



Antique Kodak Vest Pocket Autographic Camera. Bertillon Lens. Usa, 1915-1917

120 EUR



Period : 20th century

Condition : Bon état

Length : 6,5 cm (2,56 in)

Height : 12 cm (4,72 in)

Description

This Kodak Vest Pocket Autographic, manufactured in Rochester, New York, between 1915 and 1917, represents one of the most iconic cameras in the history of portable photography. It was the direct evolution of the famous 1912 Vest Pocket, to which Eastman Kodak added an innovation that revolutionized the photographic world: the Autographic system, a feature that allowed the photographer to write notes, dates, or locations directly onto the film, visible after development. This version is the first Autographic generation, prior to the Model B, identifiable by the 1913 patents engraved on its back and by the metal flap that protects the writing window.

Its metal body, finished in glossy black lacquer

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with a pressed leather texture, preserves the functional elegance of prewar Kodaks. The camera retains its original leather bellows, completely intact and flexible, with no cracks or tears, a rare condition after more than a century. On the back, it still holds the original autographic metal stylus, finely engraved and secured in its upper holder, perfectly preserved, proving that the camera is complete and authentic.

Equipped with a Kodak Ball Bearing No. 0 shutter and a French-made Bertillon f/6.8 lens, this example combines American optical engineering with European precision. The name Bertillon refers to Alphonse Bertillon, the French pioneer of forensic photography, and although he did not manufacture lenses, Kodak used this designation on some series destined for the European market during the First World War. The result is a robust and optically refined camera that still delivers excellent sharpness and charm characteristic of early Kodak emulsions.

Mechanically, this unit works perfectly, although it has not been tested with film. The shutter operates firmly, the diaphragm adjusts correctly through all stops, and the viewfinder remains clear. On the rear side, the original red exposure control window is intact, a sign of the great care the camera has received for over a hundred years.

The camera comes with its original Kodak brown leather case, with strong stitching and amber button closure. The leather preserves its authentic patina and an attractive natural sheen, reflecting excellent preservation. The presence of the original case adds significant historical and collector value, as very few examples remain complete with their period case.

Its compact size, designed to fit in a vest pocket, hence its name, and its elegant presentation with the original leather case make it an irresistible

piece for both collectors of historical cameras and those seeking a decorative object full of history. Whether displayed in a showcase, library, or photography studio, its presence attracts attention and evokes the nostalgia of an era when photography was becoming truly portable.

A camera that symbolizes the dawn of modern photography and, for its preservation, rarity, completeness, and history, stands as an exceptional collecting opportunity for lovers of original Kodak pieces.

Dimensions: 12 cm × 6.5 cm (4.72 in × 2.56 in).

History of the Kodak Vest Pocket Autographic

The Kodak Vest Pocket was introduced by Eastman Kodak in 1912 as the world's first truly pocket-sized camera. Compact, elegant, and easy to use, it quickly became a commercial success, especially among soldiers of the First World War, who nicknamed it "The Soldier's Camera." Three years later, in 1915, Kodak presented an innovation that would define an era: the Autographic system, invented by Henry J. Gaisman.

The Autographic system allowed users to write, using a small metal stylus, notes, dates, or places on a sensitive layer of special "A127 Autographic" film. By opening the small rear window, the photographer could inscribe notes on the negative, which appeared on the developed image. This innovation turned the Vest Pocket Autographic into a practical and personal tool, uniting image and memory on the same medium.

Manufactured in Rochester, New York, between 1915 and 1917, this first version retained the metal body and black leather bellows of its predecessor but added the hinged back and engraved stylus. Its success was immediate, with hundreds of thousands of units sold before the

appearance of the Model B in 1925.

Today, the first Vest Pocket Autographic models are highly prized by collectors worldwide for their historical importance, reliable mechanics, and compact elegance, symbols of Kodak's golden age and the birth of true pocket photography.

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