Martin and Osa Johnson Flipbook

Martin Johnson (1884-1937) and Osa Leighty Johnson (1894-1953) were explorers and photographers who both grew up in southeast Kansas. Martin’s father owned a jewelry store in Independence that also sold cameras. Osa’s father worked for the railroad in Chanute. Martin began his explorations with author Jack London. When he returned to Kansas he took his photographs from town to town, stopping in Chanute where he met Osa. Together they traveled to Africa and the South Pacific to photograph exotic animals, peoples, and landscapes, much of which is now gone.

About the images

The images for this flip book were scanned from a 16mm film. In the film, the scene of the giraffes running across the savanna takes less than two seconds, but is composed of more than 80 frames. Sixteen of these images were selected for this book. Each frame is basically a photograph, similar to what you might take with a still camera. The difference is that the camera that filmed the giraffes was taking these still pictures at a rapid speed. The resulting film is a strip of still images. When the developed film is shown, the projector moves at a fast rate of speed that causes the human eye to see the still images as continuous motion.

Assembly instructions

Print the following three pages. It works best if you can use stiff paper but standard printer paper is fine. Cut out each of the pages for the flip book along the solid lines. All of the pages will be slightly different lengths. This makes it easier to flip through the book when it is finished. Arrange the pages in order according to the number in the top left hand side of each image. Line up all the pages by the edge that has a broken line marked for staples. Staple the left edge along the broken line. Your flip book is ready!

Flip book images are from the opening of Big Game Hunt, a 1950s television program that featured footage from the Johnsons’ films. All images are from the Kansas Historical Society collections.
Giraffes Running Across the African Savanna

Images from the opening of Big Game Hunt, a 1950s television show featuring the Johnsons’ film, The Jaws of Death.

(Kansas Historical Society collections)