

A Brief Timeline of Polaroid

1926

Edwin H. Land leaves Harvard after his freshman year to pursue his own work on light polarization. Two years later, he creates the first synthetic sheet polarizer.

1932-1933

Edwin H. Land establishes Land-Wheelwright Laboratories in Boston with Harvard physics professor, George Wheelwright, III, and continues research and production of synthetic polarizers.

1935

American Optical Company signs a license agreement to use polarizers from Land-Wheelwright for the production of sunglasses. The public announcement of the invention of polarizing disks is made at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel.

1937

The Polaroid Corporation is formed.

1938

Polaroid announces the Vectograph, a 3-D system using polarized spectacles. It is shown at the New York World's Fair the next year and later used by the military.

1939

Polaroid products include glasses, ski goggles, stereoscopic motion picture viewers, a redesigned desk lamp, fog-free and dark-adaptor goggles for the Army and Navy, and the company receives a contract to develop heat seeking missiles equipped with miniature computers. The company offices move from Boston to 730 Main Street in Cambridge.

1941-1944

Polaroid concentrates its efforts on products for the war.

1944

Land conceives of the one-step photographic system while on vacation in New Mexico with his family.

1947

On February 21, Land demonstrates the one-step process of producing finished photographs within one minute at the Optical Society of America meeting.

1948

The first Land camera, the Model 95, is sold in Boston at Jordan Marsh department store on November 26 for \$89.75. This model is the prototype for all Polaroid Land cameras produced for the next 15 years.

1949

Photographic sales of the Land Model 95 camera exceed \$5 million in the first year. Land hires Ansel Adams as a film consultant, initiating a long tradition of working with and supporting photographic artists. Several young photographers including Paul Caponigro, William Clift, Nick Dean, and John Benson will join the company in the 1950s and 1960s.

PHOTOGRAPHIC RESOURCE CENTER at boston university

832 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215 t 617-975-0600 f 617-975-0606 prcboston.org

1950-1954

Polaroid sales exceed \$23 million and over 4,000 dealers in the US alone sell Polaroid cameras, films, and accessories. Polaroid leases additional office space in Cambridge and also opens a new manufacturing plant in Waltham.

1956-1958

The company spends most of its advertising budget on network television programs, while the one-millionth camera rolls off the assembly line. Polaroid products are now distributed in over 45 countries worldwide. The Waltham manufacturing site is expanded with the construction of an additional building.

1961

Polaroid Positive/Negative 4x5" film Type 55 is introduced, the first black and white film that produces both a positive and a negative.

1963

Polaroid introduces Polacolor, as instant color film is invented. The Model 100 Land camera, the first fully automatic pack film camera to include automatic exposure control, and Type 48 and Type 38 Polacolor Land roll films are introduced.

1965

The inexpensive Swinger camera is released, a \$20 camera that takes wallet-sized black and white photographs.

1967

The company leases 784 Memorial Drive in Cambridge for engineering and research, as an expansion program is announced with new facilities planned in New Bedford, Norwood, and Waltham.

1968

The Polaroid Collection is officially founded, as ongoing acquisitions of selected prints taken with Polaroid products is initiated with a group of Polaroid employees acting as the selection committee.

1971

The Polaroid Foundation is established as a charitable organization.

1972

Polaroid SX-70 Land Camera, the first automatic, motorized, folding, single-lens reflex camera which makes self-developing instant color prints, is introduced. Lawrence Olivier acts as an advertising spokesman for the camera, and *Life Magazine* features the camera and Land on its cover.

1973

The Clarence Kennedy Gallery is established in Cambridge to serve as a showcase for the work of emerging and established photographers using Polaroid materials.

1976

The 20 x 24-inch and 40 x 80-inch instant cameras are developed to produce high quality art reproductions for museums. The cameras incorporate already existing Polaroid films including Polacolor ER film, Polapan black and white film, and Polacolor PRO film.

1977

Land is awarded his 500th patent. The OneStep Land camera is introduced and advertised in a series of successful television and print ads featuring Mariette Hartley and James Garner. This inexpensive fixed-focus camera becomes the best-selling camera in the US, instant or conventional.

PHOTOGRAPHIC RESOURCE CENTER at boston university

832 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215 t 617-975-0600 f 617-975-0606 prcboston.org

1978

Polavision, an instant color motion picture system, is introduced.

1979

Time Zero, a faster-developing film, replaces SX-70 film.

1980

Land retires as CEO, and becomes Consulting Director of Basic Research in Land Photography.

1981

Polaroid Sun 600 System cameras and Type 600 color film are released.

1983

Polaroid flourishes with 13,402 employees, \$1.3 billion in sales, and more than 1,000 patents.

1986

Federal appeals Court upholds its decision that Eastman Kodak violated Polaroid patent rights in the manufacture of its instant cameras and film. The Spectra System camera is introduced at Jordan Marsh in Boston, 38 years after the first instant Land camera was announced.

1987

Polaroid Corporation celebrates its 50th Anniversary.

1991

Edwin Land dies at the age of 82.

1992

Captiva camera and film system, an ultra-compact format designed for instant portraits is introduced.

1998-1999

Digital camera sales make Polaroid the number one digital camera seller in the United States. Introduction of the I-zone, JoyCam, and PopShots cameras and films is successful.

2001

Polaroid Corporation files for Chapter 11 bankruptcy restructuring on October 12.

2002

On July 31, Polaroid Corporation is purchased by One Equity Partners, creating a new company that now operates under the Polaroid Corporation name, thereby launching a new era for Polaroid.

Adapted from *Innovation/Imagination: 50 Years of Polaroid Photography* (New York: Abrams, 1999), and *Polaroid Access, Fifty Years* (Access Press, 1989).