  
TREATISE BEFORE YOU AT THE TIME OF WRITING YOUR  
GRAND BOOK. I PERSONALLY FEEL THAT HILL HAS BEEN  
HARSHLY AND UNFAIRLY CRITICIZED BY ALL HISTORY TO DATE.

MAY I ASK WHETHER OR NOT YOU SHARE  
WITH ME THE OPINION THAT HILL'S PROCESSES AS HE  
DISCLOSED THEM MAY WELL HAVE BEEN AUTHENTIC, BUT  
THAT HIS ~~WTS~~ CONTEMPORARIES IN DISCREDITING HILL  
EITHER DID NOT GIVE THE PROCESSES A FAIR TRIAL OR  
DID NOT STATE MATTER OF THERE OWN KNOWLEDGE.

I PERSONALLY SEE IN THE BOOK THE  
ANTICIPATION OF THE WELSBACH MANTLE BY 29 YEARS; I  
SEE AN UNUSUAL EXPOSITION OF THE THEORY OF LIGHT  
AND COLOR FOR THE YEAR 1856; I SEE A HUMAN STORY OF  
A MAN AGAINST GREAT ODDS. I WOULD BE MOST CURIOUS TO  
KNOW WHAT GLARING ERROBS YOU FIND IN THE BOOK AND  
WHAT UNUSUAL FACTS YOU FIND THEREIN. DO NOT GIVE ME  
YOUR CONCLUSIONS; I WOULD LIKE BUT A TENTATIVE OPINION -  
I AM FULLY AWARE THAT CONCLUSIONS SHOULD ONLY BE  
EXPRESSED AFTER ACCURATE KNOWLEDGE OF ALL AVAILABLE  
FACTS HAS BEEN OBTAINED. HOWEVER, KNOWLEDGE OF THE  
PRECISE STEPS OF THE PROCESSES HE CLAIMED EFFECTIVE  
HAS FORMED MY OPINION THAT IT IS NOT UNREASONABLE TO

- 1 -



## Robert Taft photography correspondence

BELIEVE THAT THE PROCESSES HAVE NOT BEEN DISPROVEN.

I AM MOST CURIOUS AS TO YOUR PERSONAL REACTION.  
I HAVE CONTACTED NO AUTHORITIES BUT YOU, AND BELIEVE  
THAT YOUR ANSWER WILL BE AMPLY SATISFACTORY.

VERY TRULY YOURS,



THOMAS E. STRAT

## Robert Taft photography correspondence

**A. R. PHILLIPS & Co.**  
**INSURANCE BROKERS**

TELEPHONE CONNECTION  
TRINITY 8779

SPECIALIZING IN  
INSURANCE NEEDS OF INDUSTRIAL PLANTS  
AND THEIR EXECUTIVES

1002 LANE MORTGAGE BLDG.  
208 W. 8TH ST.

LOS ANGELES, CALIF.

August 1, 1939

Dr. Robert Taft  
University of Kansas,  
Lawrence, Kansas.

Dear Dr. Taft;

I regret very much not being able to see you this summer. However I was with some friends who had to return through Montana and I could not persuade them to change their plans.

However I met some very interesting people who are interested in photography, including a Miss Mueller at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia who has made several Daguerreotypes with the first camera built in the United States, which they have in their collection. Also I met Miss Therese Bonney in New York. She showed me several interesting things including an original painting and a Daguerreotype by Daguerre, an original picture of Bayard's and many interesting old books. Mr. Tremear, the old photographer at Ford's Greenfield Village, was very interesting. I had him make some tintypes of me, which he did with an old four lensed tintype camera. The tintypes cost fifty cents for four. The process is very interesting. Mr. Tremear also makes Daguerreotypes, but the charge is five dollars each and an appointment must be made in advance, I did not have the time, anyway.

I was able to find some very interesting Daguerreotypes, including one of Major-General Thomas, taken by Brady during the Mexican War and some of the Merriwethers, relatives of Merriwether Lewis, of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. I bought two of Brady's portrait negatives from a Mrs. Evans in Washington and found an old Daguerreotype camera stand in Philadelphia.

Yours very truly,

*Robert Phillips*



## Robert Taft photography correspondence

*Greer's Studio*

Artistic Photography

August 25, 1939

Mr. Robert Taft, Prof Chemistry  
University of Kansas  
Lawrence, Kansas

Dear Mr. Taft:

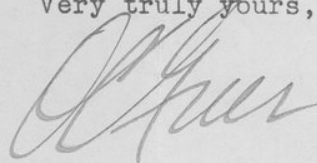
Regarding a photograph of an "unknown" man on page 327 of your "PHOTOGRAPHY and the AMERICAN SCENE", please be advised that we firmly believe it is that of a certain Mr. Krueger, from Germany, who was one of the foremost retouchers, and later demonstrator for G. Cramer Dry Plate Company.

His method was to grind the glass negative with pumice, coat with rosin, and retouch with METALLIC LEAD.

No doubt you will find information and photographs of the man at the Cramer offices.

Very truly yours,

OCG:v



COLLEGE ANNUALS  
YEAR BOOKS COMPLETE  
HIGH SCHOOL ANNUALS  
COMMERCIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

PHOTOGRAPHERS IN FORT WORTH, TEXAS SINCE 1890



## Robert Taft photography correspondence

October 2, 1939

Miss Nova Creighton  
Box 342  
Tacumcari, New Mexico

Dear Miss Creighton:

Photography was practiced in England for the first time in 1839; however, the number of galleries where photographs were taken in England was very small for a good many years after the practice was first begun. The earliest form of the photograph made was the daguerreotype, a picture on silvered copper. Tinting of daguerreotypes began in the early '40's.

The tintype was a much later form of photograph. The process for making them was first patented in this country in 1856 but the tintype did not become widely known in this country until after 1860. They were little made abroad until the '70's. Tinting tintypes was practiced almost from the time they were first made.

If you are sure that the photograph referred to in your letter is a tintype and not a daguerreotype, the chances are greater that it was made after 1870 than it was before.

You will find methods of distinguishing between the various forms of photographs described in my book, a descriptive circular of which is enclosed. Probably it can be consulted at your local library. If I can be of further service, please feel free to write me.

Sincerely yours,

RT/cdo

Robert Taft.





## Robert Taft photography correspondence

Paterson, N. J.  
October 13, 1939  
(superstitiously 'unlucky'  
Friday...thirteenth)

To:  
"Robert Taft"  
-Professor of Chemistry-  
'University of Kansas'  
Lawrence, Kansas.

Dear Sir:-

Subject. ....Book....  
'PHOTOGRAPHY and the AMERICAN SCENE'  
..A Social History, 1839-1889..

On October 30, 1938, I wrote you a letter, via of your publishers, 'The Macmillan Company', New York City, N.Y., supplicating a 'gratis donation' damaged and quite unsalable copy of your book, purely due to the irrefutable fact that my poverty, financially, preveted my purchasing anything other than the absolute phsical welfare necessities of life.

...WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF MY UNFORTUNATE CIRCUMSTANCES...

Explanation.

On March 17, 1933, after a continuous honorable employment, as a clerical accountant, with an outstanding machinery and accessories manufacturing concern, whose product was distributed throughout the entire civilized world, my services, along with others, were terminated, on account of the necessity of a drastic reduction of the production and accounting staff, brought about through the then and now existing 'economic depression', slowing down and partially cutting out altogether, the sales of their merchandise to their numerous customers.

This enterprise suffered considerable losses and even today are struggling to keep in existence.

At this date of my 'lay-off' I and my wife had to our credit in bank savings \$690.00, and no other assets convertible into cash value of over \$100.00.

I immediately sought employment anywhere and everywhere here in town locally, and in Newark, N.J. and New York City, via of correspondence and in many instances by personal contact with the 'personel managers' of all sorts of business concerns, offering myself to work at the commonest of labor, if my educational abilities along accountancy lines, were not needed.

I recieved all kinds of nice responses by mail and vague kindly assurances of possible future assistance, pending business improvements, by the 'personnel executives', but to date I am still awaiting the offer of any kind of a job.

Days passing bye; weeks also; I turned to the the government "C.W.A." relief for work.

Questionnaire documentary size folders were filled in; identification sheets were filled in; citizenship affidavits were filled in; results...no work assistance or anyother kind of assistance was furnished. Undisclosed reason...truthful revelation of our small \$690.00 savings account debarred us.

On Sept 1, 1934, 18 months after loss of my 'job' and not one cent of our bank savings left, I was compelled to demand relief of the "E.R.A." for food and the meagrest of home maintenance assistance.

I was immediately put to work with pick & shovel, etc.



## Robert Taft photography correspondence

and was kept at this type of employment up until February 1938, when I was transferred to a 'senior clerkship' job, on tabulation statistical expense and accomplishment accountings of projects, covering local public school renovations, rehabilitations, additional and reconstructions, etc.

This clerical work had unsatisfactorily been handled by political appointees for a period of two years, and the 'Area Supervisor', whom some 18 years previously I had supervised his time and production accomplishments, in a manufacturing plant department of which I was the 'timekeeper and production record accountant', spotted me working with pick and shovel on a street reconstruction project one day, and shortly afterward met me and told me of the federal government complaints regarding the poor quality of the 'school statistical records' as furnished, asked me to help him out of this annoying part of his responsibility, by taking hold of this work and handling it properly.

This I did agreeably, and in spite of considerable obstacles straightened out matters fairly well, not as completely as I wished and as they should be.

Complaints ceased. My records were never returned to me for any corrections or criticisms. I was faithful to my job. Loyal to my government. Respectful and tolerant to my associates. I kowtowed to no one; I curried favors of none; I did my work as the government expected it; I was absolutely fair, square and impartial with all with whom I had necessary dealings with.

I received in compensation .51¢ per hour wage, maximum 140 permissible hours monthly...no other remunerations, such as gifts, charities, bonuses etc.

I worked hours of overtime on the job and at my own home in my determination this work should be properly and punctually rendered...no reward whatsoever...no acknowledged, or implied appreciation tendered me.

I was surrounded and in the midst of illiterate, uncouth and irresponsible MEN, CLASSIFIED as building and construction laborers and craftsmen, receiving from \$1.00 to \$1.70 per hour, a large percentage of whom were alcohol and nicotine addicts, gamblers, libertines, chiselers and political suckers, stooges, etc.

On August 17, 1938, I along with hundred of thousands of others throughout the United States, were 'W.P.A.' 403'd (indefinitely layed off) by a 'Congressional edict' purposely to check 'Rosevelt's Spending Spree', so they called it.

No doubt about it, millions of dollars were not properly utilized as intended, but any one possessed of ordinary common sense knows that the excess monies so expended was not destroyed by fire, or lost in the oceans or carried out of the country by brigands, but diverted into the pockets of the states, counties and municipalities politicians and their appointees, placed in supervision of the work projects and and money disposals.

Our democratic form of government is just one ludicrous joke, inasmuch as the people's representatives practically directly and indirectly buy or acquire public office at a larger personal and supporting friendships financial expenditure, than what the office sought after actually pays for their special and illustrious services.

These self same congressional representatives who so eagerly check the spending spree of a 'relief programme', seemingly disregard the impoverishment of the millions of helpless



## Robert Taft photography correspondence

proletariat folks who elected them to office, expectant that they would do all in their power to uplift their condition instead of creating a greater depression and ultimate destruction.

If 'Rosevelt' is a utopian dreamer, deluded idealist, unconscious communistic socialist, egoist, crackpot, cunning totalatarian zealot, and granting this analysis is accepted as correct by the master minds of our entire population, then just why doesn't our intellectual congressmen, senators, and political representatives great and otherwise, remove him from his position by constitutional authority of 'IMPEACHMENT'.

Is there no substitute individual his equal or superior? Isn't there amongst our loudly proclaimed master minds here in this glorious United States, at least one clever person capable of advising and leading us all in a sane and sensible governmental manner?

Aren't there any more 'Lincoln's'? Why? What's the cause of the failures of 'Hoover', 'Landon', 'Coolidge', 'Harding', 'Taft', 'Rosevelt', 'Cleveland', 'McKinley', 'Harrison' and so on back? 'Woodrow Wilson' was presumably the most cultured and thoroughly educated of them all, yet, per general report, he too was a howling inefficient.

Well, professor, I am today worse off, financially, than when I first wrote you on October 30, 1938.

I am unemployed still. My wife and I are receiving .46¢ a day, collectively, to exist on from the State Relief Authorities. My rent is now in arrears. We have no coal. Neighbors and real friends are assisting us as much as consistently possible.

Although I am, hale and hearty, good health and of unblemished character, willing, intelligent and experienced, dependable worker, yet, private enterprise has no need of my services, either because they are diminishing the numbers on their payrolls, or else my being 63 years of age, interferes with their accepting me, on account of the insurance corporation stipulations safeguarding their 'employers liability and compensation' obligations.

A few months ago, I became aware that the local Paterson Free Public Library had placed a copy of your book on ~~public~~ their shelves for public withdrawal privilege, and on Oct. 5/39 I was enabled to take same home with me for inspection and reading. It has been withdrawn and inspected by 36 other interested persons, prior to my getting it.

I have read it carefully from cover to cover, and scrutinized each and every illustration, via of a highly powerful reading glass magnifier.

Professor, allow me to compliment you, on this literary masterpiece of 'photographic history'.

I certainly enjoyed it intensely and would surely like to own a copy for myself for a perusal of its contents any time I would desire to consult it, which would be quite often.

Sorry indeed your publishers had no 'damaged' copies; usually some mistakes arise, in spite of all precautions, making the publication thereby unsalable.

I have practically very uncertain hopes that my future finances will improve any, so I must content myself without the pleasure of an ownership of your book, and take my chance turn, in withdrawing same from the public library from time to time.

Chapter XIX ...The Flexible Film....



## Robert Taft photography correspondence

referring to the 'George Eastman' and ~~Hannibal~~ Hannibal Goodwin' controversial and litigational disclosures revealed in your text ~~matter~~ on this matter, was extremely enlightening to me, as I had read at various times in newspapers, periodicals, etc. statements on this subject, which I felt, through an apparent ~~harmony~~ lack of complete harmony in the telling, and at times seemed more like guess-work conclusions on the part of the writers.

Your write up appeals to me very strongly and leads me to believe it has a bona-fide ring of reasonability and authenticity.

The type style, size and spacing in your book text matter is very pleasing, easy to read and not fatiguing.

The illustrations are clear cut, plenty large in dimension, attractive, unusual and goodly in numbers.

THAT Professor, I personally like your book as much as any as I have perused and inspected on this subject, which is not a few.

I possess a small collection of books on this subject, some of reputed high quality, so you can readily understand my interest in anything new appearing on the market.

Had my circumstances been more favorable during the past five years, I would most assuredly have purchased a copy of your book, and wrote to you just the same, to show you my appreciation of your contribution to the literature of this absorbingly attractive science and hobby.

Hope my letter will not seem boresome to you. My intentions are of the very best, I did not mean to be intrusive. Beseech you to forgive and pardon me if I have in any way seemed offensive.

Best regards and well wishes to you, and that your book

.....PHOTOGRAPHY and the AMERICAN SCENE..... will enjoy a world wide circulation and appreciation, and worth while your effort at its creation, remuneratively.

Very respectfully yours,

*Joseph Banker*  
Joseph Banker,  
Paterson,  
New Jersey.

'Unemployed...63 year old  
'W.P.A.'...victim'





## Robert Taft photography correspondence

October 19, 1939.

Robert Taft,  
Professor of Chemistry,  
University of Kansas.

Dear Professor Taft:

Your correspondent has undertaken the job of celebrating in motion pictures the life and career of Matthew B. Brady, and is now engaged in the preparation of a screen story toward that end. It is his desire to do Brady's life as authentically as possible -- to do full justice to this sadly neglected figure of Civil War times.

I have, of course, read your "PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE AMERICAN SCENE", also your two-part article which appeared in "AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHY" of August and September, 1935, and have found them exceedingly informative and stimulating. In all of my research thus far, however, I have discovered little concerning the personal and domestic side of Mr. Brady's life, and I am wondering whether you might be able to direct my labors along these lines. I am particularly anxious to glean more facts concerning Mrs. Brady, and would be deeply appreciative if you could suggest or place me in contact with any sources that might throw any light on her. Are there any living heirs or persons whom I might address? Are there any diaries, letters, books, or documents which might prove helpful?

In closing, permit me to say once again that I shall be greatly beholden to you for any assistance you may be able to render in this matter. Awaiting your reply with keen anticipation, and tendering my thanks in advance,

Cordially yours,

*Ernest Maas*

Ernest Maas  
439 South Hamel Rd.  
Los Angeles, Calif.