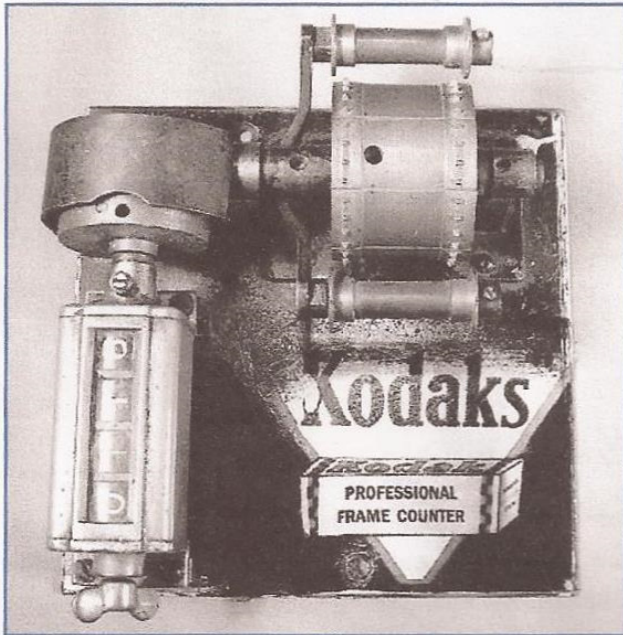


35mm FILM FOOTAGE COUNTERS

Story by ALAN OSBORNE

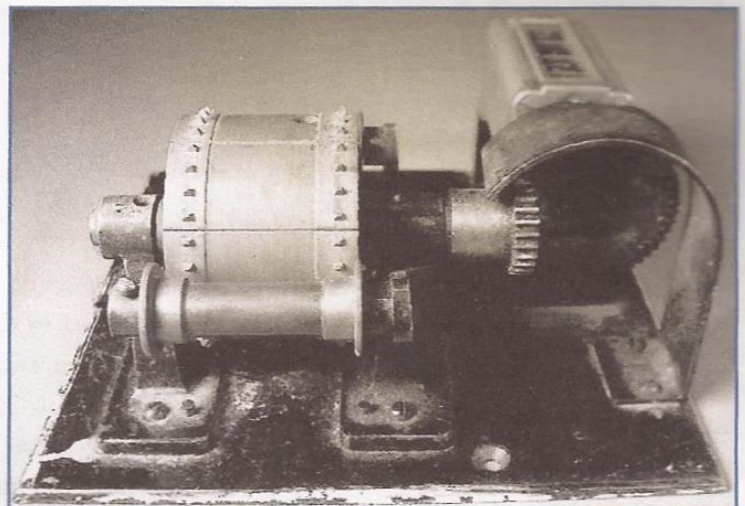
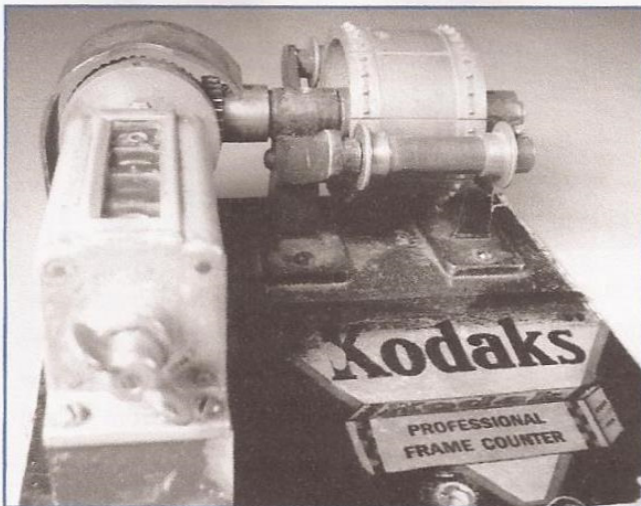


George Eastman started supplying 35mm film stock in 1896, and the Eastman Kodak company has continued supplying it ever since. But aside from 35mm film, I had never heard of Kodak ever manufacturing or distributing a single piece of 35mm movie equipment. But earlier this year I acquired an interesting item labelled "Kodaks Professional Frame Counter," the only Kodak 35mm movie item I have ever seen.

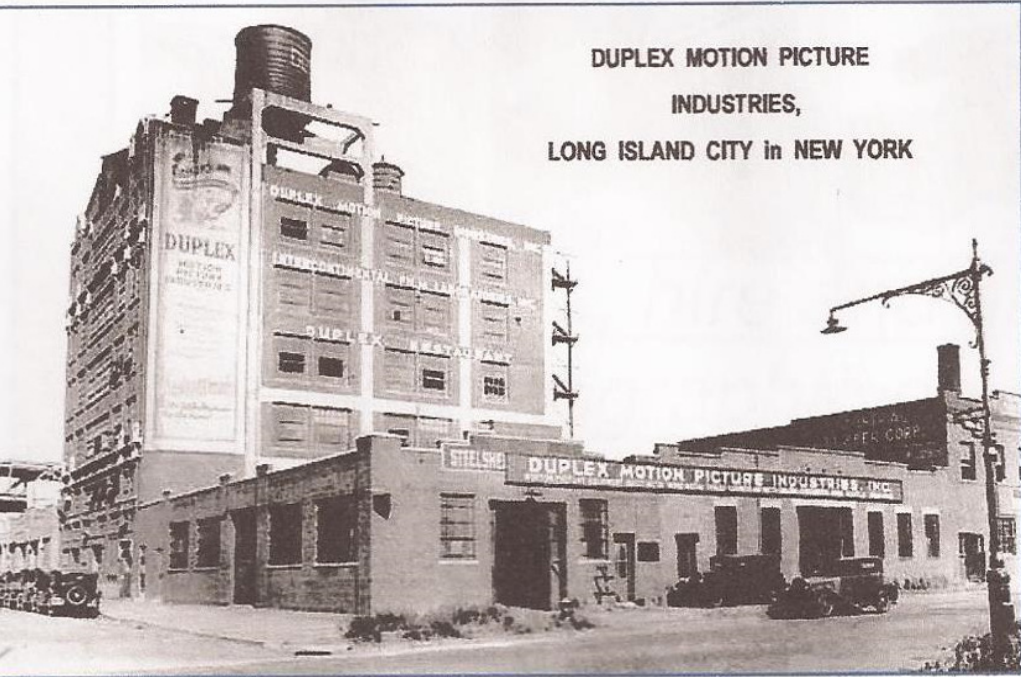
With the exception of the Veeder counter and the shafts and gears, every part is made of brass, including the 32 tooth sprocket. Dating the item is difficult. With so much of it made of brass, especially the sprocket, I would have dated it to pre-1920, and probably pre-WW1. However, the label has an art deco look, which to me said 1930's. The label is a full colour transfer (decal). At some point the brass baseplate has been painted black, and not too carefully either, as the top edge of the label has some overspray.

The Veeder counter actually counts feet, not frames. Of course one can argue that if you know the footage count you can calculate the frames. Sixteen frames to the foot, so ten feet on the counter would be 160 frames. Fair enough, but if it's called "Kodaks Professional Frame Counter" it's reasonable to expect that the Veeder counter would count frames.

Time to do some research. If this was a Kodak item, I decided to go to what I thought would be the best source of information - Todd Gustavson, curator of Technology at George Eastman House. He said, "I also was under the impression that Eastman Kodak Company did not make any 35mm cine equipment. I'll have to check into this for you." Contact with Todd again a few weeks later revealed that he had not been able to find out anything about the frame counter. He also told me that they don't have an example of this footage counter in the Eastman House collection.



DUPLEX MOTION PICTURE
INDUSTRIES,
LONG ISLAND CITY in NEW YORK



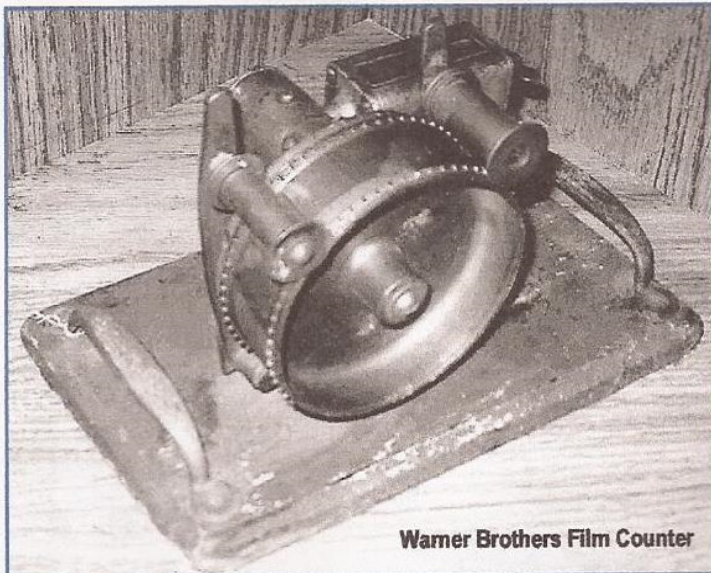
DUPLEX FILM COUNTER



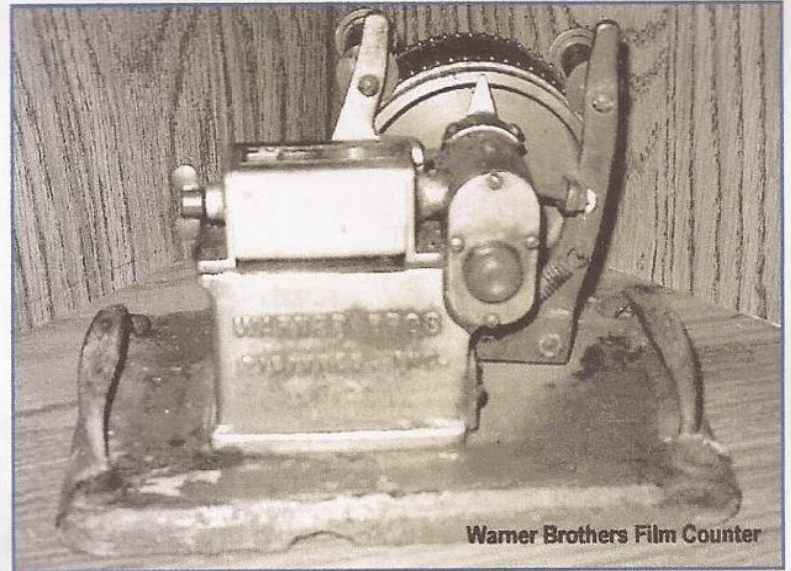
Anyone who has been collecting for years will know that collecting is full of coincidences, and very often when one unusual or rare item comes out of the woodwork, it's amazing how often another of the same type will surface soon after. And so it was in this case, because a few weeks

later I acquired another very similar footage counter. Its design is not identical to the Kodak, but very similar. It was made by Duplex Motion Picture Industries, Long Island City, New York. Duplex manufactured a variety of high quality 35mm motion picture equipment, including printers, splicers, optical and reduction printers, perforators, processing machines, etc. Although it's mere speculation on my part, I wouldn't be surprised to learn that Duplex made the Kodak item, which Kodak then distributed for a short time only.

While I was pondering all of this yet another footage counter turned up which I also acquired. This one has a massive 16 frame or 128 tooth brass sprocket, the biggest sprocket I have ever seen, which is reminiscent of the oversized



Warner Brothers Film Counter



Warner Brothers Film Counter

brass sprockets used on some 35mm projectors of the 1896-1900 period. The only identification on it is "Warner Bros Pictures, Inc" in the main casting. Some early models of American projectors, such as Edison, Lubin, Power's, had wood cases. The materials used in their construction were a product of their era. For instance, it was once said to me that if motion pictures had been developed in the 1930's rather than the 1890's, no part of a projector would have been made of wood, and there would have been more use of other materials, such as steel or aluminium, rather than brass. Every item made is a product of its time, and so it is with these three footage counters. Apart from the steel shafts and gears already mentioned, the majority of parts are nickel plated brass, with most of the plating having worn off over the years. Hopefully some information will turn up in the future which will date and identify them properly.