Interview with Edward T. McDermott, Eastman Kodak Company, New York City Branch 2/9/40

Mr. McDermott worked with Mr. Eastman during George Eastman's most active business years. He came with Eastman Kodak Company on September 9, 1895 and worked in the film developing department, under Harry Sprague, manager. Later he was given charge of some of the chemical stock consisting of Solio hardener and one-ounce bottles of glycerine. In 1896, he was assigned to the shipping room, under its manager, Charles E. Johnson, who was one of Mr. Eastman's earliest employees, and he felt jealous when "the boss" spoke to Charlie but not to him. He was thrilled one day (at the age of 18) when Mr. Eastman, in walking through the shipping room, said "Good morning, Eddie." Previously, the boys in the department had called him "Mac" but when he told them what Mr. Eastman had called him they promptly called him "Eddie", too.

Mr. Eastman walked briskly about the plant, and even when he passed quickly through the place he noticed things that needed fixing and he observed the men without seeming too. When he observed something wrong with a man's work, he told his foreman, Mr. Crouch, and not the man himself.

Mr. Eastman's mother, in the late nineties, occasionally came to the office to take him home for lunch, or to be driven home with him in the afternoons after work. Mr. Johnson, head of the shipping department, often went out to talk with her as she sat in her carriage. Sometimes she came into the office to wait a few minutes for Mr. Eastman.
Mr. McDermott said the old five-story building, which stood back about 150 feet from State Street, was used as follows:

- **Basement**: Stock Room
- **First Floor**: Shipping Room
- **Second**: Fasting labels on products
- **Third**: Supplies
- **Fourth**: (Front) Kodak inspection
  (Rear) Developing
- **Fifth**: Printing Department

Mr. Francis S. Glasser was superintendent in the late nineties, and Frank Crouch was office manager. Glasser was an expert on emulsions and sometimes he was missing for a week at a time when he went to Kodak Park to remedy emulsion trouble.

Mr. McDermott worked in the then called London Packing Room, which was just outside Mr. Eastman's office. Every week the shipment for London, England, had to be ready Wednesday night for Saturday's boat. "Mac" had to weigh and record the contents of approximately 150 cases which were sent out every week. There was only a thin wooden partition separating Mr. Eastman's office from the shipping department and when directors' meetings were held, Mr. Eastman sent out word to have the hammering stopped in the shipping department. The directors' meetings were usually very brief, for unnecessary talk was discouraged. Mr. Eastman was interested in few matters beside business in those days. He never engaged in sports and he often remained at work in his office after the others had gone home.
conversationist. He had gone but a short distance when he came back and said briskly "Say, McDermott, how's all your family?" Apparently, he remembered the incident with Abbott and he tried to be friendly and intimate as Abbott had been when he took him by the hand years before to congratulate Mr. McDermott upon the addition to his family.
Mr. McDermott frequently attended musical shows presented at Cook's Opera House and the Lyceum Theater (both of which have long since been demolished.) He had an ear for melody and was a good whistler. Often, while he worked, he whistled melodies he heard in Gilbert and Sullivan operettas and other musical shows. One day when he whistled a merry air while at work Mr. Eastman came out of his office and said "I wish you wouldn't whistle so much!" Mr. McDermott replied "All right, sir!" Mr. Eastman "took the curse off" his criticism by adding "However, you're a good whistler and you always know the latest tunes." Mr. Eastman enjoyed pleasant melodies (apparently he kept up on them, judging by his remark) although he didn't like to hear persons whistle.

Mr. Eastman appreciated faithful service and was not niggardly with loyal workers. In February, 1900, Mr. McDermott went to his then superintendent Mr. Mott and told him he was to be married and he wanted a week off for his honeymoon. Mott asked if he had his vacation during the past year, and he replied he had taken a vacation the preceding August. Mr. Mott told "Mac" if he wanted another vacation he would have to take it on his own time. Mr. McDermott retorted, if he was to take it on his own time, he would take two weeks, and he did. He learned on his return that Miss Whitney had been told he was to be 'docked' and Mr. Eastman gave word to Mr. Crouch to pay "Mac" for the two weeks. After this occurrence Mr. Mott had the greatest respect for "Mac." Mr. McDermott pointed out that Eastman employees were not "factory hands" as Mr. Mott considered them when he came into the organization. Often they were boys and men who were not educated, but they were a decent and refined bunch of fellows.
Mr. Henry A. Strong, president of the Eastman Kodak Company, supervised the London orders which Mr. McDermott packed and once he reprimanded "Mac" in a way he felt to be unjust. He explained to Mr. Strong that he didn't like to be "called down" when he was not at fault. Mr. Strong chuckled as he replied "Say, kid, if you were to get the call-downs I do (from Mr. Eastman) you would have something to kick about."

Mr. McDermott recalls George Eastman in the 'nineties as a busy, lonely man for whom he felt sorry because he, apparently, did not "have fun" like other men. Mr. McDermott believed that if the jovial, hearty, Charles S. Abbott had lived, his influence on Mr. Eastman might have made him a more mellow person at an early age. (Abbott was an advertising man who founded the American Aristotype Company of Jamestown, N.Y., which was taken over by Eastman Kodak Company in 1900).

In 1901, Mr. Eastman came to the shipping room of the New York branch on business. Mr. McDermott had just been transferred there from Rochester. Mr. Abbott kept abreast of personal news, as well as that concerning business, and he took Mr. Eastman by the hand and said in his loud voice "Come on, George, I want you to congratulate "Mac" on the new baby he's got at home." Mr. Eastman hardly knew what to say but he murmured "You're going up to Rochester, aren't you? Go right along." (Mrs. McDermott had stayed on in Rochester when "Mac" started on his job with the New York City branch.)

Years later (in 1913) Mr. Eastman paid a visit to New York and talked briefly with Mr. McDermott. He inquired "How's business? Is there anything you want?" "Mac" replied "No, I guess not" and Mr. Eastman started to walk away, for he was not usually a fluent
March 25, 1940

Col. O. M. Solbert
Eastman Kodak Company
Rochester, New York

Dear Col. Solbert:

Your letter of February 21 with write-up of my interview arrived here while I was on vacation, and as your letter indicated that there was no particular hurry I am just getting around to answering it. Inasmuch as there were a number of corrections, and also one important addition (I refer to the first bonus) I have had the write-up rewritten and enclose it herewith.

I hope that you are well. Best regards.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Enc.
Interview with Edward T. McDermott, Eastman Kodak Company - New York Branch 350 Hudson Street New York, New York

Mr. McDermott worked nearby Mr. Eastman's office during 1898 through 1900. He came with Eastman Kodak Company on September 9, 1895 and worked in the film developing department under Harry Sprague. When work in that department was slack he was sent to the chemical room in the basement for a short time, and early in 1896 was assigned to the shipping room under Charles E. Johnson, who was one of Mr. Eastman's earliest employees. Mr. McDermott remembers that he felt envious when "The Boss" spoke to Charlie but not to him. However, he was thrilled one day, after he had been with the company about two years, when Mr. Eastman in walking through the shipping room said "Good morning, Eddie." Previously the boys in the department had called him "Mac" but when he told them what Mr. Eastman had called him they promptly called him "Eddie", too.

Mr. Eastman walked briskly about the plant and even when he passed through quickly he noticed things that needed fixing and he observed the men without seeming to. When he saw something wrong with a man's work he would speak to the superintendent, Mr. Glasser, or the office manager, Mr. Crouch, and not to the man himself.

Mr. Eastman's mother, in the late nineties, occasionally came to the office to take him home for lunch, or to be driven home with him in the afternoon after work. Mr.
Johnson, head of the shipping department, often went out to talk with her as she sat in her carriage. Sometimes she came into the office to wait a few minutes for Mr. Eastman.

Mr. McDermott said the old five-story building, which stood back about 100 feet from State Street, was used as follows:

- Basement - Storage and Chemical Room
- First Floor - Shipping & Receiving Rear - Office Front
- Second " - Label Department & Stock Room - Rear
  Mr. Eastman's Office & Export Shipping - Front
- Third " - Stock Room
- Fourth " - Kodak Inspection - Front
  Developing - Rear
- Fifth " - Printing Department

Mr. Florence S. Glasser was an expert on emulsions and sometimes he was missing for a week at a time when he went to Kodak Park to remedy emulsion trouble.

Mr. McDermott worked in the London Packing Room, which was just to the left of Mr. Eastman's office. Every week the shipment for London, England, had to be ready Wednesday night for Saturday's boat. "Mac" had to pack, weigh and record the contents of more than 100 cases which were sent out every week. There was only a wooden partition separating Mr. Eastman's office from his shipping department and when directors' meetings were held, Mr. Eastman would send out word to have the hammering stopped. The directors' meetings were usually very brief, for unnecessary talk was dis-
couraged. Mr. Eastman was interested in few matters beside business in those days. He never engaged in sports and he often remained at work in his office after the others had gone home.

Mr. McDermott frequently attended musical shows presented at Cook's Opera House and the Lyceum Theatre (both of which have long since been demolished.) He had an ear for melody and was a good whistler. Often, while he worked, he whistled melodies he heard in Gilbert and Sullivan operettas and other musical shows. One day when he whistled a merry air while at work Mr. Eastman came out of his office and said "I wish you wouldn't whistle so much!" Mr. McDermott replied "All right, Sir!" Mr. Eastman "took the curse off" his criticism by adding "However, you're a good whistler and you always know the latest tunes." Mr. Eastman enjoyed pleasant melodies (apparently he kept up on them, judging by his remark) although he didn't like to hear persons whistle.

The first bonus given by the company was in 1898. About 5 PM on a Friday afternoon the word was passed around that no one must leave the premises, and everybody wondered why. A little later Frank Crouch, cashier and office manager, appeared with a box of pay envelopes. Mr. McDermott remembers that the first man to receive his envelope, which contained two weeks' pay and a card, turned a back somersault off his stool. The card read "The enclosed is not to be considered a present but is extra pay for extra good work." Un-
necessary to say, there were three rousing cheers given for Mr. Eastman. Two weeks pay, coming on a Friday night when everybody as usual was broke, was more than welcome.

Mr. Eastman appreciated faithful service and was not niggardly with loyal workers. In February, 1900, Mr. McDermott went to his then superintendent Mr. Mott and told him he was to be married and he wanted a week off for his honeymoon. Mott asked if he had his vacation during the past year and he replied he had taken a vacation the preceding August. Mr. Mott told "Mac" if he wanted another vacation he would have to take it on his own time. Mr. McDermott retorted, if he was to take it on his own time he would take two weeks, and he did. He learned on his return that Miss Whitney had been told he was to be 'docked' and Mr. Eastman gave word to Mr. Crouch to pay "Mac" for the two weeks. After this occurrence Mr. Mott treated 'Mac' more cordially. Mr. McDermott pointed out that Eastman employees were not "factory hands" as Mr. Mott considered them when he came into the organization. Often they were boys and men who, while not well educated, were a decent and refined bunch of fellows.

Mr. Henry A. Strong, president of the Eastman Kodak Company, supervised the London orders which Mr. McDermott packed and once he reprimanded "Mac" in a way he felt to be unjust. He explained to Mr. Strong that he didn't like to be "called down" when he was not at fault. Mr. Strong chuckled as he replied "Say, kid, if you were to get the call-downs I
do (from Mr. Eastman) you would have something to kick about."

Mr. McDermott recalls George Eastman in the late nineties as a very busy man for whom he felt sorry because he, apparently, did not "have fun" like other men. Mr. McDermott believed that if the jovial, hearty, Charles S. Abbott had lived, his influence on Mr. Eastman might have made him a more mellow person at an early age. (Abbott was an advertising man who founded the American Aristotype Company at Jamestown, N.Y., which was taken over by Eastman Kodak Company in 1900).

In 1901, Mr. Eastman came to the shipping room of the New York branch on business. Mr. McDermott had just been transferred there from Rochester. Mr. Abbott kept abreast of personal news, as well as that concerning business, and he took Mr. Eastman by the hand and said in his loud voice "Come on, George, I want to you to congratulate "Mac" on the new baby boy he has up in Rochester." Mr. Eastman hardly knew what to say but he said, as he shook hands, "You're going up to Rochester at once, aren't you? Go right along."

Years later (in 1913) Mr. Eastman paid a visit to New York and talked briefly with Mr. McDermott. He asked "How are you? How's business? Is there anything you want?" After "Mac" had answered the several questions Mr. Eastman said "Goodbye" and walked away, for he was not usually a fluent conversationalist. He had gone but a short distance when he came back and said briskly "Say, McDermott, how's all your family?" Apparently, he remembered the incident with Abbott and tried to be friendly and intimate as Abbott had been when he took him by
the hand years before to congratulate Mr. McDermott upon the addition to his family.