

Despite the fact that it duplicates listings in the BM Map Catalogue this checklist is important because it highlights commercial maps of the period and gives us a better idea of how many were published. Two projects should flow from this — the first is for the National Map Collection to have 105 microfiche copies (or photostats) made of those maps not in its collection and the second is to consider a quick union list of holdings of the commercial maps of this period in map collections across Canada. Both would make good practical use of this checklist.

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**Private Realms of Light: Amateur Photography in Canada 1839-1940.** LILLY KOLTUN, ed. Written by members of the National Photography Collection, Public Archives of Canada: ANDREW J. BIRRELL, PETER ROBERTSON, LILLY KOLTUN, ANDREW C. RODGER, JOAN M. SCHWARTZ. Based on an exhibition first shown at the Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa, 14 July 1983 to 23 October 1983. Markham, Ontario: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1984. 335 p. illus., some colour. ISBN 0-88902-744-7 \$50.00.

Among the giant photographic collections of the world such as the Library of Congress and the Bibliothèque Nationale, the National Photography Collection of the Public Archives of Canada stands tall and proud. Unlike some of its equals, however, the PAC has not been as certain of its treasures, and even within Canada not as well known in all its diversity of riches as it undeniably deserves to be. With the publication of a beautifully designed, superbly illustrated book — *Private Realms of Light* — all this changes. We now have available a tantalizing introduction to the extraordinary historical, social, and aesthetic wealth of images resurrected from hitherto obscure corners of the PAC's collection of more than eight million photographs almost exclusively by Canadians. It is much more than a coffee-table glimpse limited to the Public Archives. *Private Realms of Light* is a substantial and scholarly survey of the prodigious output of "amateur photographers" wherever their work could be found, work that proves these dedicated individuals were the leaders, trend-setters, and aesthetic experimenters of the Canadian photographic community.

It was the conviction that amateurs had been the true innovators that stimulated Andrew Birrell in 1977 to initiate a quest that led eventually to *Private Realms of Light*. Gathering an enthusiastic and like-minded team of colleagues, Birrell led the way into "long forgotten photography magazines, dormant camera clubs' records, contemporary illustrated papers, and photographic collections and archives or libraries from the period before 1940." The team unearthed not only thousands of impressive images, but evidence that "the earliest stop-action snapshots, colour photography, art photography, and mini-camera work all appeared as the achievements of amateurs."

Like the amateurs of New York, Boston, Chicago, and Philadelphia, the amateurs of Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, and Vancouver became internationally famous, joining names such as Sidney Carter, Bruce Metcalfe, Johan Helders, Harold Mortimer-Lamb, J. Percy Hodgins, and William Ide with those of Alfred Stieglitz, Clarence White, Robert Demachy, Paul Strand, and Andre Kertesz, among others. In every decade since the invention of the daguerreotype, Canadian "amateurs" have produced images that rank

with the finest. It is only now that we have *Private Realms of Light* that the many exceptional Canadians can become more widely known in our own time and appreciated in their historical perspective.

How unfortunate it is that the word “amateur” has degenerated from its original meaning of “lover of an activity.” As Lilly Koltun explains, the definition of amateur used as a guideline for *Private Realms* was work done “for the love of it, with no eye for commercial use.” Photographers who did work commercially were included if they were involved in amateur endeavours as well. And who were these impressive amateurs? Among them were accountants, architects, bank clerks, businessmen, civil servants, clergymen, journalists, mining engineers, lawyers, military officers, and quite a few women. The latter are barely represented here, and whether Edith Hallet Bethune and Henrietta Constantine were exceptions to a predominantly masculine enterprise, *Private Realms* does not satisfactorily explain. Since the authors claim historical significance for the display of social mores represented by their selections, we can only wonder if images by women photographers were not initially collected and therefore did not survive for selection, or whether there was some specifically Canadian circumstance that led to their conspicuous absence. In other countries, the arrival of the dry plate and the hand-held camera in the 1880s encouraged the participation of women in photography.

The colour examples offered in *Private Realms* provide Autochromes, the Sanger Shepherd process, Agfacolor and Kodachrome, along with long-forgotten processes like Omnicolor, Paget, and Dufaycolor. Bethune’s soft, hand-tinted gelatin silver portrait of her son holding his perky wire-haired terrier contrasts wonderfully with the sharp detail of Donald Marsh’s Kodachrome of Eskimos, while the evocative carbonyl prints by John Fleetwood-Morrow demonstrate how well Canadian amateurs were keeping up with contemporary developments elsewhere, both stylistically and technically.

In addition to five readable and useful essays on the chronology of Canadian amateur photography, *Private Realms* delights by features such as a running glossary of terms, mostly concerning processes, as they are first encountered in the text; these terms appear alongside the text and are illuminated in detail. We are supplied as well with summary biographies, portraits, and signatures of some of the photographers represented along with an extensive bibliography and index. Here some confusion becomes apparent between “John Kirkland Hodges” and “J. Percy Hodgins.” Some picture captions bear the name “J.K. Hodgins,” while “J. Percy Hodgins” appears in the index but not in the biographies. (Hodgins’ absence from the biographies results from the unfortunate editorial decision to include only photographs represented in the exhibition of the same name as this book, rather than all photographers in the book.) Hodgins was a pictorialist and, like Sidney Carter, a member of the Stieglitz Photo-Secession. Hodges was active in the 1920s and 1930s with images somewhat influenced by *Die Neue Sachlichkeit*. An errata slip would have helped to clear up this confusion.

Particularly enjoyable among the many fascinating images in *Private Realms* is an early Yousef Karsh: a portrait of Johan Helder standing before a slanting skylight, contemplating two of his own pictures. That portrait seems to sum up the serious devotion of the amateurs to their craft. Karsh wrote a short preface, which ends: “The ‘private realms of light’ have now become public realms of the rediscovery of our own land, our own history, our own heritage.” We can only agree with this assessment most heartily, but *Private Realms of Light* is not simply good for the Canadian identity and ego.

It is a vastly important addition to the international history of photography, a necessary corrective to the narrowly provincial ethnocentrism of some historical surveys, and a visual treasury that will undoubtedly be enriched as research continues.

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**Guide to Canadian Photographic Archives.** CHRISTOPHER SEIFRIED, ed. Ottawa, Public Archives of Canada, 1984. xxvi, 727 p. ISBN 0-660-52274-8. Canada: \$35.00. Other countries: \$42.00.

The most amazing thing about the *Guide to Canadian Photographic Archives* is that it exists! With today's consuming passion for electronic information in "byte" size portions, it's marvelous that the Public Archives of Canada still recognizes the ultimate practicality, portability, and ease of using the basic reference book — and the *Guide* is a basic reference book of the first order. It's an absolutely essential gateway to the labyrinth of Canadian photography collections. In the short time it has been available I've drawn on it heavily and successfully; I've also recommended it a number of times to researchers in other countries who have been looking for Canadian material.

Picture research is always subjective and therefore problematical. Knowing that there are thousands of pictures of Sir John A. Macdonald or Aunt Tilly, the researcher is still looking for *THE* picture — the image that sums up the totality of the subject in one succinct and emotive glance. This is the stuff of which indexes are not made. Given that there is no substitute for looking at some visual form of the picture, the *Guide* is an excellent starting point to bring the researcher to the logical institution and the specific collection which would be, hopefully, of most value.

The *Guide* is as successful as can be expected. It contains descriptions of most of the processed collections in virtually every public collection in the country. Any deficiencies in content are more a reflection of the staggering amount of work that still has to be done on all of our collections. So far we can only see the meniscus on the visual pool. As collections are processed, it is to be hoped that they will be added to an updated *Guide*. As it stands, the *Guide* is a valuable starting point for any picture search. The index appears to be comprehensive and well cross-referenced. The descriptions are generally complete and informative.

On every glowing review a little rain must fall. One frustrating aspect of the *Guide* is the double, translated entries for federal records with separate collection numbers. When checking a lot of references it's bothersome to find you are looking at the same collection twice. There also appear to be many discrepancies in the translations, which makes it difficult to quickly determine whether or not the reference is duplicated. I suggest that the language of the descriptions is generally so simple that they could be entered equally in English or French.

A helpful addition to the *Guide* would be a brief description of the institutions whose collections are listed, along with a phone number and the name of the responsible individual. Knowing the basic size and orientation of a particular collection, operating hours, facilities, and availability of a photoduplicating service can be very helpful in determining whether a research inquiry will be worthwhile.