



Worth a Thousand Words

Images from the Sun and Redlands Daily Facts Negative Collections

Exhibit Dates: July 10 – October 31, 2004 • Exhibit Place: REDLANDS
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Flash!

A Timeline for Press Photography

Modern photojournalism required practical methods for shooting pictures, making a negative from which prints could be made, printing photographs in conjunction with text, and distributing images.

- William Talbot discovered a process for making negatives in 1839.
- In 1878, Eadweard Muybridge developed high-speed shutters and fast film to record fast motion in a fraction of a second.
- Jacob Riis used flash powder to shoot photographs in low light conditions in 1890.
- For most of the 19th century, newspapers and magazines employed artists who made wood cuts and engravings for printed pictures. Even when based on photographs, they lacked detail.
- A half-tone uses dots to create an image. A photographic image is projected through a screen onto a sensitized printing plate. The first half-tone process was used in the New York *Daily Graphic* in 1880; by the early 1900s most newspapers used this process.
- The success of the 1897 Graflex single lens reflex camera led the company to design a camera specifically for emerging press photographs: the 1912 Speed Graphic.
- News services supplied photographs to newspapers in the early 1900s. They were distributed by train, boat, and airplane. Thus, monthly magazines were able to use photographs, but the distribution process was too slow to be useful for daily newspapers.
- The Graflex company was owned by Kodak between 1905 and 1926.
- The Wirephoto process was invented in 1921 and AT&T inaugurated a commercial Wirephoto service in 1925. Photographs were transferred through telephone wires. Because

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San Bernardino County Museum

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Worth a Thousand Words (continued)

it required expensive technology at the sending and receiving end, took more than an hour to transmit a photograph (and transmissions were subject to disruption by “breaks”), and took another hour or more to print the received image line by line, Wirephotos were used only for important breaking news until 1935.

- In 1934 Associated Press (AP) developed an advanced and effective Wirephoto system. Press photographs were distributed widely by Wirephoto from 1935 until the mid-1970s. Individual newspapers hired photographers for local stories.
- From the 1930s through the end of the 1950s, the 4x5 Graflex Speed Graphic was the dominant professional camera. It had 2 shutters (focal plane and lens) and 3 viewfinders (optical, wire frame, and ground glass). It could hold 2 sheets of 4”x5” film, which was loaded by hand by the photographer.
- Photographers in the 1933 version of movie “King Kong” frightened the beast with flashbulbs from their Speed Graphic cameras.
- In the 1970s, AP instituted the Laserphoto system for faster transmission and higher resolution.
- In 1989 AP updated the Laserphoto system so it could send full color images. Transmission speed was about 15 seconds per photo.
- Today, original photographs are shot with digital cameras; “hard copy” press photography is nearly obsolete.