



PUGET SOUND PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTORS SOCIETY, INC

Vintage American Ads Show Photographic History

A website launched last September features thousands of vintage print ads from the mid 1800s to early 1900s and provides unusual insight to the products and history of that bygone era, including old cameras and related photography products.

The ads are part of an extensive collection being digitized by Reston, Virginia, resident Jay Paull and can be accessed at www.jaypaull.com. He's regularly uploading more ads to the site as he digitizes them, so it's frequently changing and expanding.

The collection was originally amassed by his great grandmother, given to Paull by his grandmother because of his interest in advertising, and then expanded by him and his parents, who are also collectors. The original ads, some of which are over 170 years old, are extremely fragile because of their age, but are in excellent condition.

"I've always loved advertising, so the endeavor is partly for fun and partly to share this great collection with others," Paull said. "The site is the most diverse display of ads from this historical period on the web."

In fact, when Paull was a kid, he used to clip ads he liked from magazines and newspapers and also wrote to advertising executives of companies such as McDonald's, Saks Fifth Avenue, Shasta and others requesting proofs and copies of ads. "They frequently would respond sending big tubes of posters and other types of advertising materials. And I still have them," Paull commented. "It was always fun when the mail arrived!"

The photography section of the site showcases diverse ads including pictures of old cameras and also related products such as lenses, plates and paper. Brands include the well known Kodak's, but also lesser names such as Premier, Adlake, Korona, and Manhattan.

Unlike today when most ads are produced using computers, in the 1800s and early 1900s companies often commissioned artists to create distinctive ads. A good example is a 1905 Kodak ad by Edward Penfield, one of the leading American illustrators of his era.

Interest in the site has been widespread and it has received national and international media coverage including an online article by The Wall Street Journal and a story in one of Spain's largest daily newspapers. A notable Canadian professional photographer Tweeted about the site soon after it launched.

Visitors can follow when new images are added to the site and learn more about some of the ads by following the site's Facebook and Twitter pages. The ads are not for sale and the ad library can be accessed free of charge.

While the site provides an insight to early Americana in many areas, the early photography ads provide an intriguing look at the origins of today's cameras and equipment and cause one to wonder what our photography-passionate ancestors will think about our current cameras one hundred years from now.