

# Toronto Notes

Reported by Robert Carter

— COME ENJOY OUR NEXT MEETING ON WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16TH, 2009

Our June speaker Reg Holloway, whose varied career began as a reporter/photographer in Britain, described how photography and the press have mutually benefitted over the years. He noted that in spite of our current interest in the “race into or perhaps through digital,” we must remember photography is still relatively new - its roots go back only four or five generations (for example my grandparents were born in the 1870s and their parents in the 1840s).

Once the photographic print had been achieved it was inevitable that a way would be found to make that image more widely available. Only a limited number of people could be reached by a single image even in an album or an exhibition. Reg emphasized that the medium for wide distribution was the press.

Artists provided the illustrations and impressions in the mass media of the day in spite of the technical limitations. Reg gave an example of the great fire of 1842 in Hamburg, Germany. The news took 10 days to arrive in London. An artist borrowed a painting of the city to guide his illustration. He added fire, smoke and by-standers to his interpretation of the painting and two weeks after the fire a detailed report appeared in the London news complete with a line drawing depicting the famous city in flames.

Up to the end of the 1860s, pictures in the press were line drawing illustrations printed with wood cuts engraved from the work of a traditional artist or photographer. In 1869 Montrealer William Leggo succeeded in applying Fox Talbot's idea of using

a fine screen to convert the continuous tones of a photograph such that they could be recreated with the simple black ink/white paper of the press. His “granulated photograph” process was used to publish a Notman portrait of Queen Victoria's son, Prince Arthur in the weekly *Canadian Illustrated News* – the world's first publication of a halftone image.

Leggo and his publisher, Desbarats, took the process to New York City where they improved it and in 1873 founded the *New York Daily Graphic*. “In 1880 the *Graphic* became the first daily paper to use the halftone process to reproduce a photograph on the same page as text.” Later in the same decade the combination of halftone technology and the speed of the new dry plate photography marked the start of press photography.

The rest of Reg's talk addressed a number of milestone press cameras and their features as the preferred models moved from glass plates to cut film to film packs and finally roll film in ever shrinking negative sizes. He brought with him a selection of these epic cameras from his collection. I was attracted most to the *small technically precise*

*c1930s Plaubel Makina* which spanned nearly a half century of press use beginning just before the great war.

To learn more about press photography pick up a copy of Reg Holloway's book *The Evolution and Demise of the Larger Format Press Camera* published in 2008 by Epic Press of Belleville, Ontario. 📖 / R.C.



PORTRAIT BY ROBERT LANSDALE

REG HOLLOWAY