

# Snapshots

January 22 – April 18, 2021

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From its inception, the Whyte Museum has recognized the value of photography both as an art form and as archival reference material. The permanent collection features photographic works by pioneering legends including works by national and international photographers.

The Harmon family photographic legacy began with Byron Harmon (1876 - 1942) of Tacoma, Washington, who settled in Banff in 1909 and opened the town's first photography studio. Three years later, Byron became the official photographer for the Alpine Club of Canada, an experience that ultimately initiated his own photographic tours. Although his photographic efforts were primarily commercial, Harmon's intrigue with the *lyāhé* Nakoda (Stoney Nakoda) has resulted in a rich compilation of images on which to examine the relationship between the *lyāhé* Nakoda and Banff's first settlers.

Byron's son Don Harmon (1917 - 1997) was also an avid outdoors man and keen landscape photographer who began experimenting with his father's cameras in the early 1950s. In 1957 he studied large format colour photography at The Brooks Institute in Santa Barbara, California, setting himself up for a career in photography. Over the next thirty years he expanded his collection of classic Canadian Rockies landscapes, mostly captured on 4"x5" transparency film. He searched throughout Canada, the United States, and Britain for superior colour reproduction facilities and expanded the wholesale distribution of his photo products throughout the Rockies. In Canada, The Byron Harmon Photos product line became the most innovative in design and production.

Don's daughter Carole Harmon (1947 -) is an accomplished writer, publisher and most recently, a radio producer. She received a BFA in theatre and acting from the University of Alberta in 1969 and among her many creative endeavours is also a stunning backcountry photographer. In addition, her wildflower art has contributed to this often overlooked category.

The Vaux family of Philadelphia are among the early North American explorers in the mountainous regions of western Canada exploring Rogers Pass, Yoho, and Banff. George Vaux Jr. (1863 - 1927), William S. Vaux (1872 - 1908), and Mary M. Vaux (1880 - 1940) regularly visited the majestic peaks, studying the massive glacier formations and capturing on glass plates, created a brilliant photographic and scientific record of the glaciers in western Canada. Their late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century explorations were followed by third generation Henry Vaux Jr. who, in 1997, began taking duplicate

photographs of the glaciers his grandfather, great aunt, and uncle had captured. Using GPS, family photographic references and visual sighting, Henry Vaux Jr. stands in the exact same locations to document a century of change. His documentation provides a collection of "before and after" photographs of glacier formations spanning a century of the Vaux families photographic impact on these iconic landscapes. Additional American photographs represented in the exhibition are the photogravure, intaglio prints of Bradford Washburn and the carbon prints of Jon Goodman.

Among the 30 photographers represented are lyrical accounts by George Webber, the industry altered natural landscapes of Edward Burtynsky, and the camera obscura creations of Colin Smith. Ron Brown, Allan King, Barbara Spohr, Ernie Kroeger, and others round out the selection.

In addition to the many superb images in the exhibition, featured are a broad range of photographic equipment owned by the Vaux and Harmon families, as well as an assortment of cameras spanning the decades. Certain artifacts will send some down memory lane while others will scoff or snicker at the notion that one had to wait for an image to be developed.