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The National Air Photo Library

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Résumé de l'article

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Research Notes/Notes de recherche

The National Air Photo Library

Kim Carbonetto

Résumé/Abstract

La photothèque nationale de l'air compte plus de quatre millions de photographies. On peut admirer des photos de tous les coins du pays, campagne et villes. Depuis la création du service dans les années 1920, on a pris des photographies aériennes verticales, obliques et panoramiques de beaucoup d'endroits.

The National Air Photo Library holds more than four million photographs. Complete coverage of the country, including its towns and cities, is available. Many places have been the subject of vertical, oblique, and scenic aerial photography from the beginning of the service in the 1920s.

Aerial photography began early in Canada, mainly due to the pioneering efforts of Captain E. Deville, surveyor-general of Dominion Lands until his death in 1924. At the start of his career, maps were plotted using photographs taken from mountain tops. Britain's donation of a few wartime flying boats, and the formation of the Air Board of Canada in 1919, took aerial photography from the mountain tops into airplanes. The Air Board, responsible for the control of commercial and nonmilitary government flying, together with Deville's department, organized the first experimental survey over Ottawa in 1920. By the 1920s regular air photography flights for mapping and forestry inventory were underway across the country.

To catalogue and disseminate the material being assembled, a forerunner of the National Air Photo Library (NAPL) was begun in 1922. It was first mentioned in Parliament in 1925, and in 1937 given its present name. It was assigned the role of archival, indexing, retrieval, sale and provision of information concerning federally owned or controlled aerial survey photography. NAPL is now part of the Reproduction and Distribution Division, Surveys & Mapping Branch, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources.

Over the years, aerial photography surveys were made on a regular basis for mapping, charting of the sea coasts, building of highways, town planning and any ground activity, including disasters, where a measure of size or change had to be made. Complete coverage of Canada may be obtained in black and white photography. Colour photography is available for approximately ten percent of Canada. Special studies in false colour, which is sensitive to near-infrared radiations, have been acquired for some portions of the country. Most of the material at the National Air Photo Library is vertical photography; that is, photography exposed with the axis of the camera pointing straight down. A limited number of scenic and oblique photographs are also available. An oblique photograph has the axis of the camera pointed toward the horizon. More than 4,000,000 photographs are on file, indexed on some 15,000 flight line index maps. From this data base, NAPL provides about 113 products and services. Included are a series of mosaics from LANDSAT (satellite) imagery which covers Canada south of 80 degrees latitude.

Catalogues containing basic information on the photo coverage are available from NAPL. One catalogue has been prepared for each of the provinces and territories, as well as a catalogue listing the Airborne Remote Sensing imagery for all of Canada. Each catalogue provides a graphic display of all of the aerial photo coverage exposed since 1966, and includes selected photography exposed prior to 1966 needed to complete the single photo coverage of Canada. These catalogues are updated annually.

Each photo is cross-referenced to an index map or flight report that indicates the exact flight path and flight altitude; identifies film type, film number, photo centres; and specifies date, time of exposure, camera and weather conditions for the particular run.

To complement the catalogue system, the library has microfilmed all photography since 1954. The index maps showing the relative ground positions of these photo-

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graphs have been placed on 35 mm. colour microfiche. Interested users may buy 16 mm. cartridges of microfilm or the microfiche cards for their own use. The NAPL has set up eight working microfilm stations at 615 Booth Street, Ottawa. As well, microfilm centres have been established at Amherst, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Victoria, Yellowknife, Whitehorse and St. John's. Coverage before 1966 is not complete, but thousands of images from a half-century of aerial photography are nonetheless available to the researcher. Vertical and oblique photographs of many Canadian towns and cities, from the 1920s, are retained in NAPL archives. These photographs are not normally indexed in the General Catalogue, but in archival indexes maintained in NAPL, Ottawa. Prospective users of historical material should consult NAPL, by mail or phone, about specific items or before visiting.

In general, a photograph can be ordered as follows: Mark the area of interest on a suitably scaled topographical map obtained from the Canada Map Office, 615 Booth Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0E9, or from regional dealers. Make a notation on the map to indicate what specific feature, lake, landmark, house or area should be visible in the photo. Because much of Canada has been photographed more than once, also state that you would like the latest or oldest photograph, or the photograph with the largest scale, if you are not concerned with the recent changes in the topography. Write your name, company (if applicable), address, telephone or telex number together with the following photographic details:

a) Is the coverage required stereoscopic or nonstereoscopic? If nonstereoscopic, only every other photograph along a line where 60 percent forward overlap has been used needs to be purchased.

b) The purpose for which the photograph is required. (Perhaps you have not made the best choice as to colour, scale, etc., relative to what is available, for your needs.)

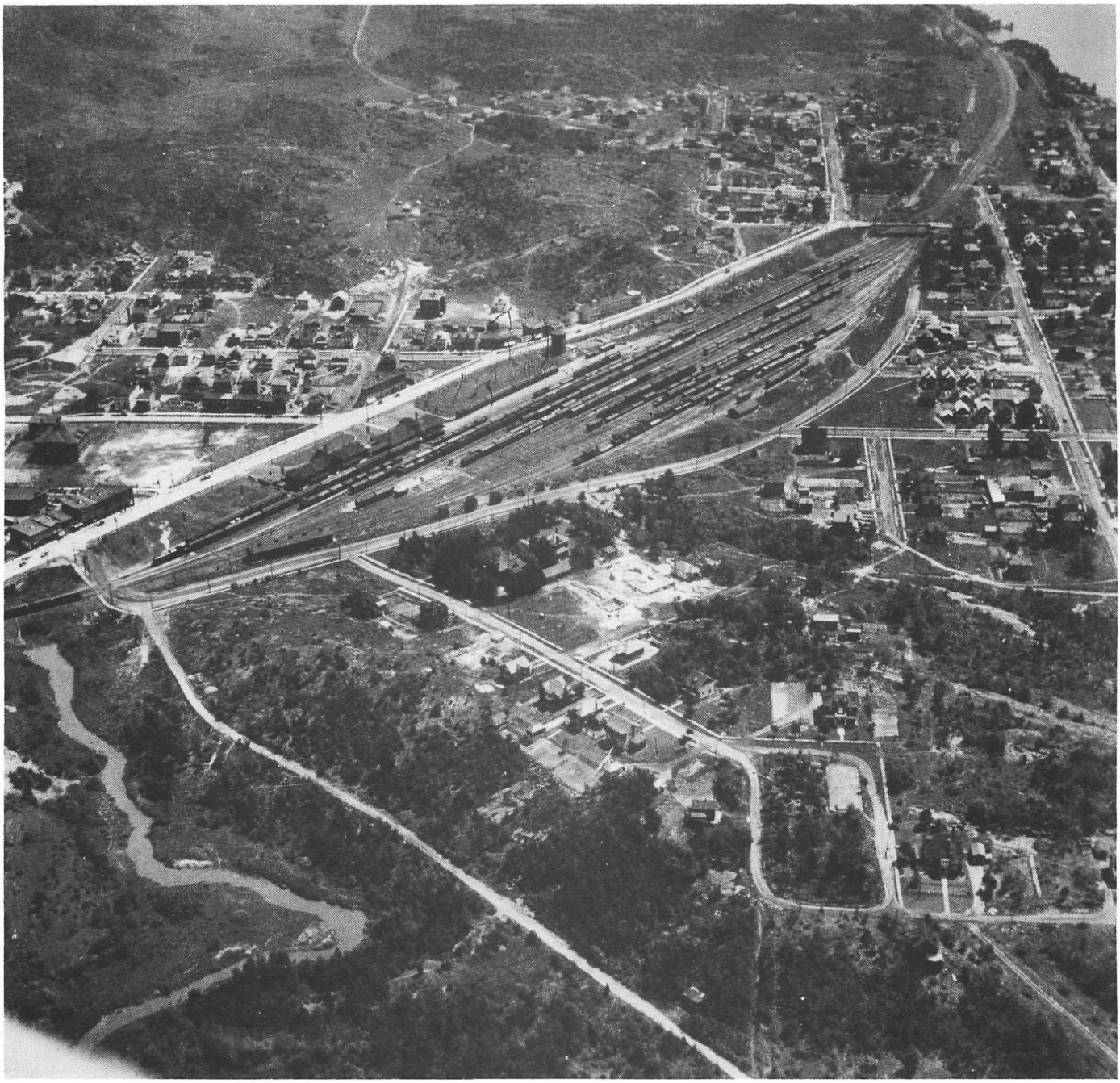
c) Send map or photo with pertinent details and remittance to:

National Air Photo Library
615 Booth Street, Room 180
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0E9
Telephone (613) 995-4560
Telex: 053-4328

Payment: Prepayment by cheque or money order, payable to Receiver General for Canada, is required for all products or services (or an active credit account with the Library).

Today, provinces also have annual aerial photography programs. Private forestry and mining firms run surveys. However, the federal government commissions the most comprehensive air surveys.

Sudbury, Portion of C.P.R. Yards, and adjacent housing, 1928. [NAPL, A169-66].



Sudbury, C.P.R. Yards, 1928. [NAPL, A169-54].

Sudbury, 1928. Showing C.P.R. Yards, Upper Right Quadrant. [NAPL, A517-94].

Sudbury, 1978. [NAPL, A24988-64].