

photographs by David Graham



Most of the photographs by David Graham are taken with a view camera. A *view camera*, also known as a *large format camera*, is a large box camera mounted on a tripod.



History of the View Camera:

This is a picture of a **large format camera**. All cameras are descendants from the **camera obscura**. The earliest photographic camera on record was made by or for the inventors of photography. Joseph Nicéphore Niépce of France and England's William Henry Fox Talbot claim to be photography's inventor, used simple wooden boxes. These boxes evolved gradually into today's view camera.

In 1851, an American camera introduced the **bellows** to common use, and became recognizable as an early view camera. On the back of this sheet, you can see an example of a typical view camera. As a result of the bellows, the early 1850s gave rise to a number of folding camera designs. The use of a flexible bellows required cameras to have a baseboard to support the camera, and until the 1940s, virtually all view cameras were a variation on the *flatbed* camera.

The enlarger appeared in the 1860s, but its practicality was severely limited by the slow speed of the available printing materials until the beginning of the 20th century. Without enlarging, photographs can only be made the same size as the negative, so to the early photographers, making large photographs meant using a large camera. By the 1880s flatbed cameras had evolved into what remained the standard professional's tool for the next 70 years. By the end of the 19th century, three different designs for flatbed cameras were in common use.

The view camera is the largest of the 4 basic types of cameras. There are a variety of formats of the view camera and they include: the 4x5 format, the 5x7 format, and the 8x10 format.

Why use a view camera?

The view camera is used by photographers who want to control every step of taking a photograph. Controlling tonal range may be crucial, they may need large negatives to create prints that clearly show even the tiniest detail, or they may want to decide exactly which parts of the picture are in focus. The photographer who uses a view camera devotes a lot of time to taking each photograph. Using a view camera is a little more complicated, because the photographer must do everything manually. A view camera is heavy and it requires a large, heavy-duty tripod. It requires serious dedication and labor to actually use the camera in the field. The subjects for view cameras must be relatively stationary because working with the view camera is not a speedy process.

Explore other famous artists who used view cameras: Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, Richard Avedon, etc.

Explore using the view camera on the World Wide Web at:

www.photographytips.com

www.library.arizona.edu/branches/ccp/education/guides/aaguide/viewcam.htm

www.viewcamera.com/getstart.htm

<http://cameras.about.com/library/weekly/aa012101a.htm>

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