VIRTUAL MUSEUM CANADA

Notmans' Canada. Photographer of the Queen

Narrator: The eyes stare back at you, clear and strong. They are the eyes of a man who can sum you up in seconds — for that is all he has, when you come into his studio to have your likeness taken. His name is William Notman and he wants to be a successful businessman, an ambition he achieves with ease. But he is more than this: He is also an historian, and some say a magician. One of the first of a new breed: He is a photographer.

Roger Hall: He was a photographer, he was a scientist, he was an aesthete, but he was also a businessman. And all of those things combined in one character.

Lily Koltun: What made him good, I think, is that he was able to apply what we would almost consider a modern sensibility to the world around him.

Dennis Reid: He was an instance of an early photographer who clearly was figuring out what photography can mean, as a form of artistic expression, as a form of social chronicling, as a way of creating a sense of status -- all the kinds of things that have flowed from works of art from time immemorial. He was trying to find ways to invest in photography.

Narrator: It is 1891, the last year of his life. William Notman has been in business in Montreal for 35 years. In that time, he and the photographers working for him have taken over 160,000 pictures. Such industry has made Notman rich; it has also made him famous. It has not always been this way: When he arrived in Montreal from Glasgow 35 years earlier, William Notman was unknown and had little more than the clothes on his back.

Narrator: In 1856 William Notman comes over the ocean to the New World, as many have done before and many will do after, to escape his past and find a future. He is on the run from the law, a small matter of some creative accounting. And in the choice between jail and Montreal, Montreal wins.

William Notman: *I begin to hope I may yet be able to repair at least a part of the loss I was the cause of. I am now a photographer. I have been giving the subject much attention and expect it will yield me a fair return for my trouble ...*

Narrator: In Montreal he finds a booming metropolis, largely populated by Scots. Here, he knows he can do business. He opens a photographic studio, one of the first in the city.

Narrator: William Notman is fascinated by the new technology of photography, which he believes can also be an art. He may not know it, but William Notman is there at the birth of a revolution.

Narrator: Notman begins by taking portraits of the Montreal elite. He cannot afford elaborate backgrounds, so his first images are plain. For two years he works alone.

Narrator: Portraits: his stock and trade.

Narrator: Then, in 1858, William Notman gets his first large commission. The directors of the Grand Trunk Railway hire him to take pictures of the building of the new Victoria Bridge. The bridge, which crosses the St. Lawrence River, is one of the great engineering achievements of the 19th century.

Narrator: It is the turning point in Notman’s career. William Notman has found his future, and has found a way to make it pay.

Nora Hague: Okay, this is the maple box, which contains the pictures of the bridge. And these are the stereo's for which you use this viewer to see them in 3D. Uh, so these have all been carefully lettered and carefully laid out on cards. You have the construction pictures of Victoria Bridge.

Nora Hague: Mr. Notman was, on this one anyhow, up on top of the tunnel with his 8 x 10 camera and his stereo camera taking photographs of the actual construction phases of the bridge.

Nora Hague: These are the people that are laying the monumental stone, which is now at the entrance to the Victoria Bridge on the Montreal side.

Nora Hague: These are the bigger plates he took with a bigger camera. These would, these would be about 11 x 14 plates allowing for cropping and show some of the workers on the bridge and the ice. He was up there with his camera in the winter as well. This must have been rather interesting, technically speaking.

Nora Hague: And the finished bridge. This whole box was presented to the prince on the occasion of opening the bridge to take back to his mother, the queen. And shortly after the boxes arrived in London there's an account of the arrival of the box in the *Illustrated London News* describing the contents of the box and the fact that the queen was very pleased with it. A few months after that, looking at Notman's picture books we find built a portico over his front door saying, "Photographer to the Queen."

Roger Hall: And the Queen of course was an avid photographer herself, and she was very keen on all of this stuff. And it was she who gave him the permission to use this title, "Photographer to the Queen," which is kind of an invented title but he lost no time in putting it up. And of course people flocked to be taken by the photographer to the Queen.

Lily Koltun: There is no known actual record of the queen, Queen Victoria, having bestowed this particular rubric on him. That does not necessarily mean that it didn't happen.

Lily Koltun: But what is true, is that being able to call yourself photographer to the queen was a massive business advantage. And Notman exploited it throughout the rest of his entire career.

Nora Hague: But shortly after this he had a whole studio and a staff of quite a few people working for him and had begun to win medals in, in some of the European exhibitions.

Narrator: It is the summer of 1872, and at the windows looking out onto Bleury Street, the workers at William Notman's studio go about their business for the camera. There are many businesses on Bleury Street in Montreal, but none quite so *modern* as William Notman's.

Narrator: The men and women employed here know they are engaged in an entirely new enterprise, and their employer, William Notman, has decided that it is only fitting to make a record of what they do. Here — in this single image — is the entire world of the Victorian photographic studio.

William Notman: *If you come into the operating room out of temper, that will probably peep out in the photograph. If you are in a hurry or bustle, you will become heated and your face may be red. ... While a pleasing expression is desirable, a characteristic one is still more so, as nothing is so silly or undignified as a forced smile.*

Roger Hall: You wouldn't visit Montreal without, if you were a well-known personage, without a trip to the Notman studio. Notman would invite you of course, but you would want to go there. So that's why we have all the visiting fireman coming to have their photographs taken.

Lily Koltun: Oh, gosh. Everybody wanted to get dressed up for photographers. After all, it was really kind of a big event. It wasn't a snapshot you were going for. Whatever level of society you were at, you would get dressed up in your Sunday best. The idea being that you actually were the star in a play. You were about to get on a stage.

Lily Koltun: The photographer was like a director and was going to organize the lights and [your character?] was going to look good and was properly posed. So that your character in the implied play could play his part, because there was an implied plot.

Dennis Reid: So when people went to the William Notman studio they were going to make their mark in a place at a moment, but with this incredible consciousness of that being momentous within the ongoing chain of time. Um, so these were very, very important occasions, very weighty, and of course, Notman delivered all of that sense in the portrait photography. So they end up having that sense of moment of permanence, and they were meant to last well beyond the sitter.

William Notman: *The one thing needful of a sitter to learn is how to forget himself. If he could be perfectly free from self-consciousness, he would secure a natural and truthful picture. The operator having a trained eye and long experience, can best determine the most graceful pose, and having his own reputation at stake, this may safely be left to his care.*

Dennis Reid: I think the aim of the William Notman studio was to make the sitter look good. But when you spend time looking at the portraits that he produced, there are those occasions when all of the artifice opens up in some way that's very special and the real character of the sitter seems to come through. Um, I don't think that's something that he pursued. I just think its something that his studio was prepared to take advantage of when it happened.

Narrator:	What can you tell by looking at a face? What a man does for a living? His character? He does many things, for not only is Hugh Allan a great shipping magnate, he has coal and iron interests, invests in railways and real estate. He is, his family says, and they should know, a man of little sentiment, a man who believes in doing his duty. A man without vanity, who gets his picture taken.
Narrator:	Can you tell that William Macdonald is a tobacco magnate? That he produces the most popular tobacco in the country, yet does not smoke himself and believes tobacco is a filthy habit?
Narrator:	Lt. Garnet Wolseley declares his occupation in his dress. He is a soldier. He comes to Montreal from Britain with his regiment and finds he likes the city. “Life in Montreal was very pleasant,” he says. “Altogether it was an elysium of bliss for young officers, the only trouble being to keep single.”
Narrator:	Miss Hannah Willard Lyman, first principal of Vassar College, has made the education of her fellow women a career, while her brother Henry, an explorer, is said to have been the victim of savages in Sumatra.
Narrator:	Miss Ethel Bond is a more typical Victorian. She has come to the studio with a chaperone, for she cannot go out alone, an unmarried beauty, waiting to be chosen.
Roger Hall:	For a photograph here of Jefferson Davis and his wife in Montreal [incomplete thought]. Jefferson Davis, of course, was the president of the Confederate States of America. And in the latter stages of the war he sent his family up to Montreal. He was imprisoned after the war for a couple of years and then in 1867 he came to Montreal himself, to live there, which they did for I think upwards of a year, and of course as a famous personage went to the Notman studio.
Roger Hall:	And here they are, um, in the studio in a very formal portrait, um, with the appropriate Victorian kind of draperies surrounding them and the fake background. Looks surprisingly vigorous for someone who has just lost a war.
Song:	*Though Baseball and Cricket, the bat and the wicket* *Have charms,* *There is no game can claim, boys* *To yield such measure of profit and pleasure* *As Lacrosse,* *Our own National Game, boys* ***“Lacrosse, Our National Game”***
Nora Hague:	What’s really nice about this collection is it exists in a numbered form. It’s already numbered. It, that’s one of its, um … characteristics, I guess you could call it. It’s not only pictures, and books, and writing

— it's organization. The uh, pictures are all numbered already, which means that, uh, we don't have to actually apply an outside number to it, we just have to, uh, use the numbers that are already there.

Nora Hague: This is one of our family albums. It was given to Mr. McCord, the McCord Museum, actually, by the Frothingham family, and in the album, which is, uh, it's been numbered by us as an album, the photographs themselves are Notman photographs. So on the back of each of these photographs you find a number.

Nora Hague: This one's hard to see, it's easier to read the one on the front, right there. There's a number. So, we can look that one up right away and if we didn't already know it was a member of the Frothingham family, we could just look that number up in Notman's files and we would know who it is immediately. This is Louisa Davenport Hayward Frothingham.

Nora Hague: The, uh, Frothingham family were quite interesting, actually. You can see from these photographs here that they went for various different poses. This kind of pose here is very unusual. A pose where a Victorian father is being informal with his daughters or children is rather unusual, and this family seems to have gone for the more informal poses.

Nora Hague: So the advantage, uh, even though we have 450,000 Notman photographs, quite often people ask, "Why are you still collecting Notman photographs if you have all the images already? Why collect more?" Because there's extra information, family information that we wouldn't know otherwise. So in the family albums you can see the children growing up. Uh, later on you find them getting married, you find pictures of their husbands, pictures of their houses, pictures of the children.

Nora Hague: Uh, here she is a little later for a fancy-dress ball. She looks quite effective! This is Harriet Frothingham, later Mrs. W. R. Miller.

William Notman: *My Dear Sir, As to the photographic business, with me it is always good -- orders come in freely, customers generally very well satisfied and everything goes on very comfortably. We had a few friends last night celebrating Willie's 7th birthday. He is growing quite a big boy now, he has a very good manner and is a general favourite. [The children] are growing up nicely ... We have truly much to be grateful for. William Notman*

Lily Koltun: What portraiture meant to people in the 19th century in some ways is quite different from what it means to people today. In the 19th century, when they wanted a portrait done, it was usually of someone else, not necessarily themselves. They wanted portraits of their family members because death was so frequent and so near. Absences were dangerous. You could go away for a business trip and never come back.

Narrator: William Notman's oldest child, Fanny dies of spinal meningitis at the age of 11. His daughter Alice dies of typhoid at the age of 17. Such losses are not uncommon, and it is not uncommon for parents to memorialize them.

Joan Schwartz: There's also that wonderful similarity between post mortem photographs of children and photographs of children sleeping. Sometimes looking post mortem photographs you have to wonder which is which. And yet there's the whole notion that death was "The Big Sleep." Um, so I think that to understand post mortem photographs you have to understand attitudes to death in the 19th century, and also the importance of maintaining the links of family even after the person has died. The photograph of deceased children was very dear to grieving families, but also to the family long after the grieving had passed. It kept that child as part of the family, at least on paper.

Narrator: ***"Montreal Gazette*," 25 February.**

William Notman: *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 ... to get up an effective Picture of the Rink, for which purpose I beg to request that you will give me an early sitting...*

Narrator: A hundred and fifty people oblige, not wishing to be left out of the record of such an event. They show up at the Bleury Street studio, as requested, in full fancy dress. But Notman is not interested in the individual photographs he takes. He plans a composite photograph in which all the individual images are to be combined into a great panorama of the event.

Narrator: *The Skating Carnival* is William Notman's first large scale production. It is received with enthusiasm around the world.

Jeff Nolte: Notman was a, a wizard at composites. It was a real money-maker for him, so each and every time there would be a large enough group, he would set about to recreate a scene for them and the scene for them would be his choosing, his arrangement. So each and every one of those people would have been shot individually and afterwards would have been cut and pasted into that giant composite image.

Jeff Nolte: Uh, the point of all this would have been making a picture that couldn't have been made otherwise, and as well it was appropriate to think that each and every one of those people would probably want one of those pictures, and that said, he could make a fortune in the, in the context of producing the work.

Roger Hall: This one's fun. This is a composite photograph. It's of yachting, all done in the studio, with the background painted in so you could make the sea as rough or as smooth as you liked. This is an initiative in which you're paying, not only for photography, you're paying for an artist, you're paying for a set, you're paying for costumes. A lot of money goes into this. We're talking about the moneyed upper-middle class. They're anxious to show off their new-found wealth. And a little family show on the, on the yacht, what could be more demonstrative for 19th century America in its gilded age?

Jeff Nolte: The work of doing those composites was quite difficult, and in the 19th century people really appreciated what was involved. They loved the look of that. It was almost magic to them, and almost magic in a way that, once again we can't really appreciate. We look at that work now and say it looks kind of tricky and faked. And yet at the time it was, for their eyes, quite wonderful; an invention that would have been impossible to create in any other way.

Dennis Reid: When one looks at the composites in relation to the painting that was going on at the time, it's very apparent that they were succeeding as cultural objects, as works of art, and I think as long as we're imagining them in that sense, we're going to enjoy them to the full. It's a little hard not to look at them and see them as something pretty kitschy because everybody tends to be exaggerated in their gestures — not always, but in many of the cases they are. And I think they were embraced first as curious Victorian collectibles and people didn't think about them in terms of how they related to other artistic activity.

Dennis Reid: But I think once you do, then you see that there's a, there's a tenor to them that is quite serious, and, and, and finally, quite profound.

Dennis Reid: This is called "*The Bounce*" because it shows the snowshoe members of the club throwing one of their members up into the air; it's probably borrowed from First Nations. What's fascinating about this, of course, is that he's got the composite down so that it just looks so natural at this point. By 1887, I mean, you don't see any of the ways that it was done at all.

Dennis Reid: But most likely, this figure who's in the air was photographed in the studio, probably lying on a table, or lying on a box of some sort and taking his position, and then they, of course, would just cut all that out when they did the collaging. And I suspect that even this group of figures down below here were just so beautifully composed with such a play of light around and each figure so sculptural in and of itself, I suspect that those probably, too, were shot in small groups. He couldn't have achieved that sense of plasticity, I think, otherwise. And then, of course, he's created this very convincing background. Another great Canadian image from William Notman.

Song: *Up! Up! The Morn is beaming*

Through the forest breaks the sun
Rouse ye sleepers, time for dreaming
When our daily journey's done
Bind the snow shoes
Fast with thongs to
See that all is right and sure
All is bliss to naught's amiss to
A brave North Western Voyageur.

"The Snowshoe Tramp," 1859

Narrator: William Notman is not content to have just one studio. He is determined on expansion. In 1868, he sends his young employee, William Topley, to Ottawa, to manage a new studio there. Ottawa dignitaries flock to have their portraits taken.

Narrator: William Notman opens studios in Toronto, Halifax and St. John.

Narrator: He decides there is business to be done on the road. Travelling to the Ivy League Colleges of the United States, Notman finds a vast new market. In New York and Boston, he opens branch plants.

Roger: This is a great favourite of mine and when we did the book on Notman we chose to put it on the cover. Um, maybe not everybody would agree, but I think it's quite a sexy shot. This is Lily Langtree, the Jersey Lily, one of the great beauties of the time, taken in the 1880's in the Boston studio. She was of course the -- what shall we call her? Oh, we'll call her the mistress, because that's what it was, of the Prince of Wales amongst others, an accomplished actress, on and off stage. And here she is with her back towards us, her bustle in view, all kinds of details, doesn't show much of her body, but what it shows is highly suggestive. This is an accomplished woman.

Narrator: Notman opens a total of 19 studios in the United States. In all of them, the house style and standards are maintained. His studios bring in enough money, that William Notman is able to buy a mansion on Sherbrooke Street, Montreal, where his neighbours are the Molsons.

Narrator: Like many a Victorian man of science, Alfred Selwyn, the head of the Geological Survey of Canada, believes in photography. When his men set out to survey a route for the new Canadian transcontinental railway, he asks William Notman to make a photographic record of their trip.

Narrator: Notman assigns the job to an employee, Benjamin Baltzly.

Narrator: And that is how Benjamin Baltzly comes to set out on a unique journey. He heads to Victoria, where he meets up with the survey team and together they journey into the uncharted interior of British Columbia.

Narrator: For almost six months, plagued by rain and then by snow, they proceed with their work, through impenetrable forest, breaking trail as they go.

Narrator: Into this virgin landscape, Benjamin Baltzly must haul cameras, tripod, glass plates, darkroom chemicals and a dark tent.

Narrator: He is the first ever to photograph this land. Everywhere, he sees views that astound him.

Narrator: Baltzly takes only 120 photographs. They are a remarkable record of his journey, and of the land, before it was altered by human hand.

Dennis Reid: I guess what impresses me about the Baltzly photographs that were taken on that expedition in the West, is the remarkable sense you have in each of the images that he is a part of the expeditionary force, that he's part of the team, he's right in there. And as a consequence you feel, you feel the muscle strain, you feel the, you feel the, the bruises from the rock, the dampness, the slickness, the…its, I find them quite remarkable.

Narrator: For his employer, William Notman, these photographs are of more than artistic interest. People are anxious to buy Benjamin Baltzly's pictures. On his return to Victoria, he sells over $400 worth of images, covering the cost of his wages and his photographic supplies. Wilderness, William Notman discovers from Benjamin Baltzly's fine example, is a very popular subject.

Narrator: Montreal, in winter, takes a holiday. But not William Notman. He has figured out a way to keep busy in winter. He decides to create scenes in the studio that represent Canada to the world, and what, he thinks, better represents Canada than snow and ice?

Dennis Reid: One thing we have to remember is that winter in the 19th century represented something quite different than what it does for us today. In the 19th century you traveled on the river, and you traveled on pretty bad roads when you could, and they didn't go very far. Winter gave a kind of freedom of mobility that you didn't have during the summertime. So, if you had a sleigh and a, you know, good, strong horse you could get a lot of place faster in the winter than you could during the summer.

Dennis Reid: And not only that, particularly in the rural areas, you didn't have the work to do in the winter that you had to do during the summer or in the spring and fall. And so it was a time of leisure, it was a time when people tended to gather together and get around a warm fire, and so the winter represented a good moment in the cycle of the year.

William Notman: *I will now try to describe how I produced the wintry effects which have met with so much approval. Suitable background: This is very*

essential; the best effects are produced with a middle tint of gray, not too strongly broken with dark clouds, and with a few lights near the horizon.

William Notman: *Snow cover: This I find, after many experiments, to be best represented by white fur, such as that of the Arctic fox, or by salt; the latter is perhaps the best, as it can be thrown on and about the various objects in the scene.*

William Notman: *Falling snow: there is but one way I know to produce this effect, but as it is so simple, and answers so well, I have never sought for any other....*

Dennis Reid: Now this is a remarkable photograph of young William McFarlane Notman, one of William Notman's sons, a photograph that's entitled by Notman "*Young Canada*" and was taken in 1867, so it's obviously meant to have a great deal of portent. And of course it's just laden with all the signs of Canadianness that were so cherished at the time. He's wearing a blanket coat, what was sometimes called a Red River coat, he's wearing a scarf around his waist that's fastened as though it's a *ceinture fléchée*, he has snowshoes on, and of course he's sitting on what purports to be the banks of the St. Lawrence river frozen behind and is a studio backdrop, and the photograph has been doctored a great deal to put him in a friendly blizzard. An icon.

Joan M. Schwatz: The desire of the British military administrators who came here, for them to be Canadian was to participate in robust winter sports. The photograph of Lady Dufferin in the studio, with her children, simulating a tobogganing scene, was very much the wife of the governor general saying to all elite ladies that they can go outside when it's cold, that they should go tobogganing and skating, and they should participate in winter events.

Joan M. Schwatz: All of the things that happened around Montreal, the ice carnivals, the snowshoe tramps, that was part of being Canadian, and I think that Notman certainly contributed to the sense of winter as a bracing time. The scenes that he created in his studio reinforced the notion that the British imperial male on the colonial frontier was a robust man.

Narrator: Colonel William Rhodes brings his 83-year-old guide, François Gros-Louis to Notman's studio with him, and together they create a series of images depicting caribou hunting, moose hunting and trapping.

Narrator: These are full-scale productions, with art direction of a high order. What François Gros-Louis, who has spent his long life trapping and hunting for a living, thinks of the whole business goes unrecorded.

Jeff Nolte: This is a great Notman photograph: "*The Caribou Hunters*" in 1866, sitting around a campfire, in the studio, posing as if they're in the out-of-doors, lit by a magnesium flare, stand-in for the campfire, and an

audience around the world would have been looking at pictures like this to see Canada, that last great frontier in the new world. Caribou hunting: what a treat.

Song: ***"The Canadian Sleigh Song," 1843***

Narrator: Montreal, 1885. Through the course of the year, members of City Council all oblige Mr. Notman with their images, for a grand composite. First among their number is the newly elected reform mayor, Honoré Beaugrand, who has a new project. He is determined to clean up his city.

Narrator: The streets are filthy. As the snow begins to melt, the refuse produced by 200,000 people over the winter is exposed. Garbage, dead animals and animal excrement litter the streets.

Narrator: It is a side of city life that William Notman does not choose to photograph. There is, after all, no market for such pictures. In April a young Acadian girl working at the Hôtel Dieu hospital dies of smallpox. The hospital discharges its patients and the disease spreads through the poor, mainly French areas, of the city.

Narrator: After a bad batch of vaccine makes several patients sick, many refuse vaccination. The city temporarily suspends its use. As a result, 3,000 people will die of the disease.

Narrator: For those coming into the Notman studio to have their portraits taken, this is another world. They may worry about the disfigurement the disease could cause to a beautiful face, but they have been vaccinated. They are immune.

Narrator: They live up on the mountain, away from the slums. That summer of 1885, many go to the resorts of the St. Lawrence, from Murray Bay to Tadoussac, to escape the heat and the pox.

Narrator: To show that smallpox is no respecter of race or language, that summer there is an unexpected English victim. Sir Francis Hincks, once prime minister of Canada, and Montreal's most prominent citizen, dies of the disease. From then on, no one feels entirely safe.

Narrator: The studio on Bleury Street, now with 31 people on staff, continues to operate throughout the epidemic. But business is less brisk than usual. In August, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show comes into town. Like many a famous visitor before them, they visit William Notman.

Narrator: Among their number, a man who is already familiar with the ravages of smallpox and what it has done to his people. Tatanka Iyotake -- Sitting Bull -- has taken up Buffalo Bill's invitation to join his show, for $50 a week, plus expenses.

Narrator: Sitting Bull, in his contract with Buffalo Bill, specifies that he has the right to sell photographs of himself to those members of the public who wish to have a memento of the man who defeated General Custer.

Narrator: The era of celebrity photography has begun. In all, the William Notman studio takes three thousand images during Montreal's plague year. Yet, from the images he makes, it might never have happened.

Narrator: When the year is over, the Castanet Club arrives at the studio to celebrate its production of the new Gilbert and Sullivan opera, *The Mikado.* William Notman obliges with a composite in honour of the occasion.

Song: *Three little maids from school are we*
Pert as a school-girl well can be
Filled to the brim with girlish glee
Three little maids from school.
Everything is a source of fun
Nobody's safe, for we care for none!
Life is a joke that's just begun!
Three Little Maids from school.

"The Mikado." Gilbert and Sullivan.

Narrator: It is left to other photographers to document the floods that devastate the city the following spring.

Narrator: Watch how a face changes over time. The jaw is set, the eyes become more focussed.

Narrator: The child becomes the man. William McFarlane Notman has done what no one could before his time: He has grown up on camera. He has watched his father at work. At 16 (15), he starts in the studio as an apprentice. A decade later, he is his father's partner.

Narrator: But the confines of the studio are not for him. Landscape is his strength. When the Canadian Pacific Railway ask his father to document their work, it is William McFarlane Notman who takes on the task. His job: to record the landscape and the people, to make images that will celebrate a growing country to the world.

Narrator: Starting in 1884, for 15 years, William McFarlane Notman travels the West, taking photographs of its splendours. The CPR supply him with a rail car equipped with a darkroom.

Dennis Reid: One of the things we must remember about William McFarlane Notman was that he was on commission. So, he was sent out by the Canadian Pacific Railway to chronicle the wondrous new playground,

in a sense, that was being opened by their line. Because advertising in the 19th century, much like advertising today, is always meant to serve more than one end. You're selling a product but you're also exposing a brand, you're also selling a sense of quality, a sense of vision, a sense of mission and McFarlane Notman delivered all of that for the CPR in his images.

Narrator: William McFarlane Notman shows a busy railway, carrying traffic from the East to growing settlements along the line.

Dennis Reid: Now this is one of my favourites of William McFarlane Notman's. It's from the first trip out. It's called "*Looking Above the Valley from First Trestle of Loop on the Canadian Pacific*," done in 1887. There's a couple of fires going in the foreground here, campfires. He's caught a moment as the smoke moves up, curls across, climbs higher, moves through a patch of low-lying mist, and then ultimately blends in with the clouds in the highest reaches.

Dennis Reid: When you look at the actual object, you're almost certain that you can distinguish the smoke in among the mist, that, that it's fine enough that it distinguishes the textures of those two different vapours. It's, of course, a remarkable composition as well, these are masterful, masterful … Almost like studio shots, but taken out-of-doors.

Stanley Triggs: Now, this is the Vancouver harbour. And what simpler photograph could you take? Just this uh, a horizontal line, and this giant space of the sky and the sea, broken by the added interest of a little Indian sailing canoe.

Stanley Triggs: Very abstract.

Stanley Triggs: Squint your eyes and you still see the same design.

Stanley Triggs: Very precisely arranged by the photographer. Didn't matter that it was a gray, foggy day with no interest here. It's just space and land.

Narrator: Notman's landscape photographs circulate around the world, giving an image of Canada that is both exotic and grand.

Narrator: For William McFarlane Notman, they are the means by which he earns a reputation that is truly his own. With them, he leaves a lasting record of a world in transition.

Narrator: In November 1891, William Notman writes to his son Charles that he is suffering from a cold — nothing serious, he says, but the doctor has told him to keep to the house.

Narrator: The cold turns to pneumonia, and a week later, the founder of the Notman Studio dies at the age of 65.

Roger Hall: My experience in researching Notman was that you'd walk into an American repository and mention his name and it would certainly ring a bell. To the informed he was a superb pioneer American photographer, uh, and when you'd explain to them that he was in fact a Canadian, they were very surprised.

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Dennis Reid: I think William Notman was so successful because he was a man of remarkable vision. I think he was one of those types of people who is always imagining how things can be better, how things can be not just bigger, because he certainly divested at times as well when it was a way to achieve something better, but no, I think he was somebody who was always, always able to imagine how they could be better.

Joan M. Schwatz: Its almost as though I know Canadian history because I know Canadian photographs of Notman's. For every Notman photograph there's a history story attached; it's the biography of people, it the biography of place, and um, you can lean an awful lot about Canadian history by looking at William Notman's photographs.

Lily Koltun: He gave us a sense that we know who passed through those rooms. Therefore those rooms live for us in a way that … the artifacts of other generations that don't have a Notman, or don't have photographs, they can't. I think that's what he gave us.

Narrator: For more than one hundred years after his death, William Notman's studio continues to take photographic portraits of the citizens of Montreal.

Narrator: Over the years, the style of image changes, but what does not change is the desire: the desire to preserve a part of oneself forever, the desire to leave a trace of who we are, at a single moment in time, for all time.

Narrator: William Notman was there at the birth of this desire. He nurtured it, nourished it, dedicated his life to it.

Narrator: His own image, and the images of the thousands of men and women he photographed live on for us, as they wanted, testimony that they were once here, alive on this earth.

Stanley Triggs: Well, talking about favourite photographs, it was early in my job at the archives, somebody asked me the usual question, “Which is your favourite photograph?”

Stanley Triggs: And I gave my usual answer, “I don’t have a favourite, there’s too many, they’re all good.” Well, then she had an inspired thought. She says, “S’posin’ you had to take one to heaven?” And I said, “Oh, that’s easy, ‘*The Indian Women*’.”

Stanley Triggs: There’s the mammoth shapes and the choosing of the right angle to accent the design of the forms, and then personification of motherhood and care. So that’s the photograph I’d take to heaven. Ha, ha.

Credits

Notmans' Canada. Photographer to the Queen

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Co-producer / director : Murray Battle

Writer / narrator / researcher : Barbara Sears

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Production manager : Bryan Hughes

Director of photography : John Tran

Editor : Timothy Pocius

Composer : Hugh Marsh

With : Nora Hague
Roger Hall
Dr Lilly Koltun
Jeff Nolte
Dennis Reid
Joan Schwartz
Stanley Triggs