

Click!



A Story about George Eastman



by Barbara Mitchell
illustrated by Jan Hosking Smith
A Creative Minds Biography

Chapter One

George had a toothache. He did not want to trouble his mother about it, though. The Eastmans had hardly enough money to keep the house going, let alone enough to pay a dentist.

Mrs. Eastman was already bustling about in the kitchen getting breakfast for George, Ellen Maria, and Emma Kate—and for the boarders. The boarders had come after Father died. “*Boarders on Livingston Park*,” the neighbors had said. They did not think much of having the homes in this stylish neighborhood of Rochester, New York, turned into rooming houses. But Mr. Eastman had sunk all of his money into his dream, a business college for the city of Rochester, and very little was left when he died.

George watched his mother ladle out big bowls of oatmeal. She looked tired. Probably has one of her headaches again, he thought. After breakfast would come the great stack of dishes to wash, the rooms to clean, and the laundry to do. Then there would be Katey's lessons to hear. Emma Kate had been crippled by polio and could not get to school during the winter.

George did not like to see his pretty mother struggling so. It worried him. It frightened him, too. The house was chilly again this morning. The wood pile would have to last all winter, Mother had said. But suppose the wood pile did *not* last? What would they do? "Maybe I could get a job, Mother," George said.

Mrs. Eastman looked up from her serving. More than anything, she wanted her children to finish school. "Nine-year-old boys are too young to be thinking about jobs," she said to George. "Now run along to Sunday school."

George took his place in the row of Sunday school boys. He had brought along something interesting, just in case the lesson went on too long. It was a puzzle he had made out of his mother's old wire knitting needles. The wonderful toy went up and down the row of curious boys.

The boy next to George wanted George to give the toy to him for keeps. "Nothing doing," George said. Then George had an idea. "All right, you may have it—for 10¢," he said. George took the dime home to his mother.

By the time George was 13, the Eastmans were nearly penniless. An insurance agent offered George a job as a messenger boy. There was nothing for Mrs. Eastman to do but give in and let her son leave school to go to work. George made \$3 a week and started his first cash-and-account book. Like everything else of George's, the book was a masterpiece of organization. He even wrote in the money he spent to treat his family to ice cream on his fourteenth birthday: "ice cream, 65¢, July 12, 1868."

The next year, George got a job as an office boy. "You certainly are an organizer," his boss said. Soon George was earning \$35 a month. He liked to do things for his mother whenever he could. Once he took her to a lecture and afterward had a photograph taken of himself for her (and one taken for his Sunday school teacher, too).

Having a photograph taken was a real labor of love (both for the photographer and for the subject). One had to sit absolutely still while the

When George Eastman decided to make photography his hobby, “simple” was hardly the word to describe the pastime. He had to lug 50 pounds of camera equipment around with him, including the fragile glass plates which would become pictures. But resourceful George wasn’t one to put up with such inconvenience for long. *Click!* is the story of how George Eastman developed a camera simple enough for anyone to use—the Kodak, predecessor of today’s pocket instamatics—and forever revolutionized photography.

“[A] stand-out because of the successful integration of a goodly amount of technological information with accurate and interesting biographical information.” —*Appraisal*

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ISBN 0-87614-472-5



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