



# WILLIAM NOTMAN

Life & Work

By Sarah Parsons

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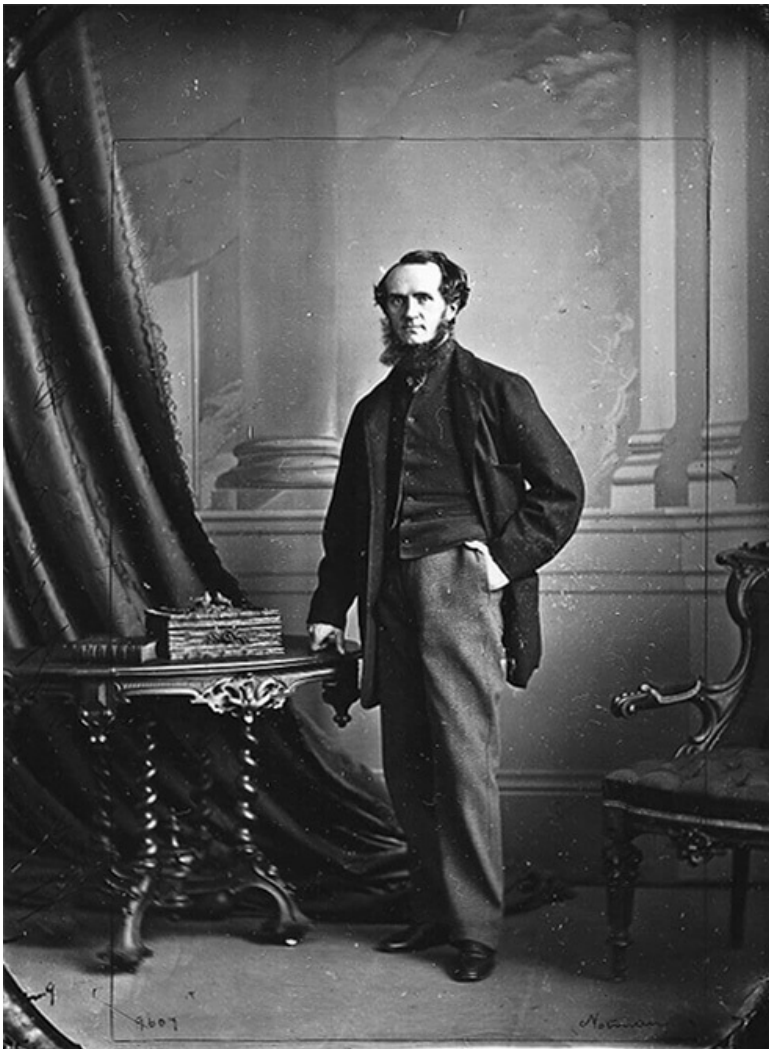


# BIOGRAPHY

**William Notman arrived in Canada from Scotland in 1856 and swiftly established himself as Montreal's most prominent photographer, with studio portraits forming the core of his work. Notman developed complex composite pictures for large groups and innovative techniques for creating winter scenes in his studio. Through his unparalleled combination of photographic and promotional skills, he was the first Canadian photographer to build an international reputation. Notman was still deeply involved in photography when he died in 1891 after a short illness.**

## GLASGOW EARLY YEARS

The broad strokes of William Notman's life could have anchored a Victorian novel. He was born March 8, 1826, in Paisley, Scotland, to William Notman and Janet Sloan. His father was a designer and manufacturer of woollen cloth; his paternal grandfather had been a dairy farmer. Young William Notman was the beneficiary of his family's ambitious upward mobility. When he was a teenager the Notmans moved from the town of Paisley to the city of Glasgow. Although there are no known details of his schooling, it is evident that young William received a decent education, including training in painting and drawing. He had hopes of becoming a professional artist but was advised to join his father's business, deemed a more stable line of work. As it turned out, this was not the case.



LEFT: William Notman, *William Notman, Photographer*, Montreal, 1863, silver salts on glass, wet collodion process, 12 x 10 cm, McCord Museum. RIGHT: William Notman, *Mrs. William Notman*, Montreal, 1862, silver salts on paper mounted on paper, albumen process, 8 x 5 cm, McCord Museum

The Scottish economy took a serious downturn in the 1850s. The Notman family business had fallen behind on its payments to suppliers. In turn the suppliers limited their credit, making it difficult for the Notmans to keep their business afloat. In a desperate move, young William Notman fabricated additional client orders and tried to sell the goods to repay what they owed, but this only compounded their debt. Although he certainly knew that this was not above board, he seemed not to understand that it was entirely outside the law. Eventually the fraud was revealed and charges were laid. The historian Stanley Triggs concludes that the family likely decided that the best course of



action was for Notman to flee the country so that the family could lay the blame safely at his feet and avoid prison for everyone. In 1856 Notman left Glasgow and sailed to Montreal, then the thriving hub of British North America, leaving behind his new wife, Alice Merry Woodward, and baby, Fanny.

### FRESH START IN CANADA

In Montreal, in 1856, Notman soon found a job with Ogilvy, Lewis & Company, a dry goods firm, and his wife and daughter joined him in the fall of the same year. When winter closed down imports for the season, Notman decided to set up a photography studio. He had no professional experience, but there is some evidence that he was an amateur photographer and may have received some photographic instruction in Glasgow. Scotland was a centre for the relatively new art, science, and business of photography, boasting exquisite professional practitioners like the studio partnership of David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson, which operated in Edinburgh from 1843 to around 1847—as well as flourishing amateur groups. The Glasgow Photographic Association was founded in 1855, and enthusiasts marked the occasion with an exhibition of photographs and photographic apparatus. Notman would likely have been among the keen attendees.<sup>1</sup>

In 1856 Montreal was not bereft of photographers, though city directories from the late 1850s suggest that fewer than ten professionals were operating, some long established and others, like Notman, just starting out.<sup>2</sup> Notman cleverly sought and received both a loan for equipment and a job guarantee from his employer in case his photography venture failed. It seems that at first the studio was meant to be a seasonal activity when the dry goods business was slow, but very soon Notman was hiring assistants and running a thriving business year-round. He never returned to dry goods.

Notman set up his first studio in a small house on Bleury Street, close to the central business district and to the business and political elite who, along with their families, would form his core clientele. Patrons were ushered through the Notman family living quarters on their way to the small annex at the rear of the house.

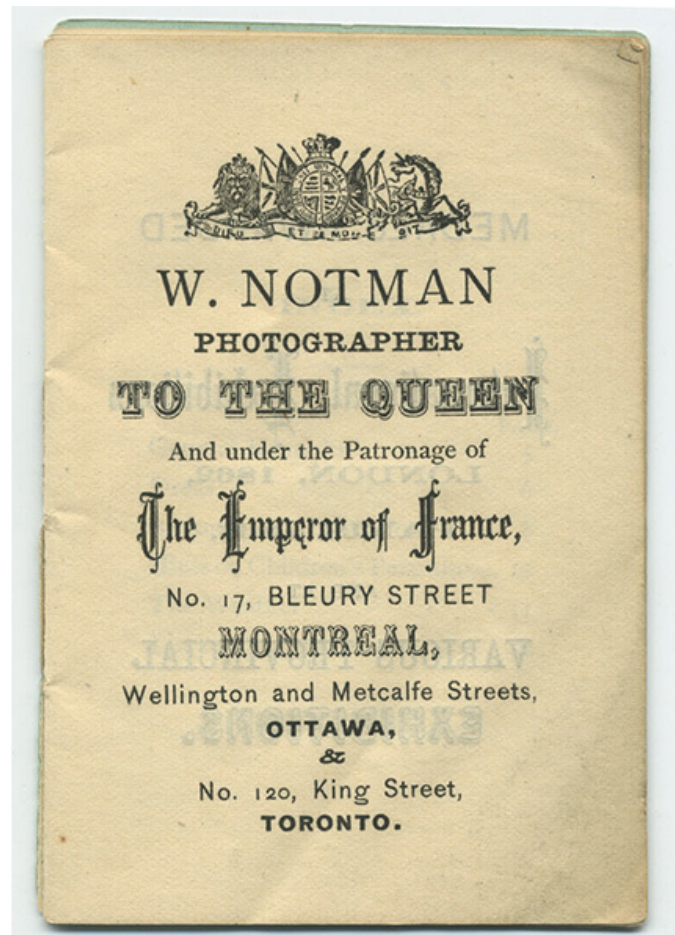
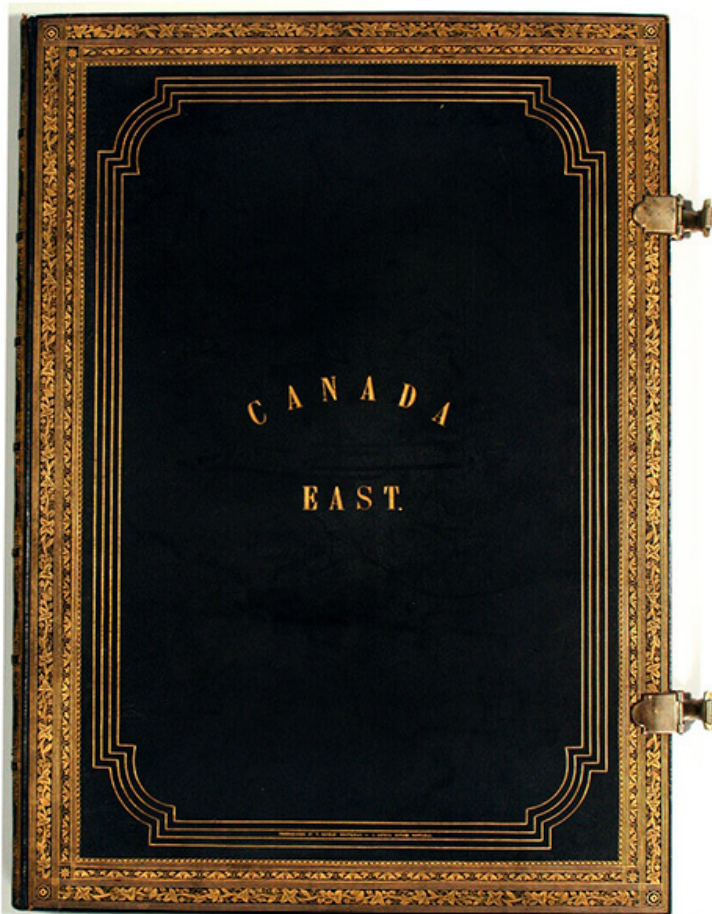


LEFT: Notman & Sandham, *William Notman Studio*, 17 Bleury Street, Montreal, c. 1875, silver salts on paper, albumen process, 25 x 20 cm, McCord Museum. RIGHT: Notman & Sandham, *Notman & Sandham's Room*, Windsor Hotel, Montreal, 1878, silver salts on paper mounted on paper, albumen process, 10 x 8 cm, McCord Museum.

## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

In two short years Notman expanded into a larger and much more elegant space next door and moved his residence offsite to Sherbrooke Street. By 1859 he was able to bring over the rest of his extended family from Scotland.

The year 1858 proved to be a fundamental turning point in Notman's career. He was awarded the commission from the Grand Trunk Railway to document the building of the Victoria Bridge across the St. Lawrence River. This was a public project on a grand scale, and Notman wasted no opportunity to draw attention to his participation. He sent copies of his photographs to a wide array of journals and even produced a commemorative maple box of the photographs to present to Queen Victoria in 1860. In it, Notman mounted photographs in two lavish leather-bound portfolios with silver clasps. Legend has it that she was so pleased that she named him "Photographer to the Queen."



LEFT: William Notman, *Canada East*, portfolio from the maple box, 1859–60, 76.2 x 91.4 x 5.1 cm, McCord Museum. Notman made two of these leather-bound portfolios of photographs and stereographs, setting each in a maple box. One of these boxes was given to Queen Victoria and the other remained in his Montreal studio. RIGHT: Opening page from the pamphlet *Photography: Things You Ought to Know* by William Notman, after 1867, ink and letterpress, 9.3 x 6.4 cm, McCord Museum. A savvy marketer and self-promoter, Notman made sure that all materials coming out of his studio indicated that he was "Photographer to the Queen".

In 1860 Notman hired the established painter John Arthur Fraser (1838–1898) to lead the business's art department and a young Henry Sandham (1842–1910) to assist. The department was responsible for painting backdrops, retouching negatives, cutting out individual figures and pasting them into composite groups, and hand-colouring prints. The work of the art department became an integral part of the studio's appeal and of its competitive advantage in the marketplace.



By 1864 Notman's Montreal studio had thirty-five employees, both men and women, including photographers and artists, apprentices, studio and darkroom assistants, receptionists, bookkeepers, and dressing-room assistants. To some extent studio labour was divided according to class, skill, and gender. Working-class women, for example, had the dirty and laborious job of preparing paper and printing negatives, whereas middle-class women worked in the art department, mounting or retouching photographs. The account books show that the staff were decently compensated and that Notman kept them steadily employed even during periods of financial hardship. The loyalty Notman showed and expected from his staff was a crucial tool in building the business.



William Notman, *Young Ladies of Notman's Printing Room, Miss Findlay's Group*, Montreal, 1876, silver salts on paper mounted on paper, albumen process, 10 x 13 cm, McCord Museum. This group of working-class women prepared paper and printing negatives in Notman's studio.

From the earliest days of his studio, Notman and his photographers fanned out across the British territories and into the northeastern United States. Often they were fulfilling commissions or capturing landscape views to add to their growing collection that was available to tourists, locals, and other studios. In 1868, a year after Confederation, Notman established a studio in Ottawa and soon set up branches and partnerships in Toronto and Halifax, usually with a trusted associate in charge.

Notman carefully nurtured talent in his studios and offered partnerships or managerial positions in the branches as a way of retaining skilled staff. He placed John Fraser in charge of his Toronto branch and called it Notman & Fraser. He offered a junior partnership in the Montreal studio to Henry Sandham in 1872, changing the firm's name to Notman & Sandham. Always on the lookout for new opportunities, in 1869 Notman garnered a commission to produce student and faculty portraits at Vassar College in New York State. He developed this line of business quickly and eventually set up seasonal branches at Harvard and Yale. At the height of his empire in the 1880s, Notman's name was on twenty studios.



William Notman, *Yale College, Sheffield Scientific School Class in Library*, New Haven, Connecticut, composite, 1872, silver salts on paper, albumen process, 35.6 x 43.2 cm, McCord Museum. After Notman was commissioned to produce student and faculty portraits at Vassar College in 1869, he developed this line of business and set up seasonal branches at Harvard and Yale.

### MONTREAL ART AND SOCIETY

Notman's success in business both depended on and fuelled his social role in Montreal society. His Scottish roots helped immensely. A significant number of Anglo Montrealers hailed from Scotland, and many of these were ambitious entrepreneurs like Notman. Early letters from Alice Notman to her parents confirm that the couple found a warm welcome in Montreal; when Alice and Fanny first arrived, the young family stayed for several months with a Scottish family with whom they had mutual friends back home.



The comfort of a familiar tribe must have eased the Notmans' transition, but William Notman also worked hard to integrate himself into the wider Montreal scene. He became an Anglican and rose to play an important role in the church. He bought a country house on the South Shore and became an avid sailor, helping to found a local sailing club. Notman also became an avid patron of the arts. He helped to establish the Art Association of Montreal in 1860, offering the reception room of his studio as a meeting space and later as an exhibition space. He further supported the association's activities by lending paintings from his own growing collection for exhibitions and donating photographs for prizes. At a time when photography was still considered by some to fall outside the fine arts, Notman's leadership was both generous and savvy. His first clients were his Scottish contemporaries, but before long Notman was photographing every major social and political figure who passed through Montreal.



Artist unknown, *The Art Association Conversazione on the Evening of February 15* (The Vice-Regal Visit to Montreal), 1878, Art Association of Montreal.

William and Alice had seven children, and all but the beloved first born, Fanny, survived to adulthood. The three boys trained as photographers under their father and were employed in the family business where Notman continued to work until his death from pneumonia in 1891. His eldest son, William McFarlane Notman, became a partner in 1882, at which point the name of the studios changed to William Notman & Son. The younger William took over as head of the Notman operations after his father's death. In turn his younger brother Charles took over in 1913 and ran the business until 1935. The business was closed that year, and over 400,000 negatives and prints in its archives were sold to Associated Screen News, a Montreal-based company that made newsreels.



William Notman, *William Notman and Family*, Montreal, 1859, silver salts on paper, albumen process, 7.5 x 7 cm, McCord Museum.





# KEY WORKS

Notman's studio produced photographs in almost every genre, from portraiture to composite images to landscapes and industrial photographs. Selecting key works from an archive of thousands is complicated by the fact that there is so little information about which photographs Notman actually took. Although no definitive proof exists that Notman himself made these images, they all date from periods when he was actively involved in the business. These selections illustrate the breadth and creativity of the studio business that Notman created.



## FRAMEWORK OF TUBE AND STAGING LOOKING IN, VICTORIA BRIDGE 1859



William Notman, *Framework of Tube and Staging Looking In, Victoria Bridge, Montreal*, 1859

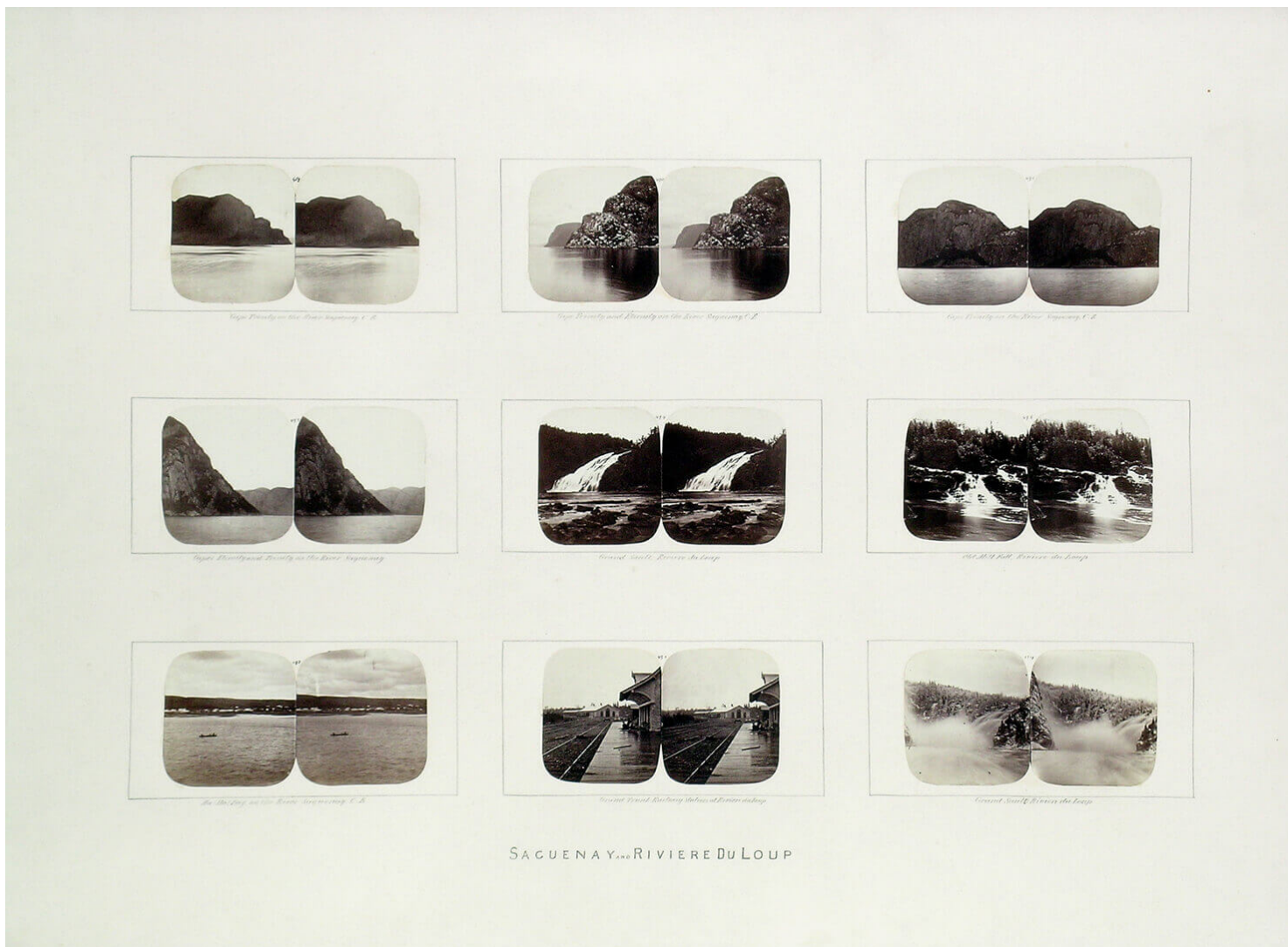
Silver salts on paper mounted on card, albumen process, 23 x 28 cm  
McCord Museum

It is often said that the turning point in Notman's career was the commission he received from the Grand Trunk Railway in 1858 to document the two-year process of building the Victoria Bridge. This covered bridge (the longest in the world at the time) would finally connect Quebec by rail to the eastern seaboard cities of Boston and New York. During its construction it was often referred to as the eighth wonder of the world. The project was a monumental undertaking, requiring massive construction underwater in the freezing St. Lawrence River before the span of the bridge and the covered tracks could be built. Notman documented every step in wet collodion negatives from which he created prints on albumen paper. He must have had some assistance with the heaviest equipment, but for the most part he worked alone through the winter, often climbing or balancing to find the best angles.



This photograph feels almost radical in its framing. Notman has zoomed in tight to the tunnel and placed us almost dead centre on the tracks. Although we cannot see into the distance, we see far enough to get a sense of the scale and the speed and power that the structure would soon facilitate. There is nothing romantic about this picture. The subject matter demanded a modern, industrial aesthetic, and Notman complied. The result is stark but not clinical. From our viewpoint on the tracks, Notman enables us to see the overhead structure reflected in the side beams as crosshatching shadows. The shadows provide the slightest hint of the natural world in which this mammoth industrial construction rests.

## GROUP OF STEREOGRAPHS FROM THE MAPLE BOX 1859–60



William Notman, Group of stereographs from the maple box, Saguenay and Rivière-du-Loup, Quebec, 1859–60

Silver salts on paper mounted on card, albumen process, 52 x 72 cm  
McCord Museum

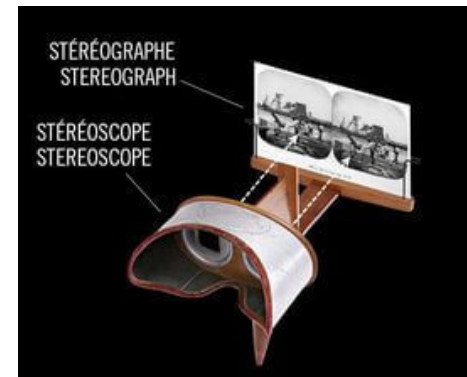
In the summer of 1860 the Prince of Wales came to Canada for the Victoria Bridge opening ceremony. Notman seized this as a perfect opportunity to promote his work on an international scale. He selected a range of large photographs and smaller stereographs of views of Canadian cities and natural wonders, as well as photographs of the Victoria Bridge. Notman mounted the stereographs singly and in groups on fifty-four large cards together in two lavish leather-bound portfolios with silver clasps. The portfolios were then each set in an ornate maple box. One was presented to the Prince of Wales as a gift for Queen Victoria, who was known to be very keen on photography. That copy has since been lost, but Notman sent his copy to the International Exhibition in London in 1862 where it won a medal and garnered further press coverage. Upon its return it was kept in the Montreal studio and was later gifted to the McCord Museum. Family legend holds that the Queen was so pleased with the gift that she pronounced Notman "Photographer to the Queen." Whatever the source, Notman adopted the slogan, even adding a portico to his studio so that he could have the title emblazoned on the frieze.



This is one of thirty-one sheets of nine stereo views that Notman included in the maple box (there were some minor differences in content between the two boxes). Stereoscopic photographs were one of the most popular formats among tourists and local clientele alike.

In contrast to the larger photographic views of dramatic geographical formations like Niagara Falls or even the Chaudière Falls, these views are more economical in structure than a traditional picturesque landscape painting. The stereoscope's structure of two small squares lent itself to more simplified views, preferably with a key contrast in tone and depth that would "pop" when viewed through the stereoscope. These views of rural Quebec fit the bill.

The objective of looking at stereo views was to create (or recreate) an experience rather than provide a static object of contemplation. In 1860 Britain's *Art Journal* ran a glowing review of Notman's stereoscope views, saying they offer "almost a perfect idea of the interesting country which is just now attracting special attention in England."<sup>1</sup> Their luxurious presentation and fame surely helped to market them to Notman's clients.



This stereoscope and slide show how two nearly identical photographs were mounted side by side on cardstock; viewed through a device known as a stereoscope, the two images created a three-dimensional effect.

## CARIBOU HUNTING, THE CHANCE SHOT 1866



William Notman, *Caribou Hunting, The Chance Shot*, Montreal, 1866  
Silver salts on paper mounted on paper, albumen process, 12.3 x 8.6 cm  
McCord Museum

Winter scenes, recreated in the studio, were the source of much of Notman's contemporary renown and financial success. These scenes have also been the object of much subsequent derision. They are, of course, illusions. The "snow" billows in ways that snow does not. The space is shallow, and the backdrop is clearly painted. The light is too even, and the characters are too posed to be engaged in anything as adrenaline-pumping as a caribou hunt. (The long exposure time for Notman's camera would have required the use of head and body rests to keep sitters still.)



Notman was immensely proud of his innovations in genre photography and set aside a special room in the studio for the purpose of experimentation. He and his team of artists created the snowbanks around the hunters by fluffing lambswool and photographing it slightly out of focus. To approximate falling snow, they would spray glass negatives with white paint. One of Notman's more celebrated and eventually patented innovations was a plate of zinc polished to such a degree that it could appear to be ice, ready for skaters. Another image from the Caribou Hunting series featured a campfire created by a magnesium flare—a lighting technique Notman used for many purposes, given they were operating without electricity.

These were meant to be momentary deceptions, clever visual tricks that allowed viewers to feel a sense of reality. Edward L. Wilson, editor of the influential journal *Philadelphia Photographer*, featured this image on the cover of the May 1866 issue and raved, "Nature has been caught—not napping—but alive! Out of doors has been brought indoors with the elements.... We have never seen anything more successful and true to nature, without being nature itself. Oh! What a future there is for photography!"<sup>1</sup>

The Caribou Hunting series was commissioned by William Rhodes, a British military officer who had settled in Canada and went on to become a successful landowner and politician. The series consists of nine photographs featuring Rhodes, his son, and their Huron guides. In this scene Rhodes crouches, waiting for the caribou, all the while being quietly coached by his Native guide (played here by one of Notman's employees).<sup>2</sup> Rhodes and his crew used their own clothes and equipment in an attempt to make these thematic portraits as authentic as possible.

Reminding us that naturalism is always a historically contextual illusion, these images were described by contemporary viewers as miraculously lifelike. Notman submitted them to many periodicals and to exhibitions, including the Paris World Exposition of 1867, where they won awards. Thematically, they capture an appealing view of the Canadian experience, filled with adventure and friendly indigenous guides. Rhodes was able to collaborate with Notman to record his rather heroic view of himself in the Canadian landscape. Thankfully for Notman, it was a view that appealed to many, and he sold copies of the image in several sizes.



William Notman, *Lovell's Group of Children Skating in Costume*, Montreal, 1867, silver salts on glass, wet collodion process, 17 x 12 cm, McCord Museum.

## ST. REGIS LACROSSE CLUB 1867



William Notman, *St. Regis Lacrosse Club*, Montreal, 1867

Silver salts on paper mounted on paper, albumen process, 10.1 x 13.9 cm

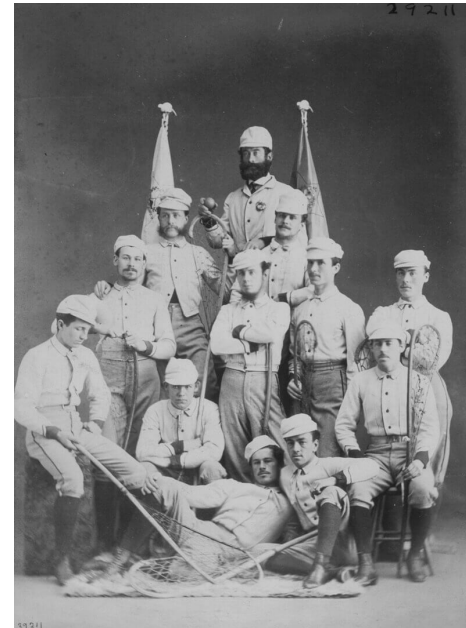
McCord Museum

French Jesuit priests first documented lacrosse in the seventeenth century, describing it as a ceremonial ritual in the Algonquin and Iroquois cultures. Teams of between a hundred and a thousand players faced off on a field anywhere from half a kilometre to three kilometres in length, with rules negotiated before the game began. The match itself could take up to several days and served spiritual and practical purposes such as conflict resolution and warrior training. The Jesuits disapproved of lacrosse on the grounds that it was violent and involved betting. However, by the eighteenth century French colonists began to play the game themselves, though apparently with little success against indigenous opponents.



By the mid-nineteenth century the game was absorbed into the Anglo culture of organized leisure sports, which had eagerly adapted to the local pastimes of snowshoeing, skating, and lacrosse. William George Beers, a Montreal dentist, founded the Montreal Lacrosse Club as a teenager, in 1856. By the 1860s he began to codify the game. His rules required that the hair-stuffed deerskin ball be replaced with a rubber one of standard size and that the sticks be standardized. Beers also specified the number of players and the size of the field. This portrait would seem to mark his founding of the Canadian National Lacrosse Foundation and the year the first game was played under his new rules. He was insistent that lacrosse would be the right choice for a national game to unify the country. Confederation provided the perfect moment to make his pitch.

Beers was a regular client of Notman's, and it seems reasonable to assume that it was Beers who commissioned a series of team photographs of indigenous and Anglo teams as a way of both documenting and promoting the popularity of the sport specifically on his new terms. This was an early and creative use of photography in the realm of marketing. The encounter that generated this photograph would have been an unusual one for both Notman and his sitters. Despite the players being lined up and casually posed under the lacrosse association flags, their arrangement and body language seem awkward, especially in comparison with Notman's image of the Montreal Lacrosse Club from the same year. The Montreal players seem more comfortable performing for the camera, and yet ultimately the artfulness of their arrangement was the domain of the photographer. It would have been Notman who directed each man in his position and pose. In turn they seem to have willingly submitted to his familiar and respected authority.



William Notman, *Montreal Lacrosse Club*, 1867, silver salts on paper mounted on paper, albumen process, 14 x 10 cm, McCord Museum.

**MRS. HILLARD'S DEAD BABY 1868**

William Notman, *Mrs. Hillard's Dead Baby*, Montreal, 1868  
Silver salts on paper mounted on paper, albumen process, 8.5 x 5.6 cm  
McCord Museum

Of all the oddities of Victorian photography, one of the most incomprehensible to modern eyes is the post-mortem photograph. Sitting for a portrait quickly became a key social ritual for members of the upper middle class and the elite, and when a child died before a first live portrait was taken, the parents often requested a post-mortem image. The idea of posing a dead baby for a portrait may well seem macabre to us, but Victorians had a very different relationship to death and childhood mortality. Almost a third of all children born died before adulthood, and those deaths almost always took place at home. After a death, visitors were received in the family home where they could view the body, which would have been carefully arranged for those paying their respects as well as for the photographer.



Notman's approach to child and infant post-mortem photography, at least by the mid-1860s, was carefully developed. Many American examples exist of dead children posed in close quarters with their siblings, or posed sitting up on chairs, eyes pulled open, creating an utterly haunting image. In contrast, Notman's variations are restrained. Although some earlier examples of Notman's work in this genre include more details of the surroundings, including the bassinet, blankets, and elaborate dress, he seems to have settled on a more simplified style by the time he photographed Mrs. Hillard's baby.



Notman & Sandham, *J. Edgar's Dead Child*, Montreal, 1877, silver salts on paper mounted on paper, albumen process, 12.7 x 17.8 cm, McCord Museum.

As was fairly common, the child has been laid out with eyes closed, looking something like a doll or as though the child might just be sleeping. The background and dress are as light and simple as possible. The focus rests on the still beautiful face of the child rendered as pure and innocent as possible, an effect only enhanced by the scattering of flowers, including a stem propped in the baby's tiny fist. If the archives are an accurate reflection, 1868 saw a sharp increase in the number of portraits the studio produced of dead children. It was the same year that Notman's beloved first-born daughter, Fanny, died of meningitis at the age of eleven.

## MR. COLLINS' SLEIGH AT NOTMAN'S STUDIO, BLEURY STREET 1868–69



William Notman, *Mr. Collins' Sleigh at Notman's Studio, Bleury Street, Montreal, 1868–69*  
Silver salts on paper mounted on paper, albumen process, 12.7 x 17.8 cm  
McCord Museum

Outdoor photographs were difficult and awkward, especially in winter. The wet plate negative would have to be prepped inside, rushed out to the street, exposed, and then rushed back inside to be developed before the emulsion dried. But Notman found that it was worth the trouble. Clients posed in front of Notman's studio, under the banner "Photographer to the Queen." The sleigh added another status symbol and a touch of Canadiana to the image.



Mr. Collins had several sittings with Notman in the late 1860s and early 1870s. One set of interior portraits of Collins taken around the same time shows a jauntily dressed youngish man with an impressive moustache, neatly parted hair, a polka-dotted bowtie, and a walking stick. The interior portraits are quite dark and picture him reclining slightly in a low chair surrounded by heavy Victorian drapery and furniture. The effect is not necessarily formal but rather weighty and solemn. Hat and gloves have been discarded on a nearby settee, but they remain in the picture, their removal marked for the camera. Collins seems to have made a concerted effort to appear comfortable in his own skin, though there is something oddly preening about his pose.

It is interesting to consider the outdoor portrait as part of the ongoing relationship that Notman had with Collins and with many of his sitters. The number of examples in the archives suggests that it became very popular and even fashionable to submit to a winter portrait outside Notman's studio. This outside scene is as carefully designed as the studio photos to project bourgeois success. The outdoor image seems especially stiff; the lack of head and body rests would not have helped. The display of sleighs, furs, and servants is more conspicuous than the little details of dress and deportment that Notman weaves into his studio scenes. The lack of a strong focal point in the outdoor scene allows our attention to wander to the surrounding scene. For both Notman and his sitters this may not have been an issue. Perhaps the focal point for the image was the slogan "Photographer to the Queen." Together, sitter and photographer carefully construct their personae as comfortably successful urban professionals.



William Notman, *Mr. A. Collins*, Montreal, 1869, silver salts on paper mounted on paper, albumen process, 17.8 x 12.7 cm, McCord Museum.

## CHAUDIÈRE FALLS 1870



William Notman, *Chaudière Falls, Ottawa, 1870*  
Silver salts on glass, wet collodion process, 20 x 25 cm  
McCord Museum

Scenic views were a mainstay of nineteenth-century photography. While some studios specialized in regional coverage, Notman's sought an encyclopedic range. As their catalogue grew, so too did their renown at home and abroad. Travellers collected scenic views as souvenirs. This image follows the picturesque conventions used in landscape painting. The image is segmented into roughly three progressive sections. The photographer—and now the viewer—is positioned on a flat rock in the foreground, elevated above the next section of dark crumbling shale.

This graphically appealing jumble cuts a diagonal line through the frame and helps to create visual interest and depth. The tiny figure fishing in the centre of the image adds to the visual interest and gives a sense of scale that sets off the almost prehistoric enormity of the rock. All of this is set against an ethereally light backdrop of the wide falls, specific details muted by distance and mist. The same scene could well have been the subject of a commissioned topographical view; the geographic and geological material is carefully represented.



## SKATING CARNIVAL, VICTORIA RINK 1870



William Notman, *Skating Carnival, Victoria Rink, Montreal, 1870*  
Painted composite, silver salts, oil on canvas, albumen process, 137 x 176 cm  
McCord Museum

*Skating Carnival* was Notman's most ambitious undertaking in composite photography a technique he is credited with developing and popularizing. The process began with an overall design for the finished picture, and then individual or small group portraits were made—prints of which would eventually be cut out and pasted onto a composite negative and then printed again. *Skating Carnival* was made from more than three hundred individual photographs, and its creation makes evident Notman's keen sense of marketing. In one fell swoop he advertised his studio and its impressive access to key events, while appealing to the social aspirations of both his established and potential clientele.

A paid notice in the *Gazette*, February 25, 1870, reads:

BLEURY STREET, FEBRUARY, 1870.

The approaching CARNIVAL at the Skating rink is likely to be one of more than ordinary interest from the fact that His Royal Highness Prince Arthur is expected to grace the occasion with his presence.

I have therefore selected this opportunity as one offering many advantages, to carry out what has long been my intention; To get up an effective PICTURE OF THE RINK, for which purpose I beg to request that you will give me an early sitting, before or as soon after the event as possible, in the Costume you intend to use on the occasion.

The Directors have kindly consented to give me every facility in their power, so as to ensure a successful Picture.

Your obedient servant,

WILLIAM NOTMAN<sup>1</sup>

Large group portraits are a notoriously awkward genre, whether in paint or photography, requiring recognizable individuals and some sense of the overall activity or structure of the group. The setting tends to be shallow and stagelike, but in this composition, Notman mediates the often competing priorities of the group portrait by including a lush and detailed representation of the elaborate venue and by creating a convincing sense of perspective. Such a structure enabled Notman to include many figures in the background whose faces are not clearly recognizable yet who anchor the elegant clusters of recognizable figures in the foreground.

This balance works best in enlarged prints like this one, which enable us to read the faces of the three hundred or so participants while still getting a sense of the pomp and circumstance of the occasion, one of many winter-themed events that provided a focus for bourgeois civic life in Montreal and attracted many visitors. The original wet collodion negative measured 10 by 13 centimetres, but prints were available in a range of sizes. As he did with all of his photographs, Notman offered the option of a hand-painted version of *Skating Carnival*, which was essentially a hybrid in that it was not just a painted photograph but also a large-scale oil on canvas. A numbered key was also drawn up and provided to purchasers.



## MISS H. FROTHINGHAM 1871



William Notman, *Miss H. Frothingham*, Montreal, 1871  
Silver salts on glass, wet collodion process, 25 x 20 cm  
McCord Museum

This portrait of young Harriet was part of a series Notman did at the country home of the Frothinghams. Notman's photographs of the Frothingham family are among his most experimental portraits. They feature unusual poses, props, and settings; we can only speculate on how much was suggested by Notman and how much by the sitters themselves, but it is fair to say that Notman and the Frothinghams made quite a creative team. Notman was hardly the only photographer in Montreal, but the Frothingham family album (now at the McCord Museum) is filled almost exclusively with Notman's photographs.

The Frothingham parents, their three daughters, and one son appear to have been a playful and affectionate family, especially by Victorian standards. An 1865 carte-de-visite portrait features Mr. Frothingham whispering in the toddler Harriet's ear and is lyrically entitled *G.H. Frothingham Sharing a Secret with Harriet Frothingham*. Harriet's infant portrait featured a highly unusual solution to the problem of how to keep a baby still for a photo. Harriet is held up just above her mother's shoulder; her mother is turned away from the camera, leaving Harriet's face as the focus of the picture, set alongside the back of her mother's immaculately coiffed hair.

Other portraits featured the sisters lined up in dour black gymnastics outfits, the family simulating tobogganing in Notman's patented winter studio set-up, and even a solo portrait of the family's pet skunk. The many Frothingham sittings indicate that photographic documentation was an important part of their family life. The images do not monumentalize or aggrandize the lineage, in the way such portraits were often designed to do, as much as they capture the Frothinghams' lively and eccentric family life.

Harriet would have been about eight years old at the time of the portrait. The strong graphic lines of the lattice and balustrades make a compelling and modern backdrop for the girl with skinny legs, scruffy lapdog, and jaunty hat who fixed the photographer with a calm and direct stare. Her body takes up less than half the height of the negative, but she is undeniably its focus. The balance between her and her surroundings creates a delicate tension, though she seems to dominate by pure force of personality. Notman has carefully manipulated the light to draw out the starkest contrast. The porch floor is bathed in shadow, and Harriet's hat is the lightest and central focus. The almost haunting quality of the light and the stark and decidedly un-Victorian lines seem more akin to the early twentieth-century American photographer E.J. Bellocq (1873-1949) than to Notman. When the Frothinghams ordered a copy for their family album, they or Notman selected a cropped version of this shot that maintained the graphic background but reads more like a traditionally balanced portrait.



William Notman, *G.H. Frothingham Sharing a Secret with Harriet Frothingham*, Montreal, 1865, silver salts on paper mounted on paper, albumen process, 8.5 x 5.6 cm, McCord Museum

## MRS. WILLIAM MACKENZIE IN ALLAN'S CONSERVATORY 1871



William Notman, *Mrs. William MacKenzie in Allan's Conservatory*, Montreal, 1871  
Silver salts on glass, wet collodion process, 25 x 20 cm  
McCord Museum



Like Harriet Frothingham, Mrs. MacKenzie was a frequent client of Notman's. Although the 1870s saw Notman more regularly taking sittings outside of his studio, it does seem to have been a perk he reserved for his best clients who were perhaps also friends. Over the course of her sittings for Notman, young Mrs. MacKenzie (Nina, b. 1851) was pictured in some of the most elaborate dresses to be found in his oeuvre. She often posed at angles that ensured a full view of her latest fashion—for instance, turning her body rather awkwardly to show the bustle at the back of her dress. This image was part of a series Notman took in what seems to have been a single day at the home of her father, Andrew Allan, a Scottish-born shipowner and financier. A copy of the *Illustrated London News* that is incorporated into his portrait is seen discarded on the floor in portraits of Nina and in separate portraits of her brothers.

Other negatives in the archives show that much care and effort went into this day of sittings. Plants and furniture were rearranged. The sitters were moved around, and the photographer experimented with angles. One can imagine that Mrs. MacKenzie must have been pleased with the result. Her dress is displayed to great advantage, and the angle is incredibly flattering.

Mrs. MacKenzie was not blessed with delicate features. She had a large head and a long, full face with quite a prominent nose. But from Notman's angle above her, these features are softened. Whether to detract attention or just as a personal fashion choice, Mrs. MacKenzie's style tended to be "too much" even by Victorian standards. Here she wears heavy rings on at least three fingers, a beaded necklace, dangling earrings, and a feathered hat, with a huge white lace dress that all but ruled out walking unassisted. Her personal style is balanced by the carefully arranged assortment of potted plants and accessories in the conservatory.

As in the photograph of Harriet Frothingham, Notman has used a decorative pattern—an iron floor in this case—to add visual interest and anchor the details of the scene. The raised viewpoint and intense use of patterns flatten the space of the picture, rendering a photograph that looks almost like an Impressionist painting. It is difficult to determine just what paintings Notman might have seen in reproductions, but with the added details of the woman reclining, book in hand, the overall effect is remarkably similar to paintings by Berthe Morisot (1841–1895) from the late 1860s and early 1870s. Her scenes of the domestic domain and the limited activities of the bourgeois woman were both aesthetic experiments and sociological commentary.

It would be fascinating to know the extent to which Mrs. MacKenzie participated in the design of this scene. Perhaps she brought her needlepoint pillow to be included as testament to her feminine industry, despite the overall appearance of indolence. Is the newspaper tossed aside by design or accident? Did Notman mean to create a visual equation between the lovely white sculpture on the right and the almost equally immobilized lady? It is tempting to read restlessness, boredom, even a striving for more into Mrs. MacKenzie's portraits. In 1876, while still married to Mr. MacKenzie, Nina ran off to the



William Notman, *Mrs. MacKenzie in Allan's Conservatory*, Montreal, 1871, silver salts on glass, wet collodion process, 25 x 20 cm, McCord Museum

United States with a man from her social circle in Montreal. She divorced Mr. MacKenzie in 1877, remarried, and moved to Winnipeg with her new husband. All of this was remarkable enough to warrant an article in the *New York Times*.

This image is a reproduction of the glass negative, from which Notman would likely have printed only a portion of the photograph. In many cases where he seems to have been experimenting with new spaces and backdrops, he deliberately captured more in the image so that he could edit later. Chances are that the final prints from this sitting look decidedly less modern than the negative (as is the case with Harriet Frothingham), but it is interesting to consider this experimental streak in Notman's practice and see that the results often carry an uncanny resemblance to artistic trends in other media.

## SITTING BULL 1885



William Notman & Son, *Sitting Bull*, Montreal, 1885  
Silver salts on glass, gelatin dry plate process, 17 x 12 cm  
McCord Museum



Notman's studio grew through the 1860s and beyond, so much so that it is difficult to establish which of the photographs were taken by Notman himself. It is reasonable to assume that when celebrities came to the studio, Notman would have been involved in the session, if not operating the camera, then in a directorial position. In 1885 Buffalo Bill's Wild West made a stop in Montreal. This was a circus-type show that debuted in 1883 and toured consistently for almost thirty years in North America and Europe. The performers included Sitting Bull, a famed Lakota Sioux holy man and Indian rights activist. Like most celebrities visiting Montreal, Buffalo Bill and Sitting Bull included a session at Notman's studio, probably at Notman's invitation.

The utterly simple format of this image was rather unusual for Notman. His studio portraits made full use of the props in his well-equipped studio rooms. A double portrait of Sitting Bull and William Frederick "Buffalo Bill" Cody pictures them against a painted outdoor scene in full regalia with hands clasped one on top of the other over the barrel of a rifle. The effect is decidedly awkward. Buffalo Bill stands rigidly, right hand hovering at his chest and left foot stepping out, and gazes off to the left of the camera. Sitting Bull makes none of these active, almost preening, motions. He is turned slightly toward Bill and gazes downward.



LEFT: William Notman & Son, *Sitting Bull*, Montreal, 1885, silver salts on glass, gelatin dry plate process, 17 x 12 cm, McCord Museum. RIGHT: William Notman & Son, *Sitting Bull and Buffalo Bill*, Montreal, 1885, silver salts on glass, gelatin dry plate process, 17 x 12 cm, McCord Museum.

Pictured on his own, Sitting Bull cuts a decidedly different figure. The solo portraits of Sitting Bull are all half-length and against a neutral backdrop. In several he is wearing a large headdress, which creates lyrical lines and textures in the finished print. By contrast this pared-down portrait is even more striking. This is the only pose in which he looks directly at the camera. Without the distractions of props, backdrop, or headdress, we are left to contemplate his calm, weathered face.

The format here is very similar to the one Edward Curtis (1868–1952) would later use for many of the portraits in his famous and controversial book *The North American Indian*, published in 1907. (This photograph was taken the same year the young Curtis became an apprentice in a photo studio in St. Paul, Minnesota.) It is tempting to read Sitting Bull's emotional state in this image, to see pride, weariness, and resignation, but these are more likely to be our own projections. What Notman has captured is a visually and compellingly human image of his sitter, presumably a record of his own encounter with Sitting Bull in that moment.

A black and white photograph of a rocky coastline. In the foreground, large, dark, layered rock formations are scattered across the water's edge. A small pool of water is nestled between some of the rocks. In the middle ground, a person wearing a hat and dark clothing stands on a rocky outcrop, looking out towards the sea. The background shows a vast, calm body of water meeting a distant, hazy shoreline under a bright, overcast sky. The overall mood is serene and expansive.

# SIGNIFICANCE & CRITICAL ISSUES

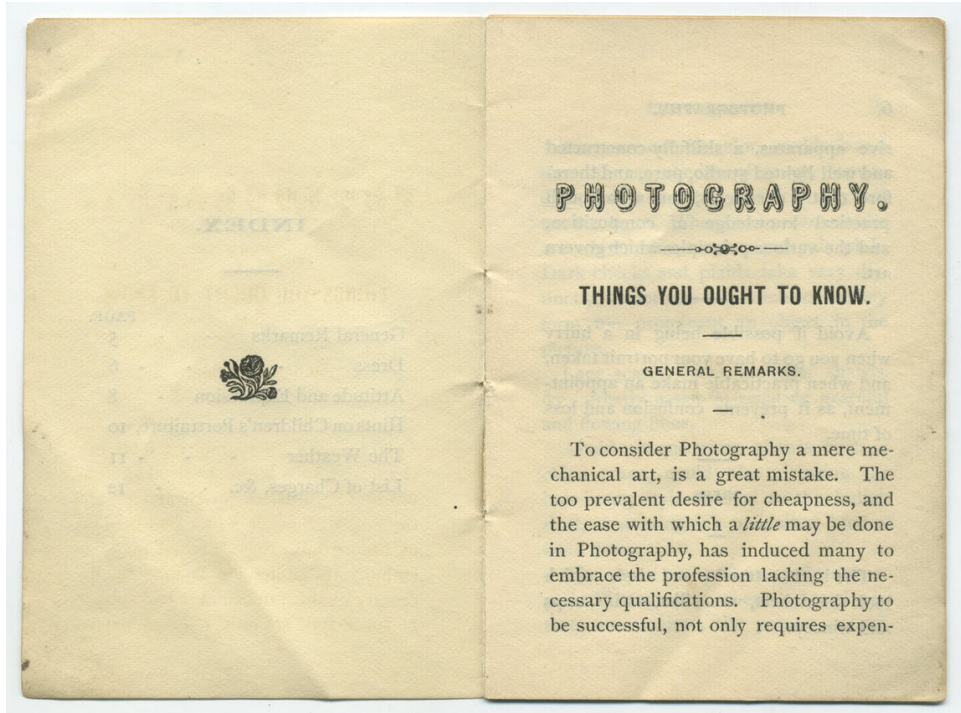
The scale and reach of Notman's photographic output are unparalleled in nineteenth-century Canada and even in comparison to developments in international centres such as London and Paris. Notman was remarkably prolific and left us with an often lively and carefully observed visual archive of Anglo Canada during a formative period in its history.

## PHOTOGRAPHY AS ART

The small brass plaque outside his studio door read "William Notman, Photographic Artist." This may seem like an obvious identifier now, but the artistic potential of a mechanical medium like photography was the subject of much debate in the nineteenth century. Many asked how someone who pointed a machine, clicked a button, and recorded nature could be considered in the same realm of creative genius as painters who use their imagination to generate images with their own hands.

In the nineteenth century, portraiture and landscapes, like Notman's *Chaudière Falls*, 1870, were exceedingly popular, and both benefited from the kind of verisimilitude that photography offered. The popularity of these subjects thus contributed to the new medium's instantaneous and widespread popularity. In addition Notman did just about everything possible to demonstrate that photography was not a passive endeavour. His studio was a laboratory for technical development, and Notman chronicled these innovations in articles for periodicals, including the influential *Philadelphia Photographer*. He submitted his photographs to periodicals on both photography and art; his photos often garnered notices, including mention of his more difficult and complicated industrial and landscape projects. He participated in local and international photography exhibitions, winning prizes and accolades. Notman's efforts raised the profile and quality of photography in Canada and beyond. At the same time, they were instrumental in the success of his business.

Notman's legacy as an artist has ebbed and flowed. His reputation, like that of many Victorian artists, waned in the first half of the twentieth century as modernism took hold. At the time, few if any art museums collected photography. When Notman's photographs were reprinted or displayed it was often for their subjects rather than as examples of their creator's work. Interest in photography began to grow in the mid-twentieth century. In 1951 the prolific Québécois historian Gérard Morisset wrote a magazine article on Canadian photographic pioneers in which he featured Notman prominently. The famed American photo historian and curator Beaumont Newhall cited Morisset's article in 1955 when he proclaimed Notman to be "Canada's first internationally known photographer."<sup>1</sup>



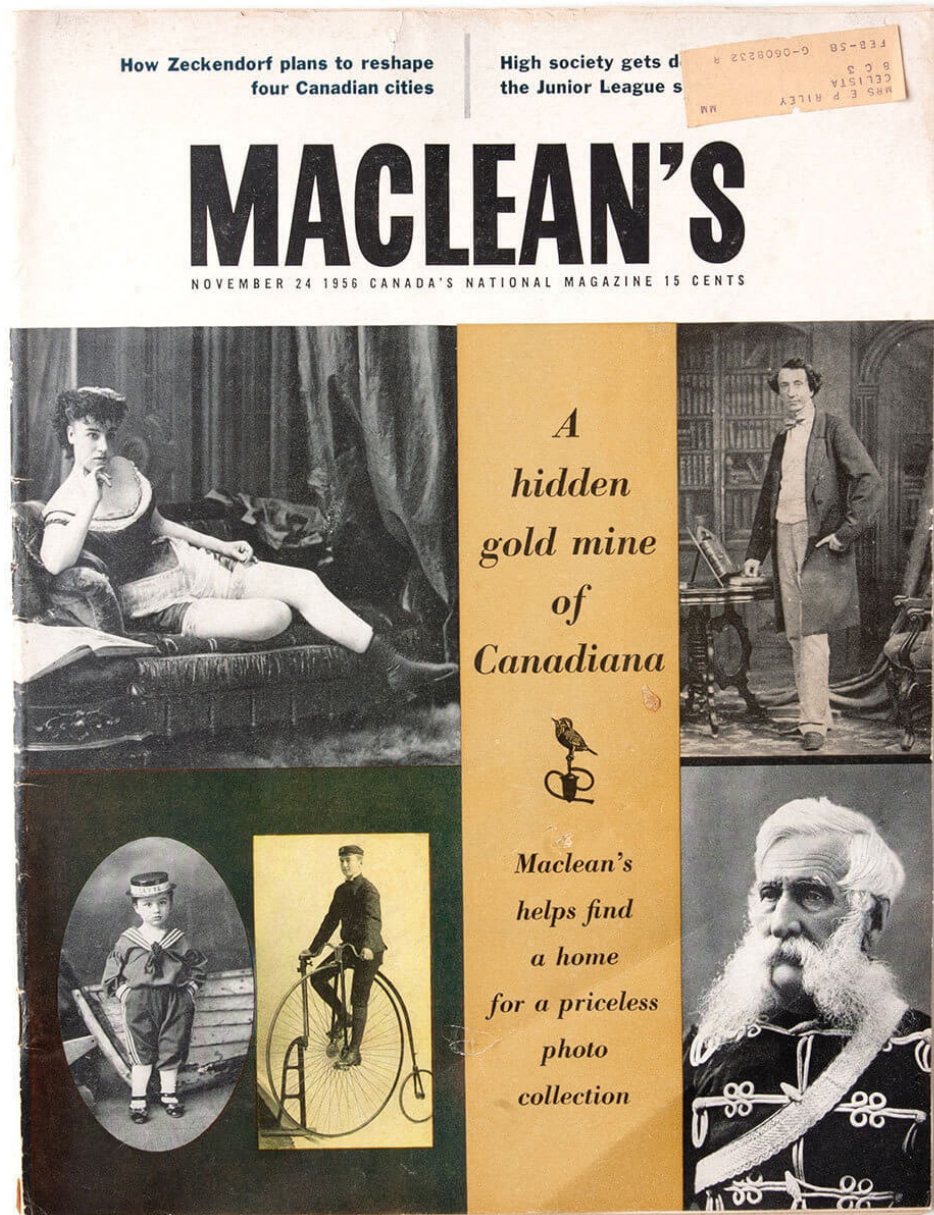
Pages 4 and 5 from the pamphlet *Photography: Things You Ought to Know* by William Notman, after 1867, ink and letterpress, 9.3 x 6.4 cm, McCord Museum. Notman frequently wrote articles and pamphlets on photography to raise the medium's profile as an art.



In 1956 a consortium made up of the Maxwell Cummings Family Foundation, Empire Universal Films, and *Maclean's* magazine purchased the Notman archive of prints and negatives from Associated Screen News (which had bought them after the business closed in 1935) and donated them to McGill University. They were housed in the McCord Museum, which was managed by the university at that time. Shortly afterward *Maclean's* published a series of heavily illustrated and glowing articles on Notman, bringing his career to the attention of a whole new generation.

The value of Notman's photographs was indisputable as a historical archive, but there was no such consensus on their place in art history. Newhall writes admiringly of Notman's technical innovations, especially in recreating winter scenes in the studio. He notes that these genre scenes were the source of Notman's international fame in his own time, but that in 1955 they were prized for their documentary value "as a record of a past age and dying customs."<sup>2</sup> In 1965 Ralph Greenhill, a collector, photographer, and amateur historian, published *Early Photography in Canada*, a book-length history of photography in Canada. Influenced by the prevailing modernist and formalist aesthetic, Greenhill had difficulty appreciating Notman's photographs.

Of Notman, Greenhill writes, "As a photographer he tended to promote some of the worst features of Victorian photography—studio scenes and composites." These were key areas in which Notman had worked hard to innovate and develop his business. The results were much lauded in their day. Greenhill was unapologetically dismissive of, and rather incurious about, Victorian taste in photography. One can almost feel Greenhill cringing as he writes of the composites: "The results were artificial and were mostly very bad pictures."<sup>3</sup> Even in the genre of studio portraits, Greenhill found Notman's work lacking, especially in comparison to the more minimalist studio portraits of his Montreal contemporary Alexander Henderson (1831–1913). Greenhill determines that Notman's portraits, "with their emphasis on the studio properties, draperies, and artificial backgrounds, appear characterless and formalized, although the best of them do have a period charm."<sup>4</sup>

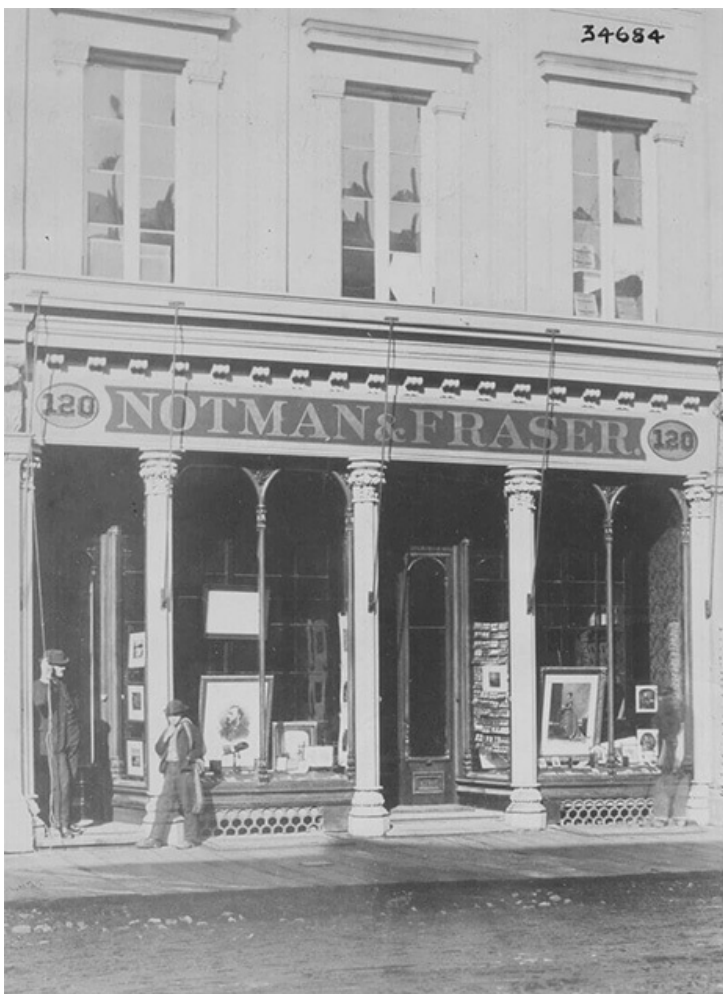


The November 24, 1956, *Maclean's* cover story on William Notman brought his work to a whole new generation.

In 1965 the McCord Museum hired Stanley Triggs as curator for the Notman archives. A photographer with a degree in fine arts and anthropology from the University of British Columbia, he held the position at the McCord for twenty-eight years, tirelessly working to make sense of the huge Notman archives, which include account books, albums, equipment, ephemera, and over 400,000 prints and negatives. In multiple books, exhibition catalogues, and essays, Triggs published his research on Notman's life, the workings of his business, and the scope of his photographs. As someone hired to represent the Notman archives, Triggs assessed the photographer's oeuvre with significantly more insight and generosity than did Greenhill.

### WHO TOOK THAT PICTURE?

Both Greenhill and Triggs raised an important point about the photographs of William Notman. Although "William Notman" is stamped on thousands of photographs, we cannot assume that all the pictures were actually taken by Notman himself. The common practice among photo studios was to stamp the back with the name of the studio rather than the photographer. A few years after he established the Montreal studio, Notman had assistants working with him and taking photographs. In some cases there are witness accounts of Notman's activities, and his writings often make reference to specific projects he was personally involved in.



LEFT: William Notman, *Notman & Fraser Photographic Studio*, Toronto, 1868, silver salts on paper mounted on paper, albumen process, 17.8 x 12.7 cm, McCord Museum. RIGHT: William Notman, *Adolphe Vogt, John Fraser and Henry Sandham, Notman Staff*, Montreal, 1868, silver salts on paper mounted on paper, albumen process, 17.8 x 12.7 cm, McCord Museum.



Greenhill saw this difficulty in establishing authorship of individual photographs as another reason not to take Notman seriously as an artist; Triggs, however, sees it differently. Triggs concludes that Notman had personally trained all the photographers who worked with him. He argues that although Notman indeed had a signature artistic style that unified his work as a photographer, it was the “house style” of the studio he had created rather than an individual style. Unlike Greenhill, Triggs describes Notman’s style as forceful and straightforward, with “no redundant or extraneous elements.” Furthermore, he argues, “the entire picture plane is used with economy to tell the story dramatically and describe the subject.”<sup>5</sup>

Ultimately it seems counterproductive to try to link all of Notman’s incredibly varied work based on a particular aesthetic style. As tempting as it might be, the concept of a house style has to be applied very generously to encompass many of the fussy Victorian portraits or touristic landscapes found among images attributed to Notman and his studio. Notman presumably had personal aesthetic preferences, but these pale in comparison to the impressive aesthetic flexibility he displayed across various subjects and over the course of his career. This flexibility was especially valuable because his works were so often imagined and commissioned by clients. Notman’s creativity in working within different parameters to create memorable photographs in many genres is one of the most significant aspects of his oeuvre.



William Notman, *Master Hugh Allan*, Montreal, 1867, painted photograph, silver salts, watercolour on card, albumen process, 69 x 52 cm, McCord Museum. This hand-tinted portrait illustrates Notman’s impressive aesthetic range and flexibility.

## PHOTOGRAPHY AS SOCIAL ENCOUNTER

Increasingly, scholars and historians of photography have come to consider photographs as the products of often complex social encounters rather than as the product of specific choices made by the photographer. This would be a particularly useful way to think about Notman’s work. Stepping back and



examining the wider context in which Notman functioned enables us to take seriously the commercial and often collaborative context in which he worked. Most of the images he made were commissioned by others, and the final appearance of such images would necessarily have been the product of negotiation between Notman and his client. Those sitting for portraits, for example, were clearly always present and active participants in the process of taking the picture.

Notman was skilled in studio negotiations between photographer and sitter, but from the beginning he also demonstrated a remarkable drive and attendant ability to create photographic opportunities. Recognizing the appeal of belonging to prominent groups, he advertised and grew the field of class portraits as well as images of athletic associations and other markers of bourgeois sociability and success. Notman's use of composites enabled him to fully exploit this particular market.



Notman/Topley Studio, *Fancy Ball Given by the Governor General Lord Dufferin at Rideau Hall on February 23, 1876, Ottawa, 1876*, composite, Library and Archives Canada. To create this photo, Notman's Ottawa partner, William James Topley, advertised for volunteers to pose in his studio in costume. He then arranged several hundred of the individual portraits as if they were at the ball in Rideau Hall.

Composite photographs were a creative response to a practical problem. Long exposure times necessitated by slow emulsions on the photographic plates made it frustratingly difficult to get interesting and universally pleasing photographs of large groups. Inevitably someone moved, or the whole group ended up looking rigid in their efforts not to move. Photographing a group of students in a meaningful setting like a library was even more difficult given the low light conditions in Victorian buildings. Starting in 1864, for group images, Notman began to photograph sitters separately in his studio. These portraits would be printed and cut out by the art department before being pasted onto a larger photograph or painted backdrop. The completed collage would then be photographed to create the final image. Notman did not pioneer this technique, nor was he the one to introduce it to Montreal, but he and his team of artists developed it in ingenious ways that thrilled his clients, built new audiences, and brought him great fame.<sup>6</sup>

The composite photograph was just one of Notman's techniques that created an almost theatrical experience for his clients. He carefully designed the most fashionable and elegant studios and advertised sittings as special events.

In turn his sitters became full participants in the experience, often presenting themselves in their finest clothes, leaving historians with an impressive archive of Victorian Canadian fashion.



LEFT: William Notman, *John A. Macdonald, Politician*, Montreal, 1863, silver salts on glass, wet collodion process, 12.7 x 10.2 cm, McCord Museum. Canada's first prime minister was among Notman's high-profile clients. RIGHT: William Notman & Son, *Sitting Bull*, Montreal, 1885, silver salts on glass, gelatin dry plate process, 17 x 12 cm, McCord Museum.

Of course Notman was somewhat of a fashion coach as well as a chronicler. In his helpful handbook for sitters, *Photography: Things You Ought to Know*, he counsels, "The best materials, and those which look the richest, are silks, satins, reps and winceys.... Dark checks and plaids take very distinctly, sometimes too much so, as they form too prominent an object in the picture. Lace scarfs, open mantles, shawls, etc., greatly assist in securing graceful flowing lines."

Although photography was his medium, Notman's significance cannot be limited to that of photographer. He was also a visionary, a facilitator, and the creator of a brand. He built teams. Key to his success was his skill in selecting staff, whether they were the photographic operators (as they were known), or those who ensured that the studio experience was as luxurious as possible, or the artists who enhanced the photographic prints in unique ways. He encouraged technological development and made certain that everything he worked on received extensive publicity. These varied skills do not fit neatly into our mould of the artist as isolated genius, but they do have echoes in modern icons like Andy Warhol (1928-1987) and Damien Hirst (b. 1965).



# STYLE & TECHNIQUE

Notman was a proficient technician and an enthusiastic inventor of tools and techniques for his photography. He preferred the wet collodion process to the more popular daguerreotype. Best known for his development of elaborate composite photographs, Notman was generous in sharing his innovations and clearly hoped to exert his influence on the wider field of practitioners.



**WET COLLODION PROCESS**

When he opened his studio, Notman worked primarily with the revolutionary, but laborious and fickle, wet collodion process perfected by Frederick Scott Archer, an Englishman, in the early 1850s. (For a wonderful demonstration of the process, watch this short video from the J. Paul Getty Museum.)

Unlike others of his generation who favoured the daguerreotype, Notman largely bypassed the process. The daguerreotype produced a small single positive image on a copper plate that had to be kept in a case away from light. Daguerreotypes originated in France and became extremely popular in North America, where they were prized for their incredible level of detail.

The collodion process entailed coating a glass plate in a chemical mixture. When the surface was tacky but not yet dry, the plate was taken to a darkroom and bathed in silver nitrate to create silver iodine. While still wet, the plate was inserted into the camera and exposed. The plate then had to be developed immediately with an acid solution and fixed. At every stage the likelihood of a decent exposure was put at risk by dust, overly dry conditions, and even a breath across the plate. Mistakes in timing or mixing were also common, and there was always the risk of chipping or cracking the plate.



William Notman, *Missie Alice Notman in Sleigh with Nurse*, Montreal, 1865, silver salts, wet collodion process, 12 x 10 cm, McCord Museum. The edges of this photograph, in the area beyond the photographer's black crop marks, reveal chemical residue from the wet collodion process.

By the time he began the commission for the Grand Trunk Railway in 1858, to document the construction of the Victoria Bridge, Notman was printing unlimited copies from glass negatives. No matter what the final format, the wet collodion process produced lush and detailed images well suited to the Victorian taste for finery and ornament. It was also capable of producing larger images than the earlier processes, a capability that Notman put to excellent use in his oversized images of the Victoria Bridge construction. Glass plates were also used to produce stereoscope images. The reproducibility of the wet collodion images revolutionized Notman's business. He was able to conceptualize each commission as an ongoing business opportunity. The second edition of the maple box, with its exquisite selection of photographs—the one on display in Notman's studio—served to advertise prints that clients could order for themselves.



An example of a glass plate negative, approx. 50 x 90 cm, from the studio of Notman's Ottawa partner, William James Topley, who began as Notman's manager in Ottawa but opened his own studio in 1875. Library and Archives Canada.

## CARTES-DE-VISITE

By 1860 Notman had joined the craze for the newly fashionable cartes-de-visite, with a process that cut production costs by rendering eight small negatives on the same plate and enabled prints to be made from the negative. The resulting albumen prints are small, at 2 1/8 by 3 1/2 inches (5.4 x 8.9 cm), and were mounted on a card sized 2 1/2 by 4 inches (6.4 x 10.2 cm), ready for gifting and collecting. These small images were madly popular and fuelled a simultaneous craze for photo albums, a form of curated storage that was not possible with the metal daguerreotypes or glass ambrotypes. However, demand soon grew for a bigger photograph that would be more amenable to groups and landscapes. (The negative itself had to be larger because enlargements from negatives were difficult, though not impossible, as Notman's famous composites attest.)



LEFT: Back of a Notman carte-de-visite, Halifax, 1876, 6.4 x 10.3 cm, private collection.  
RIGHT: Front of a Notman carte-de-visite, Halifax, 1876, 6.4 x 10.3 cm, private collection.

### CABINET CARDS

By the mid-1860s several options appeared in the marketplace. Notman was vocal in the photographic press about the need to choose one standard size and format so that studios could continue to exchange negatives and so that equipment would also be standardized. His preference was for the cabinet card, 4 1/4 by 6 1/2 inches (10.8 x 16.5 cm), and this was the format that prevailed, largely displacing the carte by the early 1870s. The cabinet card enabled photographers to adequately represent more detail and more figures in one photograph, which clearly suited Notman's creative approach.

Carte-de-visite and cabinet card photography's immense popularity and promise of endless reproduction created, from the earliest days, a unique challenge. To properly represent all the landscapes and portraits he had to offer for print, a businessman like Notman needed to develop careful systems for cataloguing and advertising his wares. Two sets of books kept track of the sitters and poses. These have almost all been saved, along with 200,000 negatives that now reside in the Notman archives at the McCord Museum, providing an unparalleled record of nineteenth-century culture, from photographic activity and Notman's business to social networks, family histories, fashion, biographies, and more.

### THE COMPOSITE

In 1870 the occasion of a fancy dress skating carnival in Montreal's Victoria Rink inspired Notman's first large composite production, a technique he was credited with developing and popularizing. The process began with an overall design for the finished picture, and then individual or small group portraits were made—prints of which would eventually be cut out and pasted onto a composite negative and then printed again. *Skating Carnival* was made from more than three hundred individual photographs, and its creation makes evident Notman's keen sense of marketing. Notman's composite technique is all the more impressive when we consider that it was perfected more than a century before the development of modern photo-editing software.





William Notman & Son, *The Bounce*, Montreal Snowshoe Club, 1886, composite, silver salts on glass, gelatin dry plate process, 25 x 20 cm, McCord Museum.

### OTHER TECHNICAL INNOVATION

Notman's creativity and desire to be able to do more with studio photography drove his technical innovations. The simplest of these were the techniques he developed to convincingly stage his narrative winter scenes: the polished zinc plate he created to stand in for ice, puffed lambswool for piles of snow, and paint on the glass negative to mimic the effect of falling snow. Although not directly related to photographic technology, these techniques enabled him to realize his creative photographic vision. They were of enough interest to his contemporaries to warrant description in the *Philadelphia Photographer*, a popular photographic magazine of the day.



William Notman, *Around the Camp Fire*, Caribou Hunting series, Montreal, 1866, silver salts on glass, wet collodion process, 20 x 25 cm, McCord Museum.

Notman's work on a functional magnesium flare also helped to stage his studio scenes, but the flare was widely applicable to various kinds of photography. Before the era of electric light, photographers universally struggled to bring enough light indoors to keep exposures brief and the image decently exposed. Notman worked with his friend and fellow Montreal photographer Alexander Henderson (1831-1913) on possible technical solutions, including a magnesium flare, that could provide a burst of light either behind or in front of the camera.<sup>1</sup> The successful result of their efforts is visible as a campfire in an image from the Caribou Hunting series.

## CAMERAS

Over the course of Notman's long career he produced photographs of varied formats and types, including cartes-de-visite, stereographs, cabinet cards, and landscape views. Each of these required a different camera, from the two-lens apparatus used to create stereoscopic images to large-format view cameras, such as the state-of-the-art Scovill that Notman purchased from the Waterbury, Connecticut, company around 1870. More information on the type of equipment used by Notman's studios can be found in the comprehensive sourcebook *McKeown's Price Guide to Antique & Classic Cameras*<sup>2</sup> or through the publications of the Photographic Historical Society of Canada.



This large-format view camera from c. 1870 was manufactured by Scovill in Waterbury, Connecticut.





# WHERE TO SEE

The McCord Museum in Montreal has by far the largest holdings of works by William Notman, but his photographs can be found in public and private collections in Canada and the United States. Although the works listed below are held by the following institutions, they may not always be on view.

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## HARVARD ART MUSEUMS

32 Quincy Street  
Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA  
617-495-9400  
harvardartmuseums.org



**William Notman, Asa Gray  
(1810-1888), 1868-75**  
Albumen silver print on card  
16.5 x 11.1 cm



**William Notman & Son, Montreal  
from Mount Royal, 1885**  
Albumen silver print  
18.2 x 23.3 cm

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## MCCORD MUSEUM

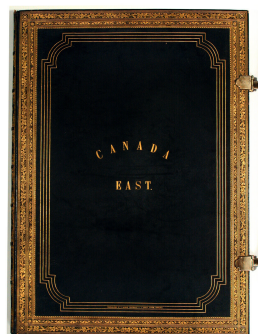
690 Sherbrooke Street West  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada  
514-398-7100  
mccord-museum.qc.ca



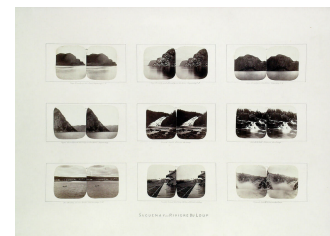
**William Notman,  
Framework of Tube and  
Staging Looking In,  
Victoria Bridge,  
Montreal, 1859**  
Silver salts on paper  
mounted on card,  
albumen process  
23 x 28 cm



**William  
Notman, William  
Notman and Family,  
Montreal, 1859**  
Silver salts on paper,  
albumen process  
7.5 x 7 cm



**William Notman,  
Canada East, portfolio  
from the maple box,  
1859-60**  
76.2 x 91.4 x 5.1 cm



**William Notman, Group  
of stereographs from  
the maple box,  
Saguenay and Rivière-  
du-Loup, Quebec,  
1859-60**  
Silver salts on paper  
mounted on card,  
albumen process  
52 x 72 cm

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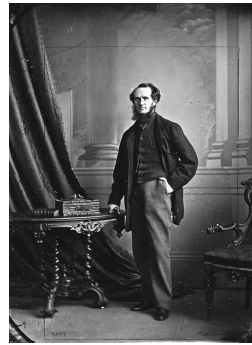
**William Notman, *Mrs. William Notman*, Montreal, 1862**

Silver salts on paper  
mounted on paper,  
albumen process  
8 x 5 cm



**William Notman, *John A. Macdonald*, Politician, Montreal, 1863**

Silver salts on glass, wet  
collodion process  
12.7 x 10.2 cm



**William Notman, *William Notman*, Photographer, Montreal 1863**

Silver salts on glass, wet  
collodion process  
12 x 10 cm



**William Notman, *G.H. Frothingham Sharing a Secret with Harriet Frothingham*, Montreal, 1865**

Silver salts on paper  
mounted on paper,  
albumen process  
8.5 x 5.6 cm



**William Notman, *Missie Alice Notman in Sleigh with Nurse*, Montreal, 1865**

Silver salts, wet  
collodion process  
12 x 10 cm



**William Notman, *Around the Camp Fire*, Caribou Hunting series, Montreal, 1866**

Silver salts on glass, wet  
collodion process  
20 x 25 cm



**William Notman, *Caribou Hunting*, The Chance Shot, Montreal, 1866**

Silver salts on paper  
mounted on paper,  
albumen process  
12.3 x 8.6 cm



**William Notman, *Lovell's Group of Children Skating in Costume*, Montreal, 1867**

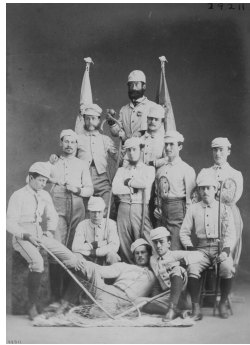
Silver salts on glass, wet  
collodion process  
17 x 12 cm





**William Notman, Master Hugh Allan, Montreal, 1867**  
Painted photograph, silver salts, watercolour on card, albumen process  
69 x 52 cm

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**William Notman, Montreal Lacrosse Club, 1867**  
Silver salts on paper mounted on paper, albumen process  
14 x 10 cm

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**William Notman, St. Regis Lacrosse Club, Montreal, 1867**  
Silver salts on paper mounted on paper, albumen process  
10.1 x 13.9 cm

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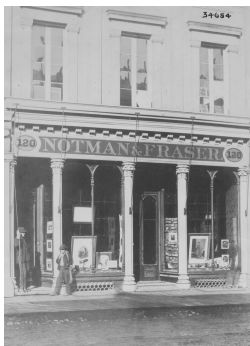
**William Notman, Adolphe Vogt, John Fraser and Henry Sandham, Notman Staff, Montreal, 1868**  
Silver salts on paper mounted on paper, albumen process  
17.8 x 12.7 cm

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**William Notman, Mrs. Hillard's Dead Baby, Montreal, 1868**  
Silver salts on paper mounted on paper, albumen process  
8.5 x 5.6 cm

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**William Notman, Notman & Fraser Photographic Studio, Toronto, 1868**  
Silver salts on paper mounted on paper, albumen process  
17.8 x 12.7 cm

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**William Notman, Mr. Collins' Sleigh at Notman's Studio, Bleury Street, Montreal, 1868-69**  
Silver salts on paper mounted on paper, albumen process  
12.7 x 17.8 cm

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**William Notman, Mr. A. Collins, Montreal, 1869**  
Silver salts on paper mounted on paper, albumen process  
17.8 x 12.7 cm

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**William Notman, *Chaudière Falls, Ottawa, 1870***

Silver salts on glass, wet collodion process  
20 x 25 cm



**William Notman, *Skating Carnival, Victoria Rink, Montreal, 1870***

Painted composite, silver salts, oil on canvas, albumen process  
137 x 176 cm



**William Notman, *Miss H. Frothingham, Montreal, 1871***

Silver salts on glass, wet collodion process  
25 x 20 cm



**William Notman, *Mrs. William MacKenzie in Allan's Conservatory, Montreal, 1871***

Silver salts on glass, wet collodion process  
25 x 20 cm



**William Notman, *Mrs. MacKenzie in Allan's Conservatory, Montreal, 1871***

Silver salts on glass, wet collodion process  
25 x 20 cm



**William Notman, *Yale College, Sheffield Scientific School Class in Library, New Haven, Connecticut, 1872***

Composite, silver salts on paper, albumen process  
35.6 x 43.2 cm



**Notman & Sandham, *William Notman Studio, 17 Bleury Street, Montreal, c. 1875***

Silver salts on paper, albumen process  
25 x 20 cm



**William Notman, *Young Ladies of Notman's Printing Room, Miss Findlay's Group, Montreal, 1876***

Silver salts on paper mounted on paper, albumen process  
10 x 13 cm



**Notman & Sandham, *J. Edgar's Dead Child*, Montreal, 1877**

Silver salts on paper  
mounted on paper,  
albumen process  
12.7 x 17.8 cm



**Notman & Sandham, *Notman & Sandham's Room, Windsor Hotel, Montreal, 1878***

Silver salts on paper  
mounted on paper,  
albumen process  
10 x 8 cm



**William Notman & Son, *Sitting Bull*, Montreal, 1885**

Silver salts on glass,  
gelatin dry plate  
process  
17 x 12 cm



**William Notman & Son, *Sitting Bull*, Montreal, 1885**

Silver salts on glass,  
gelatin dry plate  
process  
17 x 12 cm



**William Notman & Son, *Sitting Bull and Buffalo Bill*, Montreal, 1885**

Silver salts on glass,  
gelatin dry plate  
process  
17 x 12 cm



**William Notman & Son, *The Bounce*, Montreal Snowshoe Club, 1886**

Composite, silver salts  
on glass, gelatin dry  
plate process  
25 x 20 cm



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**Attributed to William Notman,  
*Still Life with Books*, 1870s-80s**  
Albumen silver print from glass  
negative  
16.8 x 21.6 cm

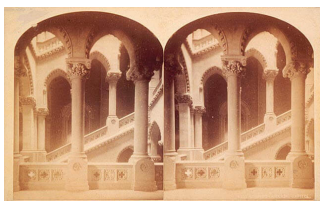


**Attributed to William Notman,  
*Burning Spring, Lord Dufferin  
Isles, Canada*, 1885**  
Albumen silver print from glass  
negative  
24.5 x 19.5 cm

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**William Notman, *Grand  
Staircase and Capital,  
Windsor Hotel,  
Montreal*, c. 1878-91**  
Albumen silver print  
10.2 x 16.4 cm



**William Notman,  
*Untitled (Men with  
Snowshoes and Sled)*,  
c. 1855**  
Albumen silver print  
14 x 10.1 cm



**William Notman,  
*Parliament Buildings in  
Course of Erection at  
Ottawa*, 1865**  
Albumen silver print  
18.5 x 23.1 cm



**William Notman, *York  
and Lancaster  
Regiment*, 1889**  
Albumen silver print  
18.9 x 23.1 cm

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## NOTES

### BIOGRAPHY

1. Tom Normand, *Scottish Photography: A History* (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2007).
2. Robert G. Wilson, "William Notman's Stereo Perspective: The Victoria Bridge," *History of Photography* 20, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 109.

### KEY WORKS: GROUP OF STEREOGRAPHS FROM THE MAPLE BOX

1. *Art Journal*, November 1860, quoted in Ralph Greenhill and Andrew Birrell, *Canadian Photography: 1839–1920* (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1979), 49.

### KEY WORKS: CARIBOU HUNTING, THE CHANCE SHOT

1. "Outdoor Photographs Taken Indoors," *Philadelphia Photographer* 3, no. 29 (May 1866): 9.
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### KEY WORKS: SKATING CARNIVAL, VICTORIA RINK

1. Stanley Triggs, *The Composite Photographs of William Notman* (Montreal: McCord Museum of Canadian History, 1994), 11.

### SIGNIFICANCE & CRITICAL ISSUES

1. Beaumont Newhall, "William Notman, 1826–1891," *Image: Journal of Photography of the George Eastman House* 4, no. 8 (November 1955): 58.
2. Beaumont Newhall, "William Notman, 1826–1891," *Image: Journal of Photography of the George Eastman House* 4, no. 8 (November 1955): 58.
3. Ralph Greenhill and Andrew Birrell, *Canadian Photography: 1839–1920* (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1979), 67.
4. Ralph Greenhill and Andrew Birrell, *Canadian Photography: 1839–1920* (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1979), 51.
5. Stanley Triggs, *William Notman: The Stamp of a Studio* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario / Coach House Press, 1985), 24.
6. Ralph Greenhill, *Early Photography in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1965), 45.



## STYLE & TECHNIQUE

1. Ramsay Cook and Jean Hamelin, eds., *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. 14: 1911–1920 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 477–78.
2. James M. McKeown and Joan C. McKeown, eds., *McKeown's Price Guide to Antique & Classic Cameras, 2005–2006*, 12th edition (Grantsburg, WI: Centennial Photo Service, 2004).



## GLOSSARY

**Adamson, Robert (Scottish, 1821–1848)**

A photographer, and one half of the photography team Hill and Adamson, in which Adamson's role was largely that of technician. Known for pioneering artistic photographic portraiture and for early mastery of the calotype process, Hill and Adamson rank among the most important photographers of the nineteenth century.

**albumen**

A coating consisting of a combination of egg whites and salt, applied to glass (for photographic negatives) or, more commonly, paper (for photographic prints), and then sensitized with a silver nitrate solution. Albumen prints were common from the 1850s to the 1890s, preferred over salt prints for their clarity.

**ambrotype**

A photographic process consisting of a collodion positive on glass backed by an opaque material and held in a hinged case. Ambrotypes largely replaced daguerreotypes (with which they are easily confused) in the late 1850s and were themselves replaced in the 1860s by cheaper tintypes and cartes-de-visite.

**Art Association of Montreal (AAM)**

Founded in 1860 as an offshoot of the Montreal Society of Artists (itself dating to 1847), the Art Association of Montreal became the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in 1947. The MMFA is now a major international museum, with more than 760,000 visitors annually.

**Bellocq, E.J. (American, 1873–1949)**

An obscure commercial photographer active in New Orleans in the 1910s, whose portraits of local prostitutes, taken on 8-by-10-inch glass plates, became famous after Lee Friedlander acquired the plates and reprinted them.

**cabinet card**

A card-mounted photograph used almost exclusively for portraiture, similar in style and purpose to cartes-de-visite but larger and popularized later. Cabinet card prints were originally albumen but were later produced using the gelatin silver, collodion, platinum, or carbon process.

**carte-de-visite**

A card-mounted photograph, roughly the size and shape of a playing card, produced in multiple using a multi-lens camera. Patented by A.A.E. Disdéri in Paris in 1854, cartes-de-visite were largely intended as photographic calling cards; they depicted sitters according to nearly universal conventions.

**composite negative**

A photographic negative made by combining several negatives. Composite negatives were largely a phenomenon of the nineteenth century, when technological limitations made it impossible to capture different areas of a particular scene—such as sea and sky—at once.

**composite photograph**

Created by photographers using a cut-and-paste technique, primarily in the nineteenth century—when exposure times were long and outdoor photography was difficult—composite photographs were a means of guaranteeing that each figure in a group photograph was sharp, visible, well posed, and had a pleasing facial expression.

**Curtis, Edward (American, 1868–1952)**

A commercial photographer known for his portraits of Native Americans, which he published in the twenty-volume *North American Indian* between 1907 and 1930. More Pictorialist than documentary, these images often recorded customs and costumes that had already vanished from the cultures depicted.

**daguerreotype**

Among the earliest type of photograph, the finely detailed daguerreotype image is formed on the mirrored surface of a sheet of silver-plated copper. The process is extremely complex and finicky, but these photographs were nonetheless phenomenally popular from their invention, by Louis Daguerre in 1839, until the 1850s.

**Fraser, John Arthur (Canadian, 1838–1898)**

A painter, photographer, illustrator, and art teacher born in England. Upon immigrating to Canada around 1860, Fraser began painting studio backdrops for the photographer William Notman, becoming a partner in Notman's Toronto firm in 1867.

**glass negative**

From the 1850s to the early twentieth century, glass was commonly used in photography as a support for light-sensitive emulsions, such as those made from albumen, collodion, and gelatin. These were coated onto the glass, or plate, which was then placed in the camera.

**Greenhill, Ralph (Canadian, 1924–1996)**

A Canadian art and documentary photographer, Greenhill studied photography at Ryerson Institute of Technology (now Ryerson University) in Toronto from 1949 to 1951 and subsequently worked in the Stills Photography department at the CBC for over thirty years. His oeuvre includes views of nineteenth-century Ontario architecture and engineering projects.

**head and body rests**

Used to hold the body still in photographic portraiture in the nineteenth century, when emulsion speeds were slow. A typical head rest consisted of a metal cradle on an adjustable stand; hands and arms could be placed on a book, plinth, or other prop.

**Henderson, Alexander (Canadian, 1831–1913)**

A landscape and portrait photographer, whose images of nature and wilderness were prized in his day. An important figure in the early history of Canadian photography, Henderson was appointed chief of the Canadian Pacific Railway's new photography department in 1892.

**Hill, David Octavius (Scottish, 1802–1870)**

A prominent Edinburgh painter, and one half of the photography team Hill and Adamson, in which Hill's role was largely that of artistic director. Known for pioneering artistic photographic portraiture and for early mastery of the calotype process, Hill and Adamson rank among the most important photographers of the nineteenth century.

**Hirst, Damien (British, b. 1965)**

Arguably the most famous living contemporary artist, whose talent for self-promotion is often regarded as a principal factor in his success. Hirst's best-known work is probably *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*, 1991: a dead shark floating in a formaldehyde-filled vitrine.

**Impressionism**

A highly influential art movement that originated in France in the 1860s and is associated with the emergence of modern urban European society. Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and other Impressionists rejected the subjects and formal rigours of academic art in favour of scenes of nature and daily life and the careful rendering of atmospheric effects. They often painted outdoors.

**International Exhibition, London, 1862**

A world's fair, also called the Great London Exposition, intended to display the latest developments in technology, industry, and the arts from thirty-six countries. Its buildings covered twenty-one acres in South Kensington, where the Natural History Museum and Science Museum now stand.

**magnesium flare**

An early method of artificial lighting for photography. Magnesium powder had been used for this purpose in various problematic incarnations, including wires and flares, since 1859; not until 1887, when Adolf Miethe and Johannes Gaedicke mixed it with potassium chlorate, was the first widely useable flash powder created.

**McCord Museum**

A Montreal museum of local and national history, opened in 1921. Included in the McCord's diverse collection is the Notman Photographic Archives: approximately 1.3 million photographs by William Notman, his studio employees, and other photographers from the 1840s to the present, as well as photographic equipment and related material.



**Morisot, Berthe (French, 1841–1895)**

A painter and printmaker who found success at the Paris Salons before becoming involved, in the late 1860s, with the fledgling Impressionist movement. She became one of its most significant figures, best known for paintings of domestic life.

**Morisset, Gérard (Canadian, 1898–1970)**

A lawyer by training, Morisset soon left the profession to dedicate himself to the study and promotion of Quebec culture. He was the director of the Musée du Québec from 1953 to 1965, and his collection of data and documentation related to Quebec artwork, begun in 1937, remains a valuable resource.

**Newhall, Beaumont (American, 1908–1993)**

An art historian, curator, and critic, whose importance to the institutional history of photography is unparalleled. Author of the seminal *History of Photography: From 1839 to the Present* (1937), Newhall was the first director and curator of the photography department at the Museum of Modern Art, New York—the first such department at any museum.

**Paris World Exposition, 1867**

The second Paris world's fair, which took place under Napoleon III, in the Champ-de-Mars. Although largely dedicated to industry, it included fine art exhibitions; works by Paul Cézanne, Claude Monet, Gustave Courbet, and other painters now considered the era's most important were not included, having been rejected by the selection committee.

**picture plane**

The surface of a picture, and the area where its foreground elements reside. The picture plane can be thought of as a window through which the viewer sees a depicted world, or the point where the viewer's eye makes contact with that world.

**picturesque**

A term developed in late eighteenth-century Britain that refers to a particular variety of landscape and to a style of painting and design. The wilder areas of the British Isles, for example, were understood as perfectly "picturesque." It draws from contemporary notions of the sublime and the beautiful.

**Sandham, Henry (Canadian, 1842–1910)**

A landscape painter, photographer, and draftsman who apprenticed with William Notman in Montreal and later lived in Boston and London, U.K., where he enjoyed a successful career as an illustrator. Sandham's *Montreal Snow Shoe Club*, a composite photograph completed with Notman, won a silver medal at the world's fair in Paris in 1878.

**stereograph; stereoscopic photographs**

A photographic form that was phenomenally popular from the mid-1850s into the twentieth century. A stereograph consists of two nearly identical photographs, typically mounted side by side on cardstock, which when viewed through a stereoscope blend into each other to create a three-dimensional effect.

**Triggs, Stanley (Canadian, b. 1928)**

Curator of the Notman Photographic Archives at the McCord Museum, Montreal, from 1965 to 1993.

**Warhol, Andy (American, 1928–1987)**

One of the most important artists of the twentieth century and a central figure in Pop art. With his serial screen prints of commercial items like Campbell's Soup cans and portraits of Marilyn Monroe and Elvis, Warhol defied the notion of the artwork as a singular, handcrafted object.

**wet collodion process**

A photographic process introduced by Frederick Scott Archer in 1851 and popular until the 1880s. It is typically used in the elaboration of negatives. Made from gun cotton, collodion was poured onto a glass plate and sensitized; the plate then had to be exposed and developed immediately.

**Wilson, Edward L. (American, 1838–1903)**

A photographer and editor of the journal *Philadelphia Photographer*, and a friend of William Notman, Wilson was the sole official photographer of the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, the first world's fair held in the United States.



# SOURCES & RESOURCES

As with most Victorian artists, Notman's great fame faded in the first half of the twentieth century. However, through the 1950s and beyond he was reclaimed in the name of Canadian nationalism and then art.



### THE MCCORD AND OTHER ARCHIVES

The McCord Museum in Montreal is the main resource for all things Notman. The Notman Photographic Archives are located at the McCord and hold over 600,000 photographs, including 200,000 glass negatives. Most of these images have been scanned and can be searched and viewed on the McCord website. The website also features interviews with archivists and historians, video introductions to Notman's subjects, and information about his techniques and technologies, as well as many of the essays written by former curator Stanley Triggs.



McCord Museum, interior.

Notman's photographs and those created under the banner of his studio can also be found in the collections of most major Canadian museums and farther afield in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. However, because works on paper and especially historical photographs are subject to light damage, museums often restrict the number of prints on display at one time. The McCord Museum is the best place to view Notman photographs in person.

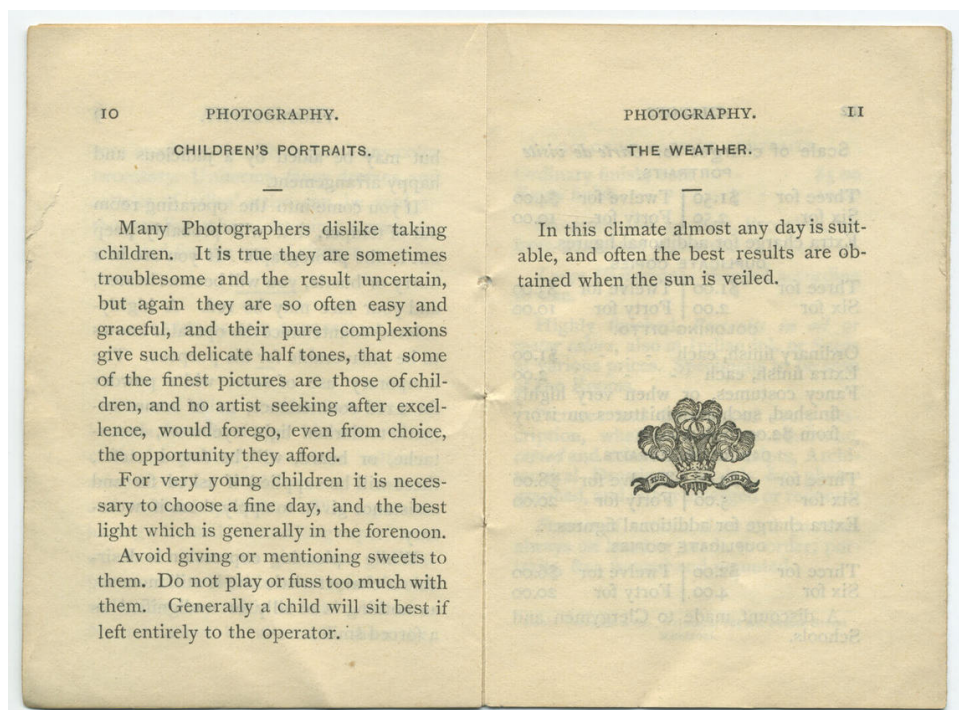
### WRITINGS BY WILLIAM NOTMAN

Notman wrote on photography frequently, but he limited himself mostly to short articles in the *Philadelphia Photographer*, edited by his friend Edward Wilson. Issues of the journal have been scanned and made available through the Boston Public Library. Notman's articles are also quoted extensively in texts by Stanley Triggs.

***Photography: Things You Ought to Know.* Montreal: Louis Perrault, n.d., after 1867.** This short text was designed to help prepare customers for the experience of sitting for a portrait. It advised on what clothes and accessories to wear to ensure the best results and outlined the process of the studio. Interesting and rather ingenious.

In the 1860s Notman published a few books, some of which featured painting and photography:

***Victoria Bridge, Niagara Falls, Principal Cities and Places of Interest throughout Canada.* Montreal: Wm. Notman, n.d., c. 1861.**



Pages 10 and 11 from the pamphlet *Photography: Things You Ought to Know* by William Notman, after 1867, ink and letterpress, 9.3 x 6.4 cm, McCord Museum.

**Notman, William, and Fennings Taylor. *Portraits of British Americans.* Montreal: Wm. Notman, 1863-68.**

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Hall, Roger, Gordon Dodds, and Stanley Triggs. *The World of William Notman: The Nineteenth Century through a Master Lens*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993.

Harper, J. Russell, and Stanley Triggs. *Portrait of a Period: A Collection of Notman Photographs, 1856-1915*. Montreal: McGill University Press, 1967.

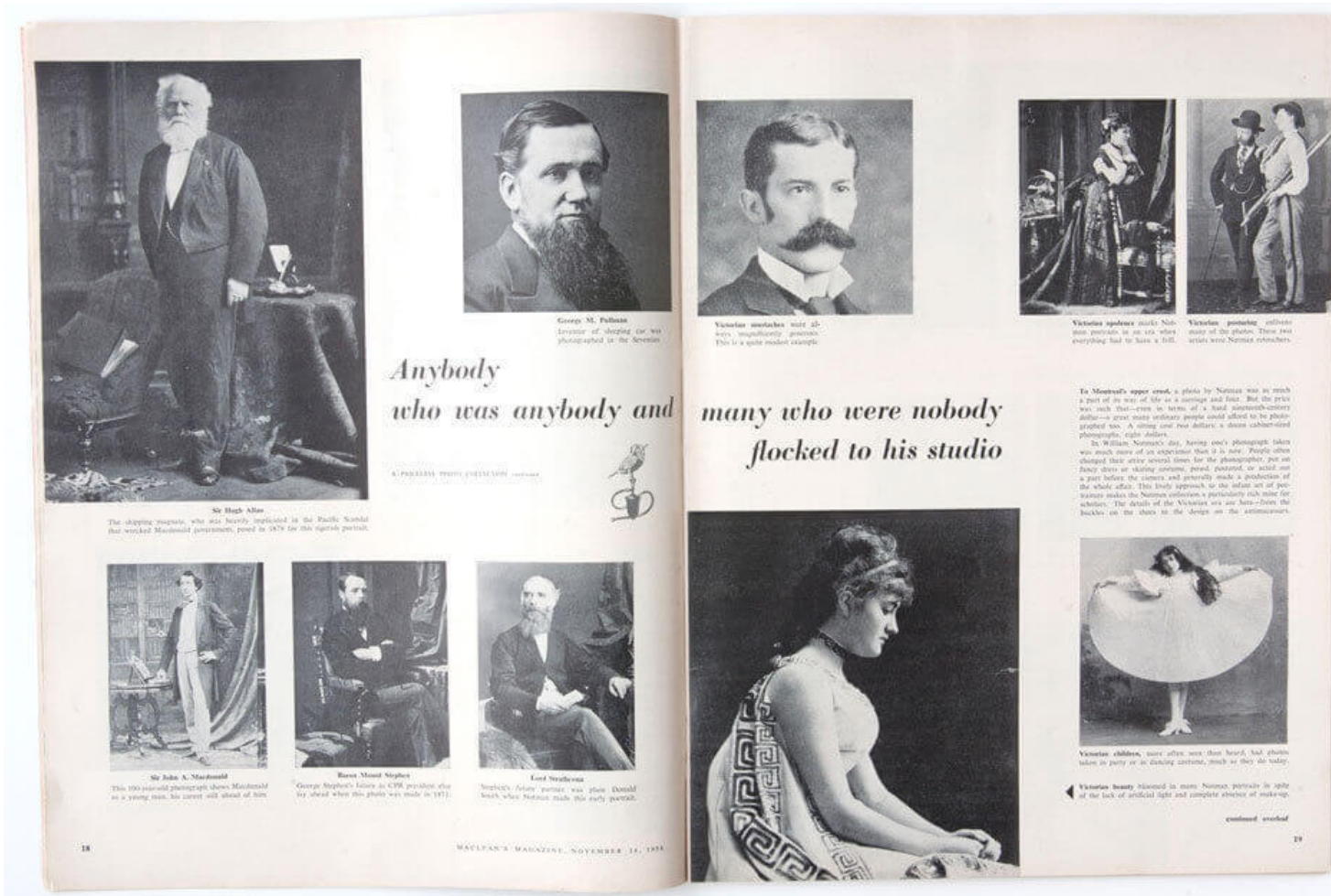
Maciejewski, Andrzej. *After Notman: Montreal Views—A Century Apart*. Toronto: Firefly Books; Montreal: McCord Museum of Canadian History, 2003.

Triggs, Stanley. *William Notman: The Stamp of a Studio*. Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario / Coach House Press, 1985.

*The Stamp of a Studio is still the best resource for comprehensive information about Notman and his studio business. It is out of print but available in libraries.*

——. *William Notman's Studio: The Canadian Picture / Le studio de William Notman: Objectif Canada*. Montreal: McCord Museum of Canadian History, 1992.

——. *The Composite Photographs of William Notman / Les photographies composites de William Notman*. Montreal: McCord Museum of Canadian History, 1994.



Spread from the November 24, 1956, *Maclean's* cover story on William Notman.

Triggs, Stanley, Conrad Graham, Brian Young, and Gilles Lauzon. *Victoria Bridge: The Vital Link / Pont Victoria: Un lien vital*. Montreal: McCord Museum of Canadian History / McGill University Press, 1992. Exhibition catalogue.

## ARTICLES ON NOTMAN

Notman's resurgence in the 1950s was bolstered by the writings of a cross-section of luminaries:

Berton, Pierre. "A Priceless Photo Collection Finds a Home." *Maclean's* 69, no. 24 (1956): 16-27.

Cloutier, Nicole. "Les disciples de Daguerre à Québec, 1839-1855." *Journal of Canadian Art History* 5, no. 1 (1980): 33-38.

Karsh, Yousuf. "Have Women Forgotten How to Be Beautiful? A *Maclean's* Album by William Notman and Yousuf Karsh." *Maclean's* 71 (August 2, 1958): 15-21.

Morisset, Gérard. "Les pionniers de la photographie canadienne." *Revue populaire* (Montreal) 44, no. 9 (September 1951): 14-15, 58, 60-63.

Newhall, Beaumont. "William Notman, 1826-1891." *Image: Journal of Photography of the George Eastman House* 4, no. 8 (November 1955): 58-59.  
[http://image.eastmanhouse.org/files/GEH\\_1955\\_04\\_08.pdf](http://image.eastmanhouse.org/files/GEH_1955_04_08.pdf).

The following are two good examples of how Notman's photographs have been used to tell stories about Victorian Canadian fashion:

Morgan, Norma. "Fashion-Plates: Sources for Canadian Fashion." *Journal of Canadian Art History* 5, no. 2 (1981): 106-10.

Nadeau-Saumier, Monique. "Late Victorian and Edwardian Jewellery in Montreal." *Journal of Canadian Art History* 9, no. 1 (1986): 68-80.

In 1996 leading scholars of Canadian photography co-edited a special issue on the subject for the British journal *History of Photography*. The journal is available at university libraries. Essays on Notman in this issue include the following:

Bara, Jana L. "Cody's Wild West Show in Canada." *History of Photography* 20, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 153-56.

Schwartz, Joan M., Ann W. Thomas, Martha Langford, and Stanley Triggs. "Some Major Canadian Collections." *History of Photography* 20, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 166-85.

Skidmore, Colleen. "Women Workers in Notman's Studio: Young Ladies of the Printing Room." *History of Photography* 20, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 122-28.



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Langford, Martha. *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001.

Thomas, Ann. *Fact and Fiction: Canadian Painting and Photography, 1860-1900*. Montreal: McCord Museum of Canadian History, 1979. Exhibition catalogue.

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Kalman Naves, Elaine. "William Notman of Montreal." *Ideas*, CBC Radio, May 24, 2012.

Parts 1 and 2 available for download on iTunes and streaming online at <http://www.cbc.ca/ideas/episodes/2012/05/24/william-notman-of-montreal-part-1-2-1/>.

Sears, Barbara. *Notman's Canada: Photographer to the Queen*. Produced by Andrea Nemtin and Murray Battle. Toronto: PTV Productions Inc., in conjunction with the McCord Museum, 2004. Film, 60 min.

Eighteen clips available through the McCord Museum website: <http://www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/en/keys/virtualexhibits/notmanstudio/exploration/video/>

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### SARAH PARSONS

Sarah Parsons is Associate Professor in the Department of Visual Arts and Art History at York University, where she teaches the history and theory of photography and Canadian art. Her recent publications include "Public/Private Tensions in the Photography of Sally Mann," in *History of Photography* (2008); "Sontag's Lament: Emotion, Ethics, and Photography," in *Photography & Culture* (2009); and "Privacy, Photography, and the Art Defense," in *Revealing Privacy: Debating the Understandings of Privacy*, edited by Margherita Carucci (Peter Lang, 2012). She also edited *Emergence: Contemporary Photography in Canada* (2009), co-published by Gallery 44 and Ryerson University.

Parsons is a founding member of the Toronto Photography Seminar. She is editing a volume of essays by the photo historian and theorist Abigail Solomon-Godeau for Duke University Press (2014). Her current research focuses on the historical relationship between privacy and photography, and she continues her work on William Notman.



**"I've long been fascinated by the tactility and immediacy of William Notman's photographs. Despite the formality demanded of Victorian portraits, he often managed to capture intimate moments between families and highlight the personalities of his sitters. Notman's photographs still resonate as vivid works of art beyond simply documentation, and they serve as a rich starting point for exploring the complexity of nineteenth-century life in Canada."**

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

#### From the Author

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#### From the Art Canada Institute

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William Notman, *Caribou Hunting, The Chance Shot*, Montreal, 1866. (See below for details.)

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Key Works: William Notman, *Skating Carnival, Victoria Rink*, Montreal, 1870. (See below for details.)



Significance & Critical Issues: William Notman, *Chaudière Falls*, Ottawa, 1870. (See below for details.)



Style & Technique: William Notman, *Around the Camp Fire*, Caribou Hunting series, Montreal, 1866. (See below for details.)



Sources & Resources: Attributed to William Notman, *Still Life with Books*, 1870s-80s, albumen silver print from glass negative, 16.8 x 21.6 cm (image); 20.3 x 24.1 cm (mount). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gilman Collection, Joyce F. Menschel Photography Library Fund, 2005, 2005.100.564.



Where to See: *Miss H. Frothingham*, Montreal, 1871. (See below for details.)

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### Credits for Works by William Notman



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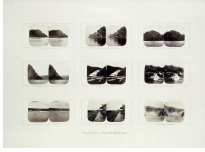
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*Framework of Tube and Staging Looking In, Victoria Bridge*, Montreal, 1859. McCord Museum, Montreal, gift of Mr. James Geoffrey Notman, N-0000.193.133. © McCord Museum.



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Back of a Notman carte-de-visite, Halifax, 1876. Private collection.



Front of a Notman carte-de-visite, Halifax, 1876. Private collection.



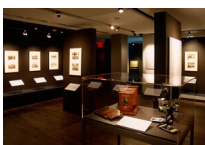
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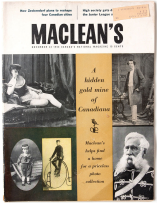
*Fancy Ball Given by the Governor General Lord Dufferin at Rideau Hall on February 23, 1876, Ottawa, 1876*, by William James Topley. Library and Archives Canada, C-006865. © Library and Archives Canada.



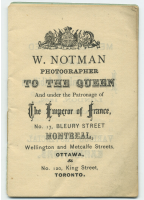
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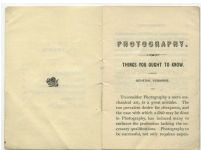
McCord Museum, interior. © McCord Museum.



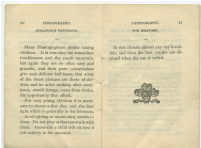
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Stereoscope and slide. © McCord Museum



This large-format view camera from c. 1870 was manufactured by Scovill in Waterbury, Connecticut. Scovill Manufacturing Co., c. 1870. McCord Museum, Montreal, M992X.4.1. © McCord Museum.

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