

Using the *TimeLinks* Image Archive Image Interpretation Worksheet

Overview:

When we look at photographs and other images, we must think of them as documents that were created at a specific place, at a specific time, and with a specific purpose. We have to remember that photographs are made, not just taken. They reflect conscious purpose on the part of the photographer, and sometimes the subject. Sometimes we have direct information about the purpose of an image. At other times, we have to infer the purpose by examining the content and context of the image.

Sometimes, the strongest message that we get from a photograph is the one that the original photographer or subject intended. At other times, we gain insights that were not intended or imagined at the time that the image was created.

Exercise:

Take a few minutes to browse the image index, and select an image that interests you. Don't take too much time making your choice, you will have plenty of opportunities to browse later-on. Next, work your way through some of the questions below. Be prepared to comment on your image, why you selected it, and what it tells us as an historical document.

Image Title:

Archival Reference:

URL: <http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/features/timelinks/imageref/>_____

Possible Questions: (Remember, not all may be relevant to understanding the image)

- 1. Identify the major content of the photo:
What type of objects, persons or events are being depicted?

- 2. Identify details in the image:
What do we learn from a closer examination of the image? Does it depict people, and if so, how are they dressed? Are they posed, or is this a candid shot?
Does the photo portray technology or artifacts? What is the implied relationship between the human subject and this/these item(s)?
In what environment was the image taken? Is this central or incidental to understanding the image?

- 3. What is your overall impression of the photograph? What feelings does it evoke?

4. If the picture depicts people, who controls the scene, the photographer or the subject? Explain.

5. For what purpose was the photo taken? Speculate as to why the photographer chose the subject? What is (s)he trying to communicate? Are there any values implicit in the way this image has been constructed?

6. Are there any "unintentional" elements in this image? That is to say, is there anything beyond the message that the photographer and the subject want to communicate that the image conveys?

7. What information would you need to better understand this image?

8. Overall, what can we learn about the period that we are studying from the image?
