

The PHSC E-MAIL

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The Photographic Historical Society of Canada

At our November 21st Meeting...

PHOTO BY MIKE ROBINSON



The above daguerreotype portrait was taken of Andrew Rodger of the National Archives of Canada while he was in Toronto to speak before a gathering of the PHSC members; the photo is by Mike Robinson. All things, as planned, do not go right. When Andrew's laptop failed to respond he relied on his years of experience to talk about the NA supported by his many slides. We offer a condensed version of Mr. Rodger's presentation that has been freed from the computer. Look for sample images on the PHSC web site re: programs.

...what follows is a report to you, the shareholders: how we at the National Archives have spent our time since 1872 in collecting Canada's photographic heritage and how we have gone about storing it and making it available. I'm going to divide my talk into several overlapping parts: a brief background on the Archives; a walk around the new building at Gatineau, which houses many of our collections; a look at the kinds of photographs which an archives acquires; a tour through some of these treasures; and a few words about what kind of research you can do at the Archives.

A bit of background on the NA: What is now called the National Archives of



Canada was founded in 1872 as the Public Archives of Canada. Why Public? At the time, most archives were in the hands of private organizations, individuals, churches and the like, and were not open to public use. The Public Archives of Canada were to collect documents from the Dominion Government as well as collect what it could find relating to the history of Canada from other sources.

The first major documents were textual in nature, but very early on the Archives began to collect all sorts of other materials and by the early twentieth century had set up the Maps room and the Picture Division in order to cater specifically for these forms of documents. While it was not the first institution in the world to start formally collecting photographs as a form of documentation, the Public Archives was one of the original institutions to subscribe to Edward Curtis' books on the North American Indian in 1910. Our first available accession registers show that by 1921 we were regularly collecting photographs. By the mid-1960s all the photo collecting and photo reference was recognized as a separate administrative entity and, with some changes, there is still a separate photographic acquisition and research unit at the National Archives..

A few statistics about the National Archives: most of our holdings are in two main buildings. One, at Renfrew (about 80 kilometres away from the Archives headquarters, which is where researchers come) holds primarily gov-

Location/Date/Times for PHSC Monthly Meetings

are held on the third Wednesday from September to June in the Burgundy Room of the North York Central Library, 5120 Yonge Street, North York, Ontario. The meeting officially begins at 8:00 p.m. but is preceded by a *Buy & Sell* and social gathering from 7:00 p.m. onwards. For information contact the PHSC or Gerald Loban, 64 Fonthill Blvd., Unionville, Ont., L3R 1V7, (905) 477-3382.

Programming Schedule:

December 19th 2001

-the PHSC Xmas gift exchange.
-Show and Tell Nite where members show their most interesting collectable

March 17th 2002

-PHSC Annual Auction at Royal Cdn. Legion, Branch 344, 1395 Lakeshore Blvd. West. Details to follow

May 5th 2002

-PHSC Spring Fair at the Coffee Time Soccer Centre, Woodbridge, Ont.

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ernment documents; the other, at Gatineau (about 15 kilometres away) holds most of the rest of our materials, including most of our photography. How much photography? We estimate that we have about 22,000,000 photographs in our holdings from daguerreotypes to digital files. Everything about the Archives has to be measured on a pretty colossal scale: for example, there's almost 150 kilometres of shelving for textual records -- which is like going from here to Mississauga and back, and back to Mississauga again, and then back here, and then back and forth a couple more times.

The mandate of the National Archives is pretty broad. We are ultimately responsible for managing all the documentation created by federal government departments and agencies; and we are responsible for deciding what, of the millions of documents produced every year, is worth keeping for the historical record and archival record. I should point out that the historical and the archival records are not the same. The historical record is of value for determining historical questions. The archival record includes documents which are kept in many instances for a pre-determined period of time and for specific purposes. An example of archival documents which must be kept but which by themselves have no historical purpose are the radiation exposure tabs worn by people working with radiation. These are photographic records in that they are composed of a photographic emulsion which would register exposure to radiation. Their only value comes if certain things -- such as cancer -- subsequently occur to their wearers. Then they provide a record which might indicate that radiation had a part to play in the cancer. Such archival records usually have a stated life, and then can be disposed of.

Aside from government records we also collect materials from organizations which have a national scope, and from nationally known individuals. Naturally, we don't collect everything as this would be impossible. But we collect an awful lot.

This talk is advertised as being about the photographic treasures at the National Archives. If that is so, then we should first talk about the treasure chest in which they're stored. As the name implies, the Gatineau Preservation Centre (or the GPC, as we call it) was designed as a holdings and treatment

area; no archivists nor researchers were supposed to be here on a regular basis, and the stacks are not designed to be worked in. Instead, the documents are kept in the same environment when they are being given conservation or preservation treatment, because all of the conservators are located in this building. A visual tour of the new archives Gatineau Preservation Centre shows: the outside curtain wall forming a big curtain around the inner vaults, power plant, stairs rising to the fifth floor, air ducts carrying controlled atmosphere, the fifth floor village where preservation and conservation work is done, vaults, inside vault 33 -



albums, extra large photos, etc and maps, cold vaults for colour and another for nitrate films,.

These images just scratch the surface of the Gatineau Preservation Centre treasure chest -- it is difficult to convey the sense that the conservators are working in a fantastic space -- lots of space, which they didn't have before -- or create the sense of purpose that exists at the GPC. This is not only the place where the conservation work is undertaken. It is also where most of the copy work and scanning is done. This is the sort of work which makes copies of documents available to the public and, through the internet, to the world at large. In order to have something to work with, however, the Archives has to collect the documents in the first place. Many different institutions collect photographs - but, like individual collectors, they col-

lect them for different institutional reasons. Museums and art galleries and archives all collect, but they have different ends in view in the use and purposes to which their photographs will be put. Museums want photographs as documentation for the artifacts in their collections, and for use in the development of exhibitions. Art galleries acquire photographs as works of art; generally these works are by photographers who are widely considered to be artists. Generally the works acquired are either those considered as the artist's most important works or a small group of photographs related to the same theme or taken at a particular point in time. Each gallery, of course, decides what its collections will consist of and directs its collecting towards fulfilling what it sees as its mandate.

Archives are a bit different from museums and art galleries in that they collect photographs in several different ways and for several different reasons. An archives might collect photos as parts of larger groups of documents all created by the same person, company, agency, government department or whatever. This larger group is called the *fonds* -- and the *fonds* can contain documents of many different media such as text, film, sound, electronic records, photographs and so forth. Photographs in some way relate to the rest of the record and cast some light on why the record exists in the way it does. Or, in some instances, the photographs are the only records we have, and they constitute the *fonds* in and of themselves.

Archives also attempt to preserve the nature of the record by keeping all the essential records, and usually by keeping them in the original order in which they were organized by their creator. There are several reasons for doing this: usually the creator of the records organized them in a way that made them easiest to use for his or its particular purposes. This means that it is possible to figure out some of the underlying ideas that the creator had when creating them in the first place -- or it is possible to see that the records were designed to serve a particular purpose. There is another very good reason: the creator of the records might have developed some sort of index or finding aid to the records. Aside from the fact that this might give intellectual clues about what the creator thought he was doing in organizing and ordering his records in a particular way, there's little

point in the archivist re-doing work that has already been done! What you get in the archival record is not a series of individual items, but a series of individual items which are located in a context. This contextualization underlies a major part of the work of the archivist. The historian tries to link together events, ideas, activities, personalities, and so forth in such a way as to form a coherent explanation of the whole of the documentation available to him, but the documentation itself generally comes from a record which has an inner coherence. Indeed, several years ago a historian wrote a book about the events at Dieppe and a major part of his argument centred on the archival record and what was NOT found there. His argument was that major operations always were undertaken with certain activities being documented, and he couldn't find the documentation for many of these activities in the Canadian army at Dieppe. He therefore concluded that the operation hadn't been planned in the normal way nor carried out through the normal channels; and he drew some resultant conclusions about who was responsible for the fiasco.

What I'm getting at is that there are different kinds of treasures -- there are those which may represent an aesthetic peak, or which may record some great or terrible event, or which by their uniqueness show us something about ourselves as human beings or about our collective past. And there are archival treasures -- which include all of the above kinds of treasures -- but which also include the very nature of the archival record. In this treasure the whole is far greater than the sum of its parts. While the individual photograph might be an excellent illustration the contextualization of that photo gives it a resonance and value which on its own it would not have. Many of the photographs are from government sponsored activities. These are not necessarily the product of a particular department of government, but exist because of reports or activities undertaken by the government of the day. Others of the photographs come either from individuals or from studios. I'm going to be looking at these photographs in pretty much chronological sequence. I have an apology to make: I think that without really realizing it, my peripheral involvement

with a web site about the opening of the west has influenced my choice of many of the photographs I've chosen to show. Or maybe it's because I'm originally from the west.

We are trying to reconstitute a photo album on the Trip of Discovery by Paul Miot and the French government which sponsored a scientific trip to North



PHOTOS COURTESY NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF CANADA

America and to south seas in 1857. We got 3 more items last week by bidding in an auction. This is one way of collecting materials -- but its by far the most costly way, and usually can be done only with a great deal of work. These are the earliest images we have of Newfoundland. We have a Micmac woman in Cape Breton. Note that another Miot portrait of a Micmac woman went for over 28000 FF last week.

While a French government expedition was setting foot on the east coast, a Canadian government expedition to the west was under way. The British government had sent out John Palliser to report on the area of Rupert's Land. In his report he felt that the Canadian prairie was essentially a desert which could not be settled. The Canadian government was rather upset by this, and sponsored its own report by Henry Youle Hind. Hind decided to take a photographer with him in order to provide good visual documentation of the region, and chose Toronto photographer Humphrey Lloyd Hime, of the firm Armstrong, Beere and Hime. While Hime took a number of shots of the prairies they were pretty much all lost in his travels. For the most part what we have are photos which show the fact that the area at least around the Red River could be settled because it already had been.

What Hime is saying through his photographs is that the basics of European society could already be found in the west -- churches, schools, farms, and hospitals existed.

In the centre of the nascent country Ottawa had been chosen as the capital of the colony of Canada. For the time being the legislature was located in Quebec City, but the new buildings were being built in Ottawa. So much money was being poured into the buildings that complaints of graft were heard and Samuel McLaughlin, a Quebec City photographer, was hired to prove through his images that buildings were actually being built.

Alexander Henderson -- like Notman an immigrant from Scotland, worked as an accountant; began photography in the early 1860s; published in 1865 "Canadian Views and Studies". These were just tipped-in photos - apparently

made more or less to order as different copies have different bindings; and contents differ though are not wildly at variance. It shows the country rather than the city, for the most part.

Thomas Grant --- Inspector of Musketry for British forces in NA. His album, donated in 1930s, contains much material by Notman and others. Includes gem sized portraits of the men working under him. Shows a side of life in Canada which he could carry back to Britain. Don't know how much of what Notman and other photographers did was specifically for the "tourist" trade; certainly the stereos of Notman, Livernois, Vallée and others were done for the tourist trade.

Benjamin Baltzly -- hired by Notman to go with a group which was to survey a railway route to British Columbia when BC entered Confederation. These photos continued to be issued by Notman at least until 1890s (sometimes slightly changed -- with clouds added, etc.) and not credited to Baltzly.

Charles Horetzky -- accompanied a group looking at a northern route to the west. He made several trips west. Both sets of photographs show the country before any development as well as showing what development there was.

Thus far much of what I've shown has centred on the activities of government - either from photographers employed directly by government departments or photographers who worked on government surveys or studies. What about private materials?

Private organizations, studios, individual photographers, transfers of material from elsewhere in the archives ie. photos as parts of *fonds*.

Organizations: Some organizations, such as newspapers and magazines and other publications, make a great use of photographs as illustration. The NA has acquired photos from newspapers such as the Globe and Mail and the Toronto Star, and from magazines such as Weekend Magazine and the Canadian Mining Journal.

Studios: our most important collection of nineteenth century Canadian photography is the Topley collection. Acquired by the NA in 1936, it includes more than 150,000 negatives ranging from wet collodion to nitrate and covers not only the typical studio portraiture but also a great deal of work done across the country

PHOTO BY ROBERT LANSDALE



Bill Kantymir presents PHSC membership plaque to speaker Andrew Rodger.

particularly in the period between about 1900 and the First WW. (e.g. Topley was official photographer for the Royal Tour in 1901) Topley worked in Ottawa from 1868 on. He initially ran Notman's studio in Ottawa which was taken over in 1872 by Topley, lasting until 1924.

What about amateur photographers?

We have the photographs of Captain James Peters who participated in the Northwest Rebellion. His snapshots record the actual events and people. Sydney Carter's photographs are pre-

served: The Rose; Phrynn; Bathing Nude; Le Baiser; a self portrait. A valuable collection of early colour photography by G.R.G Conway consists of Autochromes.

I would re-emphasize the *fonds* concept which allows drawing together of all parts of a record so that photos are not treated in isolation.

The National Archives web site

(www.archives.ca) includes many thematic "exhibitions", which include numerous documents. While these are often captivating looks at aspects of Canadian history, researchers should look at the bar on the left of the screen and click on "ArchiviaNet", which will take them to a number of databases which provide much greater detail about our holdings. Here it is possible to zero in on descriptions of the *fonds* I talked about (in the section labelled "General Inventory"), as well as look at literally millions of entries concerning documents of all sorts --including over 500,000 records specifically dealing with photographs!

Andrew Rodger

Coming Events

November 24 to December 22 The Stephen Bulger Gallery, 700 Queen Street West, Toronto offers the first Canadian exhibition by American photographer Ray K. Metzker illustrating the nuances of the urban scene.

Saturday, December 1, 2001, The Annual Meeting of Zeiss Historica Society with Dr. Hubert Golberg as main speaker. Contact: Larry Gubas at Lngubas@aol.com for details.



Honoured at the November meeting was Stan White (on right) seen being presented with a commemorative plaque by Program Chairman Gerry Loban for the Stereo-Nite Show in October.

Kodak Lecture Series 2001-2002, Ryerson Polytechnic University in Toronto is the site for the 2001-2002 Kodak Lecture Series. Noted photographers from Canada and around the world make their presentations in the School of Imaging Arts auditorium at no cost to attendees. Visit the web site at www.kodak.ca/go/kodaklectures. Roni Horn, N.Y.; Rineke Dijkstra, Amsterdam; Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller, Lethbridge; and Joan Fontcuberta, Barcelona are scheduled for February/March of 2002.

Advertisements

Members are invited to submit one free advertisement to the classified section of each issue, limit 50 words, used at the editor's discretion.

For Sale

Zeiss, Leitz, Tiyo-da, Jena, Spencer, mono and binocular microscopes; Epi, oil, phase, achromatic objectives; eyepieces and accessories - CLEARANCE. Also a Capstaff-Purdy densitometer (Kodak) ca.1935, working, rare, \$60.00 from Ron Walker collection Contact: Everett Roseborough, 289 The Kingsway, Apt. 1403, Toronto, ON, M9A 3T9, or phone (416) 233-4678



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For Sale

Two specialized Kodak catalogues: "Hawk-eye Cameras of 1888-1979" with over 300 models listed - \$3 + \$1 postage. "Kodak cameras 1964-1980" giving retail prices, market dates and technical data. \$1.50 + \$1 postage. Or both books for \$4.50 + \$1.50 = \$6.00. Marge Addison (613) 374-2169, or marge@pvdd.com