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Inventor Sig Bettini

Inventor Gianni Bettini was born into an aristocratic family in Novara, Italy in 1860. A child of privilege, he received the education of the gentleman's class, which included languages and the arts. However, he was more manly than scholarly and decided upon a military career, becoming a lieutenant in the Italian cavalry. While on leave in Paris, Sig. Bettini became smitten with American socialite Daisy Abbott. Shortly thereafter, he left the military and joined Daisy in New York, where the couple married.

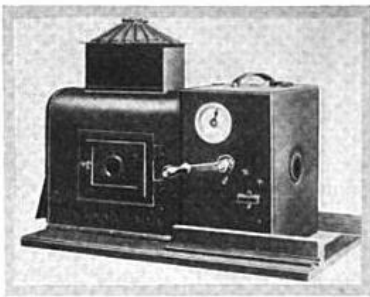
Settling in Stamford, Connecticut with his wife's family, Sig. Bettini soon discovered he was uncomfortable being a man of leisure. He developed a fascination for mechanical devices and decided to become an inventor. He and his wife relocated to New York City, where Sig. Bettini combined his passions for music and invention, creating a mechanical sheet music page turner. In 1888, he purchased Thomas Edison's supposedly new and improved phonograph. Designed for business, Sig. Bettini found the phonograph inferior for reproducing music and vocals, and so he invented a playback machine dubbed "The Micro-reproducer." He set up shop as the Bettini Microphonography Diaphragms Company, and in 1892 applied for a patent to duplicate cylinder recordings. His musician friends in U.S. and Europe were eager to use the new equipment, and Sig. Bettini happily obliged, making musical recordings of opera singers

Nellie Melba and Enrico Caruso, and rare audio recordings of Pope Leo XIII, Mark Twain, and President Benjamin Harrison. Sadly, he made the fateful decision to take these recordings to France, where they were destroyed during World War I.



After his U.S. business, renamed Bettini Company, Ltd., folded, Sig. Bettini turned his attentions to motion pictures. In 1912, he began working on developing a device that would be a more wallet-friendly alternative to

the expensive celluloid ribbon media. He began by adapting a stand camera glass plate, upon which he recorded rows of pictures – measuring less than a half-inch square – onto its sensitized emulsion. He then constructed a special camera, which was then placed onto a flattened cylinder that would move the plate past the lens until it reached the plate's edge, when it would move downward to allow a sequence of pictures to be taken. While impressive, the apparatus proved to be noisy and cumbersome, thereby having virtually no commercial value.



Although he fell short with his first effort, Sig. Bettini he perfected the moving picture device that not only achieved

his goal of being affordable to the amateur photographer, but also produced pictures that were of a finer quality than celluloid. He reversed the traditional moving picture progress by holding the plate rigid while moving the lens. Sixteen successive pictures appeared on each line (at the rate of 12 or more pictures taken per second), with 36 lines on each plate, totaling 576 consecutive images. Sig. Bettini's plate system eliminated the problem of curling that constantly plagued celluloid, and the plate cost was only 4 cents, while the same number of photographs on celluloid cost \$1.50. Sig. Bettini would later create three models for glass plates, hand cameras, and screen projection, and had plans for toy camera for children, but shockingly, his revolutionary motion picture camera was a commercial failure.

Sig. Bettini abandoned his inventions and became a Paris wartime correspondent. He returned to the U.S. permanently in 1917 as an Italian military representative. he died in 1938 with his inventions all but forgotten. An

eccentric entrepreneur, Gianni Bettini was a visionary who deserves recognition as being one of the first to recognize the commercial potential of recorded music and motion pictures.

Ref:

- 1913 Camera Craft, Vol. XX (San Francisco: Fayette J. Clute), pp. 158-162, 382.
- 1994 From Tinfoil to Stereo: The Acoustic Years of the Recording Industry, 1877-1929 (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida), pp. 61-71.
- 1995 Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press), p. 24.
- 2013 The School of Arizona Dranes (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books), pp. 103-104.

Emma B. Freeman

Emma Belle Richart (Freeman) was born in Nebraska in 1880. She lived on a farm with her homesteader parents until she moved to Denver as a young adult, where she found work as a ribbon clerk. There, she met and married



Edwin Freeman in 1902. The couple relocated to San Francisco where they opened a stationery and art supplies store at the corner of Octavia Boulevard and Union Street. In her spare time, Mrs. Freeman studied painting with renowned Northern California artist Giuseppe Cadenasso. Like many San Francisco shopkeepers, the Freemans lost their business in the devastating earthquake and fire of 1906. They decided to move 275 miles north, to Eureka, where they settled and opened the Freeman Art Company.

Always artistically inclined, Mrs. Freeman embraced the study of photography, and by 1910, she and her husband were dabbling in commercial portraiture. Mrs. Freeman eagerly

captured the daily life of her Eureka neighbors and the occasional passersby. In July 1911, Jack London and his wife Charmian passed through Eureka on a horse-drawn wagon trip to Oregon. They happily posed for Mrs. Freeman, and their experiences were later immortalized in Mr. London's short story, "Navigating Four Horses North of the Bay." Around 1913, Mrs. Freeman became interested in Native American culture after meeting Lucy Thompson, an elite member of the Yurok tribe who was married to white man Milton "Jim" Thompson. Inspired by Mrs. Thompson's stories, she created her 'Northern California Series' of Native American portraits that were described by one critic as "highly romantic and stylized." Mrs. Freeman's intent was not to make a photographic record of Indian life, but rather to present her conceptualized "noble" vision of the idealized Native American. She would often hand-color her images to enhance their aesthetic appeal.



In June of 1913, Mrs. Freeman became embroiled in a marital scandal when she

developed a romantic relationship with a visiting government official. She and her husband divorced two years' later.

The resulting social ostracism further strengthened Mrs. Freeman's connection to Native Americans, who had been relegated to the American social periphery for centuries. Her Indian portraits were exhibited at the Panama Pacific Exposition, and were chronicled in various industry journals like *Camera Craft* and popular magazines like the *Illustrated Review*. Later, one of her portraits was presented to President Warren G. Harding. During the First World War, Mrs. Freeman received national notoriety when she photographed a naval disaster, and was thereafter dubbed "the official government photographer." By now, two schools of thought were polarizing American photography. There were the pictorialists who created stylistic art portraits and the postwar modernists who preferred stark realism that did not manipulate substance to achieve style. Perhaps realizing her artistic genre was going out of style, Mrs. Freeman retired in 1925. Three years' later, on March 26, 1928 Emma Belle Freeman died in San Francisco. Several of her Yurok and Hupa Indian photographs (1914-1918) may be seen at Chicago's Newberry Library. The late photographic historian Peter E. Palmquist wrote of Mrs. Freeman, "Emma brought a unique vision to subject matter, for her approach to composition was heroic, her subject treatment allegorical, and her style painterly. Her surviving photographs clearly illustrate her training in the fine arts. Her groundbreaking efforts were made almost entirely on her own; in fact, her contemporaries in the region were purely traditional photographers. She alone enjoyed the reputation of 'artist with the camera'."

Ref:

1998 100 Years of California Photography by Women 1850-1950 (URL: <http://www.cla.purdue.edu/waaw/palmquist/Essay1.htm>).

1999 Emma B. Freeman Gallery (URL: <http://www.cla.purdue.edu/waaw/palmquist/Photographers/FreemanGalle>)

ry.html).

1991 To the American Indian: Reminiscences of a Yurok Woman (Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books), p. vii.

2003 Women Artists of the American West (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc.), pp. 215, 311.

1977 Women in Photography Archive (URL: <http://www.cla.purdue.edu/waaw/palmquist/Photographers/FreemanEssay.htm>).

2005 Women in Photography Archive: Emma B. Freeman (URL: <http://www.cla.purdue.edu/waaw/palmquist/Photographers/Freeman.htm>).

Stylophoto Camera



Photo Courtesy of Rick Soloway

The unique Stylophot camera was manufactured by the Secam company of Paris France in circa 1955. Designed to be similar to a fountain pen, the Stylophot was a large oblong shaped camera featuring a pen clip to attach it to a pocket. It was made out of plastic and metal and featured a tripod socket on the bottom of the camera. It was able to produce a 10x10mm sized images on double perforated 16mm film. There were four versions of the Stylophot camera including a solid slide model, a Standard model, the Private eye and the Luxe or Deluxe.



Photo Courtesy of [Guy Lordat](#) - © All Rights Reserved

Walter D. Welford



WALTER D. WELFORD.

Richard Walter Deverell Welford was born at Newcastle upon Tyne on September 1, 1857. The eldest son of Richard and Jemima Deverell Welford inherited his father's talent for writing. He elected to combine his two favorite interests - journalism and the new sport of cycling in his magazine *Cycling*, which he published and edited from 1878 until 1882. He also published the pioneering text *Wheel man's Yearbook* in 1881. Dogged by poor health, Mr. Welford moved to London where he studied photography and later became an editor of the *Photography* journal. Meanwhile, he also founded and edited *Photographic Review*, *The Practical & Junior Photographer*, and the short-lived *Photographic Life*, which he later unsuccessfully resurrected as *Cycle & Camera*.

Despite their lack of financial success, Mr. Welford was dedicated to using the print medium to promote the art and science of photography. He also wrote a technical manual on the hand camera and collaborated with cycle manufacturer and publisher Henry Sturney on a photographic encyclopedia and a text on optical lanterns. Mr. Welford expresses his preference for hand cameras and lantern slides in an 1893 editorial, in which he declared, "I am desirous of obtaining studies of life and character in all parts of the world." He maintained that the hand camera provided an unobtrusive and natural record of everyday street life, noting, "The hand-camera worker troubles no one, he merely waits his opportunity, and when it comes seizes it, then passes on without anyone being the wiser." He applied his knowledge to the manufacturing of a lightweight and moderately priced camera known as "The Welford 'No. 1 Hand Camera.'" Mr. Welford also supervised the production of "Easy Cloud Negatives," which were made-to-order glass negatives that enabled photographers to add clouds to their sky prints. His "Straight-edge Vignette" is an opaque band plate or film that applies combination printing to achieve blocking or shading in nature photographs.

Mr. Welford married Jean Agnes Morgan (1855-1949) in 1880, and together they shared three daughters and a mutual love of photography. "Jeanie" Welford became an award-winning photojournalist in her own right, and her topographic images were frequently featured in her husband's publications. Unfortunately, Mr. Welford continued being plagued by ill health, which severely compromised his once active lifestyle. Nevertheless, he was a staff member of Kinematograph Weekly until the end of World War I and also penned several screenplays during his prolonged convalescences. Sixty-one-year-old Walter D. Welford died at his London home in July 1919.

- Ref:
1893 American Journal of Photography, Vol. XIV (Philadelphia: Thomas H. McCollin & Company), p. 41.
- 2007 Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography, Vol. I (New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group LLC), pp. 1484-1485.
- 2007 The Haunted Gallery: Painting, Photography, Film c. 1900 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), p. 113.
- 1900 The Photogram, Vol. VII (London: Dawbarn & Ward, Ltd.), pp. 94, 267.
- 1894 The Photographic Times and American Photographer, Vol. XXV (New York: The Photographic Times Publishing Association), p. 77.
- 1984 W. D. Welford Photojournalist (URL: <http://www.salisburycameraclub.org.uk/welford1.htm>).

The following NEW information can be seen on our Historic Camera Site.

New Biography Listings:



[B. J. Sayce](#)

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