

## *On View: The Evolution of Amateur Photography*

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Nearly all the greatest work is being, and has always been done, by those who are following photography for the love of it.

Alfred Stieglitz, 1899

All the photographs in "Private Realms of Light" were created for the love of photography. Making them was an art or a pastime or a challenge. For many images, this is their first public appearance; for others, only another in a string of exhibitions which brought widespread recognition. For all, it is the first time that the work of amateurs has been placed in the stream of Canada's historical consciousness. Their splendid achievements explode the myth of the bumbler. Indeed, amateurs were among the very first to try photography in our rough-hewn country. Many were dedicated, expert photographers who surpassed the technical and artistic abilities of the professional. In Canada, amateurs were among the first to take on-the-spot snapshots, the first to pursue photography as an art form, the first to experiment with colour photography, and the first to adopt the miniature camera. Unbounded in interests and undeterred by failure, they often led, often surpassed the professionals they so admired. Indeed, the ranks of amateurs were swelled by professionals who indulged a need to pursue photography on their own time as a means of creative expression or personal record-keeping.

Perhaps more so in photography than in, say, sports, the word "amateur" has taken on a pejorative sense. Increasingly, technological advances made it possible to take pictures without detailed knowledge of optics or chemistry. Disdain grew for the snapshooter who sent his film to the local drugstore for processing. In the preliminary stages of work on "Private Realms of Light," the literal definition and the popular conception of an amateur engendered heated debate over what clearly merited inclusion in an exhibition on Canadian amateur photography. Eventually, amateur photography was considered to be work done "for the love of it," not for monetary gain. Thus, the portrait, industrial, and press photographer might be represented by his/her non-commercial endeavours, but not by "official" photographs for which he or she was paid.

What follows is a brief description of the historical and stylistic developments of the various sections of "Private Realms of Light," accompanied by a selection of photographs offering a representative sample of the accomplishments of Canadian amateur photography between 1839 and 1940.

## *The Early Years, 1839-1885*

Remarkably, the name of Canada's first amateur photographer is known. Gustave Joly de Lotbinière, a Quebec seigneur, was in Paris in 1839 at the time of the announcement of the new process invented by Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre. Joly de Lotbinière obtained the necessary apparatus and used it in his travels through the lands of Antiquity. The only known examples of his work exist as engravings in N.-M. P. Lerebours' *Excursions daguerriennes*,<sup>1</sup> which reproduces three of Joly de Lotbinière's daguerreotypes.

A second early method of photography, the calotype or Talbotype process invented by an Englishman, William Henry Fox Talbot, was also introduced in 1839. It was practised by few photographers in Canada, and little of their work has survived. This earliest period of amateur photographic activity in Canada is shrouded in mystery. Canada's small population spread over large distances, and the technical difficulty of these early methods precluded the growth of organized amateur activity on the scale of Europe or the United States.

Only in the 1860s, with the advent of "wet-plate" photography, do new names emerge together with their impressive photographs. Many of these amateurs, like Richard Roche, were visitors, stationed with the British Army or Navy, or sent out to fill colonial government positions. Montreal's Alexander Henderson defied convention by successfully taking pictures with his cumbersome equipment during snow storms and freezing weather. A group of isolated Hudson's Bay Company men at Moose Factory pursued photography as a pastime, and left us a unique record of early Canada's northern hinterland. Finally, the gelatin dry-plate, the major technical development of the 1870s, freed photographers from the need to prepare emulsions and develop negatives on the spot. It created a revolution in photography and ushered in the era of a new and different amateur.

1. Richard Roche, "American Artillerymen, San Juan [Island], Vancouver's Island, B. C.," [November 1859]. Albumen silver print, 145 x 205 mm. Courtesy: Provincial Archives of British Columbia.

This photograph of American soldiers taken by a British officer attests the peaceful coexistence between the American and British detachments on San Juan Island after its initial occupation by the American infantry in July 1859. This was no "grab" shot; rather, it required a reasonably long exposure with the cooperation of the soldiers. The photographer, Richard Roche (1831-1888) was in something of a privileged position as the first British officer ashore after the occupation, landed to scout the best location for the British Marines' camp.

This photograph, one of Roche's more successful, shows a number of the difficulties which faced the photographer in 1859. He used the collodion wet-plate technique which required the photographer to flow the emulsion onto a sheet of glass, then sensitize, expose, and develop it before the collodion hardened. Coating the plate was a tricky business and, in the hands of the inexperienced, could prove

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1 N.-M. P. Lerebours, *Excursions daguerriennes* (Paris, 1840-41).



disastrous. This print reveals a relatively good technique, for the flow marks of the viscous collodion can be seen in the lower left-hand corner where they should be. Roche was not always this adept. Dust and dirt were always threats, and are probably responsible for the dark, granular dots appearing in the distant line of trees. Roche's lens did not quite cover his full negative; consequently, there are dark cutoffs at the corners. These were usually masked by trimming the corners in a rounded fashion.

Roche was a lieutenant aboard *H. M.S. Satellite* which had been sent to the North Pacific coast in 1857 to aid in the marking of the boundary through the Straits of Juan de Fuca. He is typical of many British military men who took up photography as a hobby to document the strange and exotic lands where they were stationed. Little is known of Roche himself, and there exists only a handful of his photographs. Like many contemporary travellers, he was interested in keeping photographs as souvenirs of his travels.



2. *Alexander Henderson, "At Hochelaga," from Canadian Views and Studies, [1860-1865], Albumen silver print, 164 x 211 mm. Courtesy: Public Archives of Canada (PA-126623).*

This snow scene, one of many by Henderson, was taken at a stage in the development of the medium when photographers seldom worked outdoors in winter. This was not only because of discomfort and inconvenience, but because it was generally believed that the cold rendered the already slow wet-collodion emulsion even less sensitive. Henderson was not deterred, and produced many beautiful winter scenes, on one occasion even in a snow storm. Henderson's work is marked by the fine quality of his prints resulting from his mastery of photographic technique.

Alexander Henderson (1831-1913) came to Canada from Scotland during the 1850s. An accountant at first, he took up photography as a hobby. Gradually his talent and interest took over his job and, about 1866, he opened a studio as a professional. Prior to that time, he had made a reputation for himself as a landscape photographer who was a member of the Art Association of Montreal and well known to the city's leading artists.

Henderson was attracted to the outdoors, and carefully composed his photographs to be intimate and inviting. His work, particularly at this period of his life, was marked by a distinctly picturesque style and, as it matured, bridged the gap between documentary photographs rooted in time, and romantic, almost idealized country scenes. More than any of his contemporaries in Canada, Henderson balanced the demands of commercial practicality and artistic sensitivity.

## *The New Amateur, 1885-1900*

Photography became much more accessible to the layman during the 1880s, thanks largely to new equipment such as the hand-held camera which took gelatin dry-plate negatives, and the Kodak camera which introduced commercially processed celluloid roll film. As a result, hundreds of adventurous men and women, like James Peters, May Ballantyne, and Robert Reford, took up photography, primarily as a sort of visual diary for recording the events of their personal lives.

The rise of the New Amateur gave impetus to the formation of camera clubs in the cities and towns of Canada. These organizations provided forums where both amateurs and professionals could meet to exchange experiences, and to hear lectures on photography. They could consult photographic manuals and periodicals, use club darkrooms and workrooms, and participate in photo excursions and a variety of social events. Moreover, by organizing annual public exhibitions and by fostering contacts in the United States and the United Kingdom, clubs introduced Canadian amateur photography to a wider audience.

Unfortunately, the competitive nature of exhibitions, which resulted in medals and prizes for only a select few, exacerbated the growing divergence between serious amateurs who regarded photography as a form of art, and those amateurs who valued content more than style. As Canadian amateurs entered the twentieth century, the British critic, H. Snowden Ward, expressed the optimistic wish that they would “evolve their own school, expressing their own thoughts, feelings, and even prejudices, and giving us something of the real spirit of the breezy, frank, progressive life of their great colony.”<sup>2</sup>

3. James Peters, “[Louis] Riel, a prisoner, [Batoche, N.W.T.],” 19 May 1885, *Albumen silver print, 96 x 126 mm*. Courtesy: Public Archives of Canada (C-3450).

“Riel was allowed out of his tent this afternoon for a few minutes, of course escorted by a guard. He had scarcely left the tent when the ubiquitous Captain Peters of ‘A’ Battery, who is an amateur photographer of no mean order, had him ‘taken’. Riel looked askance at the ‘instantaneous’ camera, perhaps fearing that it was an infernal machine, but as it didn’t go off, he walked back into his tented prison apparently well pleased.”<sup>3</sup>

This is one of those photographs that could only have been taken by the right person, at the right time and place, using the right type of camera. Peters was at Batoche because he was a professional soldier. He was outside Riel’s tent because he was a conscientious amateur photographer who sought to make his documentary record of the Northwest Rebellion as complete as possible. Given the bad light and the fleeting nature of the subject, he took what modern photographers would call a “grab shot,” using the Marion “Academy” dry-plate, hand-held camera which had served him throughout the campaign. Canada’s first military photographer, Peters, commented, “It is quite wonderful what the instrument did stand.... The rebel

2 H. Snowden Ward and Catherine Weed Ward, eds., *Photograms of the Year* (London, 1899), pp. 73-74.

3 C.P. Mulvaney, *The History of the North-West Rebellion of 1885* (Toronto, 1885), p. 321.



marksmen of the far West did not give an amateur photographer much time with his 'quickest shutter'.... Numbers of my plates are under time ... but 'circumstances alter photographs.'"<sup>4</sup>

Born and raised in Saint John, New Brunswick, James Peters (1853-1927) began his military career at the age of seventeen with the 62nd Saint John Fusiliers during the Fenian raid of 1870. During the Northwest Rebellion of 1885, Peters commanded "A" Battery of the Regiment of Canadian Artillery, and was mentioned in despatches for his conspicuous services. He also acted as a special correspondent for the Quebec *Morning Chronicle*, and found time to pursue his hobby of photography. He was one of the original members of the Quebec Camera Club founded in 1887, and served as its first President.

4. *Robert Wilson Reford, "Town Council Taking It In, [Masset, B.C., October 1890]," Silver gelatin print, Circular image, 60 mm diameter, on paper 73 x 73 mm. Courtesy: Public Archives of Canada (C-60834).*

This photograph is a fascinating record of the interaction between the photographer and the Haida people of the Queen Charlotte Islands.<sup>5</sup> As the men and boys gathered to look through the ground glass back of a large, tripod-mounted, dry-plate camera, Reford took their photograph with a second camera. The small,

4 For a complete account of Peters' photography, see "Photographs Taken Under Fire," *The Canadian Militia Gazette* 1, no. 32 (15 December 1885), p. 252.

5 Margaret B. Blackman, " 'Copying People': Northwest Coast Native Response to Early Photography," in Joan M. Schwartz, ed., *The Past in Focus: Photography & British Columbia, 1858-1914*, a special issue of *BC Studies* 52 (Winter 1981-82), pp. 86-112.



circular format reveals that Reford was one of the first Canadians to use a Kodak No. 1 camera which had become commercially available in 1888. The Kodak system of photography, invented by George Eastman, consisted of a box camera which was supplied to the photographer already loaded with a 100-exposure roll of celluloid film. Using the camera required only that one obey the slogan: "You press the button, We do the rest." When a roll was finished, the photographer sent both camera and film back to Eastman's factory, where prints were made and a new roll of film was loaded into the camera.<sup>6</sup> Commercial processing, which separated the act of taking a photograph from the task of developing and printing it, began to influence significant numbers of Canadian amateurs.

Robert Wilson Reford (1867-1951) was educated at Upper Canada College in Toronto, and at Lincoln College in Sorel. In order to broaden his education before joining his father's Montreal shipping firm, he travelled to the Mediterranean in 1885, to Britain in 1887, and to France in 1888. From 1889 to 1891, young Reford lived in Victoria, immersing himself in the commercial life of British Columbia. He assisted in running the affairs of the Mount Royal Rice Milling and Manufacturing

6 Brian Coe, *Cameras: From Daguerreotypes to Instant Pictures* (New York, 1978), pp. 79-88.

Company, and was Ship's Agent for the firm's clipper ship *Thermopylae*, which brought rice from China. It was during these years of apprenticeship that he used photography to record the activities of himself and his friends, and to document the landscape and people of the province. In 1892, he became the Reford Company's agent at Antwerp, Belgium. Later he returned to Montreal, where he continued his interest in photography as a member of the Montreal Camera Club. Upon the death of his father in 1913, he became President of the Reford Company, and remained active in its affairs until his retirement in 1946.



5. J. May Ballantyne, "Lillie and Jo [Lillie Ballantyne and Joe O'Gara, Ottawa East, Ontario]." 1891, Dry-plate negative, 100 x 125 mm. Courtesy: Public Archives of Canada (PA-130011).



This is a photograph which enters the privacy of nineteenth-century family life to record the spontaneity of childhood in an engaging way. It not only documents social conditions, but also highlights the fact that many New Amateurs were women like May Ballantyne. Much of the photographic advertizing of the period was directed at women, many of whom took up photography in their traditional role of family record-keeper. There is a tragic postscript to this photograph, for Lillie Ballantyne later died of tuberculosis as a young woman.

Isa May Ballantyne (1864-1929) belonged to a family of amateur photographers in the community of Ottawa East. Her father, James, was one of the original members of the Ottawa Camera Club founded in 1894. May herself was Vice-President of the club in 1898-1899, and her brother, Adam, was Secretary in 1899-1900.

### *Art Ascendant, 1900-1914*

Undoubtedly the single most significant change in amateur photography at the turn of the century was the attempt to introduce pictorialism as the canon of artistic taste. Stemming from earlier movements in England and New York, pictorialism reached Canada chiefly through the efforts of Sidney Carter and Harold Mortimer-Lamb. These two, with a small band of converts, cajoled, criticized, and manoeuvred Canadian amateur photographers into a respect for the new style, with its broad compositional effects, diffused focus, art-imitative techniques, and subject matter derived from the traditions of painting.

The debate over pictorialism did not halt the continuing popularity of snapshot and travel photography. Wherever Canadians travelled, whether to their own Northland or to places in Europe or the United States, they took their Kodaks and their hand cameras. They recorded the life and scenery around them like nascent photojournalists, intriguing us with a glimpse of a strange garden or an Eskimo mother. Although the family remained an important subject, photographs of relatives could now be mixed with stop-action shots or experimentally "artistic" portraits.

Technical advances and marketing kept pace with the interests of amateurs, resulting in simpler equipment and improved services. Most breathtaking of all, practicable colour photography first appeared in Canada in the hands of amateurs. From a past which seemed already to encompass an unprecedented momentum of photographic change, this period witnessed an even more rapid expansion. Wherever they looked, whatever their interests — art, technique, events of family — amateurs of this period could see only broader, greener fields before them.

6. *Sidney Carter, "Portrait — Joliffe Walker, Esq.,"* [c. 1908], *Platinum print, 220 x 158 mm.* Courtesy: Public Archives of Canada (PA-126983).

The veiled quality of this portrait, with its softened edges, makes it a fine example of the pictorial style so actively espoused in Canada by Sidney Carter (1880-1956). The luminous highlights and the intense, serious expression are far removed from the often stiff, accurate formality of professional studio work. The use of platinum rather than silver to create the image underlines the desire of pictorialists to exploit a wide range of subtle grey tones possible only in that medium, as well as their concern for the permanence of the image, for platinum prints were not subject to fading and silvering. An intriguing touch is the plain band deliberately left at the bottom of the print, perhaps a distant echo of a similar device used in Italian early Renaissance portraiture. The parallel is not far-fetched because the imitation of compositional techniques used in painting was very typical of pictorialism. In addition, the Italian early Renaissance had been endowed with *cachet* during the later part of the nineteenth century by way of a general admiration for the English pre-Raphaelite painters.

By the time Carter made this portrait, he had been established as a leader in Canadian photography for some years. He had achieved the status of Associate in Alfred Stieglitz's Photo-Secession in New York in 1904, the only Canadian known to have belonged to that elite group. In 1907, he attempted to become a professional in partnership with Harold Mortimer-Lamb. Their ill-starred venture limped along for about a year before it finally dissolved. One of the reasons for its failure was undoubtedly the novelty of their photographic style. However, by the time this portrait was exhibited, taste was turning toward pictorialism. In response, around 1917, Carter began to accept occasional portrait commissions, although he made his living largely as an art and antique dealer. Throughout the 1920s, he produced an impressive series of portraits of such prominent personalities as Serge Prokofieff, Bliss Carman, Percy Grainger, and John Singer Sargent. However, in 1928 he wrote to Alfred Stieglitz, "[I am] doing less each year and with few regrets as I have always found it nerve-wracking trying to please the public."<sup>7</sup>

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7 Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, Collection of American Literature, Carter to Stieglitz, 8 September 1928.





7. Thomas Cannon, "[Charles F.] Willard[flying] at [the] Donlands [Aviation Meet, Toronto, Ontario, 5 August] 1911," Silver gelatin lantern slide, 83 x 88 mm, cropped. Courtesy: Public Archives of Canada (PA-131094).

After the turn of the century in Canada, the widespread use of portable hand cameras combined with technical improvements such as faster emulsions and lenses facilitated "stop action" photography. As a result of this capability, photojournalism began to flourish, with amateurs often submitting prints to magazines and journals either for nominal fees or for the sheer joy of seeing a favourite image published. Editors encouraged this, asking for "an accident, a distinguished person doing something, a big fire, a riot...."<sup>8</sup> This documentary interest is well represented by Thomas Cannon's shot showing the flight of an early bi-plane at Toronto. Included in the photograph is a tripod camera, much bulkier than the small boxes which were winning the hearts of so many amateurs.

It is uncertain whether this view was taken by Thomas Edward Cannon, Jr. (1866-1956) or by his son, Thomas Hamilton Cannon (d. 1946). The family owned and operated a Toronto construction firm which became a cartage company around 1920. Thomas E. Cannon was a member of the Toronto Camera Club from 1908 to 1913. His sons, Thomas and Fred, served with No. 599 Company of the British Army Service Corps, a motor transport unit, in the East African campaign during 1916 and 1917. It was the latter Thomas who must have been responsible for the fascinating views of East African life which form part of the same collection that contains this rare glimpse of early aviation in Canada.

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8 *Canadian Pictorial*, Montreal, (September 1908), p. 16

## *So Few Earnest Workers, 1914-1930*

The period from 1914 to 1930 was deeply marked by the First World War. The young men of the camera clubs enlisted in the armed forces by the hundreds, leaving behind older cohorts to carry on their own style of photography for another decade. The thousands killed in the conflict included this young generation of amateur photographers, and the invigorating potential of youth did not make itself felt again until the mid-twenties. But all parts of the photographic world — the professional, the “serious” amateur, and the Sunday snaphooter — ultimately benefitted from the growth of technology spawned by the war effort. Technical advances resulted in improved cameras, lenses, films, and techniques which became commercially available during the 1920s, but most photographers continued to make pictures in much the same style as they had before — the snaphooter his photos of family and friend, the “serious” amateur his fuzzy landscapes and portraits in the pictorialist style. Canadian amateur photography during this period changed more as a result of external forces than because of internal growth and development. Not until the Great Depression and after was there an efflorescence of activity among a new generation.

Camera clubs slowly rebuilt after the War; internationally recognized salons, where both foreign and Canadian workers exhibited, were initiated or expanded in Toronto, Ottawa, and New Westminster. Some new workers, like Brodie Whitelaw, began their careers during the late twenties, replacing those who died or retired from competition. Yet no distinctive Canadian style emerged in photography as it had in the painting of the Group of Seven; ideas, much like equipment, were largely imported from abroad. There were, however, some Canadians such as Albert Van who achieved international standing through their own personal vision and technical excellence.

8. *Albert Van, “Mustafa Bay,” 1918. Carbon print from paper negative, 302 x 233 mm. Courtesy: Public Archives of Canada (PA-126695).*

Van’s lone pine is somewhat reminiscent of Tom Thomson’s painted work done several years earlier but, where Thomson boldly delineated his tree with broad strokes, Van’s photographic style followed the internationally ascendant pictorial fuzziness. There were several ways of achieving this highly regarded blur. The simplest entailed putting the camera out of focus when taking the picture; however, the more adept the amateur, the more involved he was likely to be with the manipulation of the negative and print after the original exposure had been made. In the case of “Mustafa Bay”, the print was made with the bromoil process which utilized various chemical treatments and oil-based pigments. Van printed this photograph in several ways, subtly changing the allure of the image each time.

By 1918 when this photograph was made, Albert Van had already spent more than a decade as a photographer. Born probably in Belgium, he came to North America shortly after the turn of the century. He was in San Francisco during the earthquake, and took photographs of the resulting fire; by 1910 he had moved to Toronto. After working for the City of Toronto in the blue-print shop during the 1910s (where his superior was the noted pictorialist, A.S. Goss), he joined the

Toronto *Telegram* in the early twenties as a photo-journalist, and stayed with this newspaper until shortly before his death in 1964. He was active as an amateur photographer, exhibiting here and there at salons, but his passion increasingly was for wildlife and nature shots. Although the earliest examples of this work were done in a pictorialist manner, he gradually changed his approach and attempted to portray his subjects as realistically as possible.





9. A. Brodie Whitelaw, "Architectural Fantasy," [c. 1929], Silver gelatin print, 229 x 179 mm. Courtesy: Public Archives of Canada (PA-126727).

"Architectural Fantasy" was done while Whitelaw was still in his teens. The converging lines of the buildings in the background (with the Hotel Vancouver on the right) result from his pointing the camera upward. This was generally frowned upon, but here the line of the trim on the margin follows exactly the line of the buildings across the street and holds the photograph together. This interest in line, shape, and dimension reflects some of the general tendencies of photography by the

late 1920s. John Vanderpant, Whitelaw's photographic mentor, at this time was intrigued more by geometrical problems than by pictorialism; his influence might have been felt in the creation of this image.

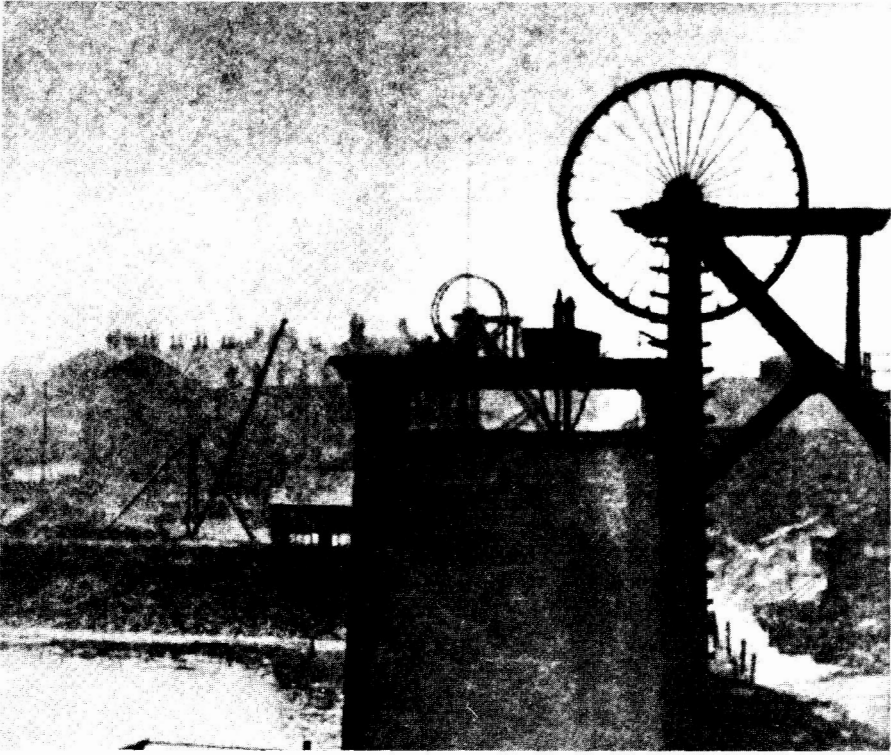
Brodie Whitelaw (b. 1910) became interested in photography while he was still a child. By the age of twelve, he had acquired a Kodak Vest Pocket camera; in his later high school years, he set up a small portrait photography business, helped by the internationally known photographer, John Vanderpant, whose style and outlook greatly influenced Whitelaw's work. After graduation from high school, he started a course in aeronautical engineering but, as the Depression hit Vancouver with some force, he left for Toronto, where he briefly worked in the accounting department of Shell Oil. Shortly thereafter, he joined a commercial photography studio and, except for a period as an air navigation instructor during World War II, he remained in commercial photography for the rest of his working life.

### *Salon Crescendo, 1930-1940*

The developments of the thirties marked a watershed in the history of amateur photography in this country. To an unprecedented degree, new technology offered greater opportunity, control, and variety in the pursuit of the medium. The growing popularity of the 35mm format and the invention of Kodachrome colour transparency film ushered in the modern age for the snapshotting amateur. For the pictorialist, the activities of the decade marked the climax of an era. As the economy recovered from the Depression, Canada experienced a photographic awakening that manifested itself in a dramatic increase in the number, size, and activity of camera clubs from coast to coast. With this growth, the salon scene thrived. At the same time, photographic aesthetics continued to evolve. In particular, pictorial work became less painterly and more oriented toward design as a new generation of camera enthusiasts began to explore the full defining powers of improved lenses and the faster recording speeds of new films.

Working largely within the mainstream of prevailing conventions, Canadians competed successfully at exhibitions all over the world and many achieved international acclaim. But, as in the years before, Canada's pictorialists were criticized for failing to develop a distinctive style of their own. The clamour for a nationalistic vision was silenced by the onset of another world war. After a period of growth and diversification, the thirties ended, much as they had begun, with retrenchment. The demise of the National Gallery's prestigious Canadian International Salon of Photographic Art in 1940 symbolized the end of an important period of recognition and support for pictorial photography. Nevertheless, amateur photography was a hardy element of Canada's social and cultural life, and survived these setbacks, only to flourish with renewed vigour in the postwar years.





10. Philip J. Croft, "Lancashire," [c. 1940], Silver gelatin print from paper negative, 196 x 233 mm. Courtesy: Public Archives of Canada (PA-126235).

Paper negatives, produced directly in the camera or later by reversing a print in the darkroom, were used by pictorialists as a technique for producing a diffuse, painterly image. Less refractory than the gum, oil, and other manipulative "control" processes popular among fine art photographers in the early decades of this century, the paper negative not only survived the demise of the soft-focus aesthetic, but actually enjoyed sustained interest among Canadian amateurs well into the forties. To Croft, out-of-focus was not soft or diffused, merely out-of-focus. He believed that needle-sharp negatives were required before pictorial effects were added in the printing stage. "Lancashire" exemplifies the successful application of this technique to reduce detail and emphasize compositional mass.

A professional engineer, Croft (b. 1901) drew upon his interests in physics, optics, and chemistry to give classes in photographic technique at the Montreal Camera Club which he helped to revive in 1932. He made his own photographic solutions from pure chemicals, and dabbled in both the bromoil and carbonyl processes. Much earlier than most of his Canadian contemporaries, Croft became interested in colour photography, exploring the gamut of materials and processes from hand-tinted lantern slides to wash-off relief prints. During the Depression, when work was slow in the field of engineering, Croft put his photographic talents to profitable use on some fashion and advertising photography, and even toyed with the idea of pursuing the lucrative field of commercial photography, but his engineering training

beckoned too strongly. After the war, Croft moved to Toronto and immediately became a member of the Toronto Camera Club. He combined his interests in colour photography and natural history but, increasingly, wildflowers, butterflies, and insects became his absorbing interest, so much so that when he moved to the West Coast in 1957, he joined, not the local camera club, but the natural history society.



11. John Morris, "Montreal Boat," 1939, Silver gelatin print, 262 x 327 mm. Courtesy: Public Archives of Canada (PA-126638).

"Montreal Boat" represents a departure from the subjects and styles of salon photography during the 1930s. Its success depended on Morris' ability to recognize a photographic opportunity and seize it, rather than on traditional premeditated composition. This print was selected "print of the month" by noted Canadian artist, A.J. Casson, who acted as judge and critic for the Toronto Camera Club's print competition for December 1939. The "moment frozen in time" gradually came to be accepted as suitable subject matter for exhibition work, and contributed to the changing aesthetic of amateur photography.

John Pearson Morris (1904-1978) became a member of the Toronto Camera Club in 1926, and for the next two decades was one of Canada's leading pictorialists. His work was exhibited regularly at the Toronto Salon of Photography, and was

accepted at some of the more prestigious Canadian and American salons. He won several prizes in the Kodak competitions of 1929 and 1931; one of his award-winning prints was used by Kodak as part of an advertisement for amateur cinematographic equipment. Morris was one of the few Canadians whose photography was featured on the cover of a major international photographic magazine; his print, "A Springtime Stroll," was the front-page illustration of the May 1930 issue of *American Photography*.

### *The Appearance of Colour*

Almost from the moment of photography's birth in 1839, the puzzle of how to reproduce the colours of nature fascinated photographers around the world. Early efforts concentrated on fine hand-tinting of black-and-white images. But the search was always for an "in camera" solution. Around the turn of the century, troublesome and complex methods were being explored by many, and were reported in the camera clubs. Experiments carried out before around 1903 by John Stanley Plaskett, later an outstanding astronomer, probably represent Canada's earliest serious efforts to understand the problem. Unfortunately, no successful colour photography by Plaskett has survived. The earliest examples are Autochromes and Omnicolore plates made around 1910. Both these methods, like all types of colour photography, were invented abroad, but were used in Canada almost as soon as they were made available to the public. Although resulting only in glass colour transparencies or lantern slides, rather than in prints, these methods were still the answer to a dream. They were easy, one-step techniques which could be produced using the portable hand-held cameras that amateurs were making their special province. Little wonder that this revolution came to Canada through the country's most receptive port of entry, the amateurs.

During the early thirties, colour transparency methods on celluloid films were developed for the motion picture industry, and appeared in roll form for miniature still photography cameras. Quickly embraced by the snapshooting amateur, these colour slides began to encroach upon the snapshot album as a record of family gatherings and holiday travels. Then, in 1936, Dufaycolor, Agfacolor, and other "granule" or "screen" base methods were superseded by a revolutionary new film, Kodachrome, the first integral tripack film and still king of the amateur slide market.

As Kodachrome ushered in a new era for slides, practical colour photography on paper was "as far off as ever."<sup>9</sup> The Eastman Wash-Off Relief process, the latest advance in the refractory method of producing colour prints from separation negatives, was used by Philip Croft, and gained a small following among Canadian amateurs. But it was not until after World War II that real advances in colour printing were to lead to its widespread adoption. In the interim, while slide photography flourished, colour did not significantly influence Canadian pictorial or salon work. However, colour was clearly the development of the future. By 1940, experimentation with prints and slides assumed unprecedented importance and heralded the end of the dominance of the black-and-white print in the world of amateur photography.

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9 F.J. Mortimer, "The Year's Work," *Photograms of the Year 1938* (London, 1938), p. 5



12. *Edith Hallett Bethune, "John E. (Jackie) Bethune and Terrier," [c. 1937], Hand-tinted, silver gelatin print, 254 x 155 mm. Courtesy: Public Archives of Canada (PA-126066 b/w copy).*

Until after World War II, the only means of making colour prints involved the painstaking and time-consuming three-colour carbon, carbro (a combination of carbon and bromide), and wash-off relief processes. These used separation negatives to produce colour images on three special which tissues were then transferred in exact register onto a paper support. An easier method, employed to add colour to photographic images almost since the invention of the medium, involved the application of colour to black-and-white prints.

Working independently at first, and later with the Annapolis Valley Pictorialists (Kentville, N.S.), Edith Hallett Bethune (1890-1970) enjoyed hand-colouring her black-and-white prints, sometimes producing coloured versions of her better known salon work, at other times producing small coloured landscape photographs for framing. Bethune was a woman of many talents who found creative expression in poetry, pottery, and weaving, as well as photography. Her earliest exhibition prints were essentially snapshots, developed and printed commercially. Mounted a half-dozen to a page, her photo-essays won first prize for both "portraits" and "landscape and marine" at the provincial exhibition in Halifax. One of these snapshots, a view taken at Rockland, N.S., was purchased by *Maclean's* for its 1931 travel issue and was published in the American journal, *The Camera*, that same year. In 1929, and again in 1931, Bethune won \$100 in the Kodak Competition. With the prize money, she purchased a new camera and an enlarger, and embarked upon more serious work for international magazine and salon competitions.

Over the next decade, her work was seen regularly at the Canadian Salon of Photography. Her prints toured Canada with the prestigious National Gallery salon, and were exhibited in Toronto and throughout the Maritimes. Her photographs were published in both *American Photography* and *The American Annual of Photography*, and consistently won awards from *Photo-Era Magazine*. Until a stroke curtailed her photography in 1947, Edith Hallett Bethune was one of Canada's leading pictorialists. Her accomplishments deserve particular mention for she was one of the few women active in salon photography, one of the few photographers from the Maritimes to achieve national and international renown, and one of the few amateurs working independently of an organized camera club.