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The Relationship Between Text and Image
in Documentary Photography

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A Thesis
in
The Department
of
Communication Studies

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

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ABSTRACT

The Relationship Between Text and Image in Documentary Photography

Barbara Verity

The present study examined the relationship between text and image in documentary photography through the theories of communication analysts such as Arnheim, McLuhan, Berger, Barthes and Burke. The subject was also explored through a project in which the village of Hatley in the Eastern Townships of Quebec was studied by the author of this thesis from an ethnographic and historical viewpoint through documentary photographs and five types of text that accompany the photographs.

Both the theories and the project reveal the particularly evocative power that results when text and photographs are combined. Documentary photographs coupled with well-chosen words can explore a subject with considerable depth and from a variety of viewpoints, providing multiple views of one reality. The span of time and space can be expressed in a manner that neither photographs nor words alone can do. Together they make specific what otherwise would be general.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Everyday, most North Americans are faced with a proliferation of material that has various combinations of text and image. There are magazines and newspapers and books. There are posters on walls, advertisements on billboards, photographs on museum walls. A day seldom passes without exposure to the use of photographs with the written word - a combination of two powerful media. Yet little study has gone into exploring the effects of the various combinations of text and image.

Some thought has been given the subject by media analysts such as John Berger, Roland Barthes, Wilson Hicks and Susan Sontag. A few experiments have been carried out. But those analysts who briefly discuss the relationship between text and image, usually add that the subject is worthy of deeper analysis.

This thesis project will explore the relationship between text and image in documentary photography. The study will begin by discussing visual perception, then proceed to describe characteristics of photography and writing relevant to the discussion. Finally, the various combinations of image and text will be described and evaluated. Examples of several such combinations will be given from a documentary study done through photographs and interviews in Hatley, an Eastern Townships village, by the author of this thesis.

The results of this exploration will be useful to those involved in combining photographs and words - whether in newspapers, magazines, books and any other similar material. By understanding the nature of the two media and the consequences of them being combined, a greater sensitivity can develop. This sensitivity and understanding can be used to combine more effectively these two media and enable better communication than is often seen in books, newspapers and magazines.

This thesis, therefore, is based on the hypothesis that a clear understanding of the effects of various combinations of text and image enhances the potential of effective communication. "We know that a single picture is worth a thousand words. But how do we know which words any given picture is worth?" (Eaton, 1980, p.15). This thesis will search for answers to that question.

In studying the relationship between text and image, certain terms require defining. Image refers to a photograph. Text refers to the written word or words that accompany a photograph. The type of text to be discussed in this paper is captions, which consists of the use of a limited number of words that accompany a photograph and are placed in close proximity to it.

In describing the two media of photography and writing, form and content will be discussed. Form refers to the structure of the medium, while content refers to the subject matter of the medium.

Effective communication refers to causing either an informative or aesthetic response in the observer. An informative effect is one in which the observer expands his or her knowledge mainly on a rational level. Some factual information has been learned by the viewer. For instance, a photograph of a family of poverty-stricken southern sharecroppers provides facts about living conditions and the types of clothing worn by people in these particular circumstances. The observer learns from this photograph.

However, an aesthetic effect is one in which the observer's knowledge is expanded or imagination stimulated on an intuitive, emotional level. For instance, if a photograph such as the one of the sharecropper's family is particularly powerful, communicating the pathos of their existence, expressed straightforwardly and without sentimentality, the viewer will not only learn about the facts of the family's existence, but will respond on a deeper level, feeling sympathy or anger. This type of deeper response to a photograph can lead to action on the part of the viewer to bring about social change.

This thesis will also probe the nature of visual perception - the basis of knowledge. An insight into this type of perception is necessary in order to understand the response of an observer to photography and writing. The work of two writers is particularly illuminating - Rudolf Arnheim and D. Dondis. Arnheim's book, "Art and Visual Perception", is a classic in its field. He also published "Visual

Thinking", which asserts that all thinking is basically perceptual in nature. "A Primer of Visual Literacy" by D. Dondis is also a highly respected work. Both authors were particularly concerned about the role of perception in communication.

Thought and perception are inextricably linked: "Human thinking cannot go beyond the patterns suppliable by the human senses" (Arnheim, 1972, p.233).

Another analyst clearly understands the role of vision in thinking: "Sight is swift, comprehensive, simultaneously analytic and synthetic" (Dondis, 1973, p.12).

"Vision is the primary medium of thought" (Arnheim, 1972, p.18). And in a more evocative statement of the same thing, artist and Renaissance philosopher Leonardo da Vinci once wrote: "The eye, which is the window of the soul, is the chief organ whereby the understanding can have the most complete and magnificent view of the infinite works of nature" (Richter, 1952, p.98).

The two media of text and image are powerful forms of communication since they are experienced through visual perception, which as we have seen is a primary form of perception. The two media are thus closely related to our thought processes.

Both media involve choice and de-coding. As the eye scans either a line of text or the surface of a photograph, choices are made of what word or group of words to give priority and what part of the photograph to focus on. The

mind is also constantly de-coding symbols. While reading, the mind is finding meaning in the letters and words of the text. And while looking at a photograph, the mind is making sense of all the elements seen in the photograph. Our experience of our environment is one guide - a specific form and a series of certain lines tells us we are looking at a picture of a chair. Or in reading, the letters c-h-a-i-r make us think of a chair. Our experience of our culture is another guide - a written description or a photograph of a decorated evergreen tree tells us of Christmas. Pictorial structure is a conventional language that must be learned as a skill, like reading.

"When we see, we are doing many things at once. We are seeing an enormous field peripherally. We are seeing in an up-to-down left-to-right movement. We are imposing on what we are isolating in our field of vision not only implied axes to adjust balance but also a structural map to chart and measure the action of the compositional forces that are so vital to content and, therefore, to message input and output. All this is happening while at the same time we are decoding all manner of symbols" (Dondis, 1973, p.17). On a deeper level, if the words are evocative or a photograph is particularly communicative without the help of various cultural cues, the observer may react aesthetically. The medium will thus reach him or her on an abstract and deeply personal level.

Both writing and photography can impart these three types of experiences - the representational, symbolical and abstract - in similar ways at the most basic level.

However, analyses by McLuhan reveal that an essential difference between text and image arises in the manner each of these media are perceived by the observer who is looking at a photograph or reading a text. Writing encourages in the observer a linear, rational type of thinking, while a photograph encourages an intuitive, spontaneous type of response.

Insofar as text is usually presented in a linear left to right fashion, that particular medium encourages, or at least is particularly well adapted to, the expression of rational thought, which results in an informative effect. McLuhan wrote that the mental process for writing a word entails putting the letters in the proper sequence to form a word, a process that led to the development of western science, technology and rationality. Another media analyst agrees. "Languages are made-up systems constructed by man to encode, store, and decode information. Therefore, their structure has a logic that visual literacy is unable to parallel" (Dondis, 1973, p.12).

In contrast, a photograph leaves greater freedom for the eye to roam in any direction over its surface in search of what to focus on, making an aesthetic response more possible because of the freedom allowed the mind of the observer. Accompanying this freedom, however, is the element

of ambiguity.

This difference between text and image, however, is only one of form, because even though text is encouraging of rational thought, it does not eliminate an intuitive or aesthetic response. In fact, in its content, writing can allow an aesthetic response because of the ungrounded and unconcrete nature of the written word. The mind is particularly free to interpret exactly what those lines forming the letters are saying. However, in a photograph, the mind is more strongly directed to interpreting what the particular lines and forms stand for since the photograph is usually a faithful reproduction of something concrete. A picture of a chair looks like the real thing.

Though differences exist between text and image, both come from one common root - the hieroglyph. Whereas the earliest form of two-dimensional communication by people consisted of drawings on rocks, cave walls and animal bones, this evolved to the hieroglyph, the form which was part writing and part picture. The hieroglyph became the first form of alphabet in all cultures. Thus, though differences have evolved between text and image, there is a commonality that perhaps makes their combination in captioned documentary photography a natural - and therefore, powerful one.

The discussion thus far has sought an understanding of the nature of visual perception regarding image and text. The next stage is to understand more fully the nature of

photography and writing. Only by understanding the characteristics of these two media will it be possible to comprehend the relationship between the two when they are combined.

Chapter 2: The Nature of Documentary Photography

During more than a century of photography, the past has been recorded and society explored through a documentary approach, which has proven to be particularly effective as a communication medium.

The first events recorded on camera were of war - 1846 and 1848 in Mexico, then the Crimean War of 1855. The fall of Sebastopol was recorded by James Robertson in the late 1850s, then the American Civil War of the early 1860s. Photographers were discovering the communicative power of the medium. "The bleak and ravaged fields, shattered houses, stiff and gruesome corpses, the pathetically homely pictures of camp life, overreach in their intensity mere records" (Newhall, 1964, p.68).

Meanwhile, in the Paris of the 1860s, condemned areas of the city were being photographed by Charles Marville.

In America, photographers documented the building of the railroad, the opening of the West and expeditions to the grand Canyon, Great Salt Lake, the Colorado River and Rocky Mountains.

The use of photographs as a powerful communicative tool for change became apparent at an early date. The US Congress, convinced by William H. Jackson's photographs of the Yellowstone region, made Yellowstone a national park.

And as early as 1862, the English "Art Journal" responded to a series of photographs of Manchester, writing that they "have an especial, though painful, interest just now, from the fact that they were views of the great manufacturing districts, where terrible destitution prevails" (Newhall, 1964, p.139).

"The documentary photographer seeks to do more than convey information through his photographs: his aim is to persuade and to convince" (Newhall, 1964, p.137). And convince they did. Jacob A. Riis' photographs of living conditions among New York City's poor, published in 1890 in "How the Other Half Lives" led to better living conditions created by government. Lewis W. Hine's photographs from 1905 of children working in factories led to the passing of child labor laws.

Each of these examples illustrates how forceful documentary photographs - and particularly groups of photographs on one subject - can be. Together the photographs provided a narrative - whether about living conditions among the poor of New York City or of the working conditions of some children, that had enough impact to stimulate social change, thus illustrating the strong effect which a group, or sequence, of photographs can have.

The movement in documentary photography evolved even further with the Farm Security Administration of the mid-1930s, when photographers such as Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange and Arthur Rothstein portrayed the plight of the

unemployed, the problems of migratory workers and the living conditions of sharecroppers in rural America.

The photographs that resulted were widely published in newspapers, magazines and books, their persuasive power again leading to changes in government legislation. "The photograph, in conjunction with print, served a distinct social purpose in that it involved a growing public in matters of vital concern... In the tradition of William Henry Jackson, the news photographer could record scenes which underscored the need for better social conditions, better laws, and better people" (Edom, 1976, p.50).

The cumulative power of these groups of photographs, some of which were accompanied by captions and others not, clearly had a particularly strong effect on viewers. What was in the nature of photography that resulted in such an effect? This is a key question to answer in aiming to understand the relationship between text and image in documentary photography.

Several communication analysts have discussed how photographs are perceived and what gives photographs their impact. Roland Barthes has published extensively on the subject, including the books, "Camera Lucida", "Image, Music, Text", and "Mythologies". The relationship between photographs and time, between life and death, are among Barthes' concerns. He also describes the symbolical and mythical nature of photography as well as the medium's role as an affirmation of reality. The immediacy and spontaneity

of the medium also strike Barthes as important elements of photographic characteristics. He also stresses that the particular is always equalized with the universal in the most expressive photographs.

John Berger too has written extensively, though less analytically than Barthes, on photography. His writing is derived from his own practical experience, in that he has provided the text to accompany the photographs of Jean Mohr in books such as "Another Way of Telling". His concerns are with the ambiguity of photographs and with their lack of narrative meaning. Berger too is interested in the sociological role of photography in society, a role often put to use through documentary photography.

The issues raised by Barthes and Berger can be summarized as six key characteristics of photography, through which can be gained an understanding of this powerful medium. This chapter will discuss these six characteristics - the immediacy with which photographs are perceived; the connection between the particular and the universal; the ambiguity of photographs; the symbolical and mythical nature of photographs; their lack of narrative meaning; and their relationship to time. A further important characteristic, the capacity of photographs to play a sociological role, has been discussed at the start of this chapter and will be explored further in the thesis project.

A key factor in the communicative strength of photographs is the fact that they are perceived with

immediacy and spontaneity because the eye of the observer absorbs what is seen instantaneously. "The Photograph is violent: not because it shows violent things, but because on each occasion it fills the sight by force, and because in it nothing can be refused or transformed" (Barthes, 1985, p.91).

As already pointed out, images - or drawings on cave walls - were the earliest form of two-dimensional visual communication. Perhaps thus closest to our primitive and most basic natures, images are also one of the most effective ways of communicating. The unconscious, the dream, the psychotic's hallucinations are all expressed through images. The visionary prophet seems to have been a visualizer and not a verbalizer. Thus, since the perceiving of an image is part of our most basic way of relating to the world and since this perception is so immediate and spontaneous, it is one of the most effective.

The capability of photography to communicate through immediacy also derives from the form of the photographic medium. The very structure of photographs frees this medium from having to be perceived in an orderly, sequential fashion - as words must. The eye of the observer can look at any part of the photograph at will, rather than the rigid left to right, top to bottom manner in which text is perceived in western civilization. This freer perception allows the impact of photographs to reach the right side of the brain - the intuitive, creative side. Therefore, if the

photograph already speaks effectively without words, they need not be added.

Words should only be added to a photograph to enhance its communicative power, if that power is rather weak. For instance, even though the manner of perceiving a photograph is encouraging of an aesthetic response, the subject matter is less so. Since photographs are about a specific place and time, they are grounded in the concrete. Thus, because the viewer's perception is partly bound too by the time, place and subject matter of the photograph, his or her interpretation of the photo is kept within certain bounds, which are discouraging of an aesthetic effect, unless the subject matter rises above the particular to encompass the universal. If, however, a photograph only expresses the particular, this communicative limitation can be overcome by the addition of well-chosen words, as will be illustrated in the thesis project in chapter 4.

Barthes discusses another key characteristic of photographs in which he distinguishes between the studium and the punctum, pointing out the relationship between the particular and the universal in especially expressive photographs. "In every expressive photograph, in every photograph which quotes at length, the particular, by way of a general idea, has been equalised with the universal" (Barthes, 1985, p.122).

The aspect of a photograph in which the photograph depicts an object at a certain time is what Barthes calls

the studium. Through the studium, the observer defines and identifies with the photograph's subject because of his or her cultural background. This response involves liking, not loving; it involves unconcerned desire, a certain amount of interest and inconsequential taste.

In contrast, occasionally a photograph goes beyond this rather disinterested response on the part of the observer to achieve what Barthes calls the punctum, in which the observer is moved beyond the subject matter and is reached by the image on a deeper level than the merely particular, objective and illustrative one. The viewer thus participates in the photograph.

The observer is pierced by the photograph, as by an arrow. This is often achieved by a detail in the photograph, which arouses sympathy or a kind of tenderness. Having nothing to do with morality or good taste, the detail - which may have meaning to one person and not to another - has the power of expansion, making the viewer add something of his or her own. Therefore, a photograph with punctum has a universality about it, which expands the photograph's expressive power. The photographs in the thesis project of chapter 4 will attempt to make universal one particular village in the Eastern Townships and its people.

Another key characteristic is that photographs by their nature are more ambiguous than other narrational media. Their content can be interpreted many ways, as is seen in an experiment described by Berger. Ten people shown

five different photos each gave contradictory interpretations of what the photos were about.

Berger writes that all photographs are ambiguous because they break some kind of continuity - whether of an event, even a landscape, light or the weather. "Yet often this ambiguity is not obvious, for as soon as photographs are used with words, they produce together an effect of certainty, even of dogmatic assertion" (Berger, 1982, p.91).

The ambiguity in a photograph, however, can be a source of power, according to Berger. Photographs are discontinuous in that they are an instant in time, not part of the flow of time. This discontinuity is the cause of their ambiguity. "Between the moment recorded and the present moment of looking at the photograph, there is an abyss" (Berger, 1982, p. 87). However, by recording a mere instant of time, the photograph can pass on to the observer a special quality that Berger calls a quotation from appearances. "...the very same discontinuity, by preserving an instantaneous set of appearances, allows us to read across them and to find a synchronic coherence. A coherence which, instead of narrating, instigates ideas. Appearances have this coherent capacity because they constitute something approaching a language. I have referred to this as a half-language" (Berger, 1982, p. 129). Thus, the photograph quotes by its appearances rather than translates, because photography does not have a language of its own.

As a result, photographs give the observer the opportunity of finding meaning in what is around us. "The camera completes the half-language of appearances and articulates an unmistakable meaning. When this happens we suddenly find ourselves at home amongst appearances, as we are at home in our mother tongue" (Berger, 1982, p. 129). This unique means of expression is what Berger calls "another way of telling", the title of one of his books. It calls to mind the importance of space and emptiness that the Chinese religion of Taoism stresses, in which meaning occurs at a deep level.

Thus, ambiguity can add strength to photographs by permitting "another way of telling" or it can weaken photographs through a lack of assertion. These two sides to ambiguity will be explored in the thesis project through an ethnographic and aesthetic study of the village of Hatley.

A fourth characteristic of photographs is the manner in which they fulfill the role of mythology in society, both creating and affirming the symbols that provide the cultural cues and meanings that help all of us make our way through life.

Although an observer looks at a photograph to gain information, much more is occurring at a deeper level of communication. Clearly, he or she may learn information from a photograph, for instance, fashions in the 1930s. But by looking at such a photograph, the observer is also participating in his or her own culture, gaining the

assurance that comes from a link with the past. As a result, the observer's cultural roots are affirmed and a sense of belonging within a span of time is achieved.

In this manner, photographs affirm our relation to the world through symbols and myths, used as a system of communication to put across a message, as Barthes explains in "Mythologies". Myths have an underlying social purpose, which is achieved by manipulating actions, visions or words. Their role is to reconcile contradictions in society so that people have a greater sense of security. And by expressing what is around us through symbolical means, we gain the comforting illusion of having control in the face of what is difficult to understand or accept, such as death and suffering. The myths too contain and express our social values and aid in our socialization. They are the way socialized people communicate - whether through speaking, writing, photography, cinema, even sports.

Photographs are particularly potent in passing on myths since they impose meaning in one stroke without analysis or dilution. This is part of the immediacy and spontaneity with which photographs are perceived, as has already been discussed. "Photography is an ellipse of language and a condensation of an 'ineffable social whole'" (Barthes, 1972, p.91).

In discussing mythology in photography, Barthes distinguishes between denotation and connotation. The denoted message of a photograph is an attempt at reality -

it is what seems most obvious - most literal. The connoted message, however, is symbolic, representing the manner in which society communicates its values. The connoted message is communicated by stereotypes, schemes, colors, graphisms, gestures, expressions. Every sign is part of the code of connotation. The paradox of photographs is that they seem objective, but are in fact, connotative. An example of this is the use of frontality in a photograph of a person, which, as already explained, expresses a characteristic of the person - what is obvious - shape of face, type of clothing, color of hair, etc.

Even the objects in a photograph are signs. For instance, a person photographed beside a bookcase implies that he or she is an intellectual. "The image is penetrated through and through by the system of meaning, in exactly the same way as man is articulated to the very depths of his being in distinct languages" (Barthes, 1977, p.47).

Susan Sontag also expresses the same view, pointing out that a photographic portrait of a subject facing the camera signifies solemnity, frankness, the disclosure of the subject's essence. Ceremonial pictures such as weddings and graduations generally use this approach. In this way, a mythology about the subject is created by a specific pose, which we recognize and react to because of our culture.

The thesis project will explore the way in which the symbols and myths of Hatley express the culture of the people there, raising the village to a mythological level.

Another characteristic of photographs to consider is that alone they are not narrative, simply because only a moment of time can be represented in one particular photograph. A narrative form implies a past, present and future. Berger states that since a photograph only records an instant, it is incapable of expressing narrative meaning. Only through the passage of time can meaning result because meaning is discovered through what connects.

The photograph is therefore weak in intentionality, as compared to writing, which by its nature is sequential and therefore conducive to expressing narrative meaning. This is often used as a reason for including words, since a span of time is readily expressed by words, thereby adding the element missing in photographs. The addition of more photographs to create a sequence also gives to photographs the capacity to be narrative. These two devices for adding narrative meaning to photographs - through the addition of words and through the grouping of photographs into a sequence - will be explored in the thesis project.

The sixth characteristic, the relationship of photography to time, is clearly central to an understanding of this medium, for photography has the unique role of freezing an instant of time, thus indirectly commenting on the entire process of change and, indeed, of life and death. As Newhall writes of photography, "The fundamental belief in the authenticity of photographs explains why photographs of people no longer living and of vanished architecture are so

melancholy. Neither words nor yet the most detailed painting can evoke a moment of vanished time so powerfully and so completely as a good photograph" (Newhall, 1964, p.71).

Barthes explores the meaning of photographs in this regard through a photograph of his mother as a child in a garden. Called the Winter Garden Photograph, this photo of his mother, which reaches him with all the force of the punctum he describes, is powerful, not because it brings back memories of his mother, but because it affirms her presence there once in the garden. "There is a superimposition here: of reality and of the past" (Barthes, 1985, p.76). The photograph proves that his mother was there in the winter garden, and it is this recognition which touches him deeply. "It has been absolutely, irrefutably present, and yet already deferred" (Barthes, 1985, p.77). The effect a photograph produces is not to restore what has been abolished by time or distance, but to attest that what the observer sees in the photograph has indeed existed. "Photography has something to do with resurrection" (Barthes, 1985, p.82).

His mother had truly been present in the garden. That was the reality of the situation. By looking at the image of his mother as a child he discovers the kindness present in her face, a characteristic she exhibited throughout her life. The experience allowed Barthes to experience the true being of his mother. "The Winter Garden Photograph was indeed essential, it achieved for me,

utopically, the impossible science of the unique being" (Barthes, 1985, p.71).

Therefore, through photography, Barthes was able to identify the truth and reality of his mother in the image of her. This is the nature and genius of photography, he states.

Closely aligned to the importance of time in photographs is the involvement of the medium with death. In a sense, a photograph defeats death. Barthes points out that photography is closest to theatre; it is a figuration of the motionless and made-up face beneath which we see the dead. The fact that we like the realistic and life-like nature of photographs is part of our apprehension and mythic denial of death. Barthes explains too that a photograph itself makes a subject die by turning it into an object - static and classifiable; the subject is no longer in constant motion, thus is no longer alive. It has been removed from life.

Closely linked to our use of photography to deal with the passage of time and with death is the use of the medium to provide us with a defense against anxiety, integrating us into society and reassuring us. "The look of the world is the widest possible confirmation of the thereness of the world, and thus the look of the world continually proposes and confirms our relation to that thereness, which nourishes our sense of Being" (Berger, 1982, p.87).

The thesis project will explore the role played by time in making photographs and text evocative of one particular village.

These six characteristics of photography form the basis of its power to communicate. By understanding these characteristics, the strength or weakness of a particular photograph can be understood. And once a photograph is understood on its own, the effect of adding words can also be analyzed so that communication can be maximized through the relationship between text and image.

The thesis project will use this understanding of the nature of photography to combine photographs with text in order to explore the possibilities of enhancing the communicative power of the photographs.

Chapter 3: The Nature of Writing

Since the 1880s, when the halftone plate was invented allowing for the widespread use of photographs, various combinations of text and image have been used extensively.

The role of captions to direct the reaction of the observer was recognized early. The Pittsburg Survey of 1907 sent photographers such as Lewis Hine to photograph in detail a typical industrial city. Several of his pictures were used in 1912 by the International Socialist Review in an article that urged workers to rebel against their industrial bosses and conservative union leaders. "To assure communication of the meaning intended by the photographer, the Survey recognized how important it was to key the pictures to a text, to establish clearly articulated structure of presentation" (Trachtenberg, 1981, p. 247).

The captioned photo stories of Life and Look magazines by the 1930s used captions to interpret the photographs. "The picture magazine was the twentieth century's scientific version of the ancient Chinese scroll, with its hand-drawn sequential pictures, founded on the ancient Chinese contention that 'one seeing is worth a hundred listenings'" (Hicks, 1973, p. 45). The magazine gave equal importance to words and photos through its combination of article, captions and photographs. "So much of the world, so judiciously selected, had never been seen before in one

place, in one week, as in Life" (Hicks, 1973, p. 45).

Time magazine, however, used a different approach to captions. Rather than giving them equal importance to the photographs, the magazine made them short and pithy, the aim being to entice readers into the text of the story. Captions consisted of the subject's name and a few short provocative words.

Others were using captions sparingly too, with only a minimum of words to place the photograph in time and place. This approach to documentary photography was taken by photographers such as Robert Frank in the 1970s in his photographic study, "The Americans". Some examples of captions he used in this book were: "Bar-Gallup, New Mexico" or "Elevator - Miami Beach".

More recently, photographers have been using captions in unconventional ways. The New York Times photography critic, Grundberg, commenting on a recent exhibition, described photographs with words embedded within them as being provocative and innovative.

These various combinations of text and image have explored different effects and have been used for different purposes. To begin understanding these effects, it is necessary first to understand the basic characteristics of writing, in the same way chapter 2 discussed the characteristics of photography.

First, the manner in which writing is perceived has a bearing on its capacity to communicate. To gain meaning

from words, the observer must proceed through a rather mechanical process. The eye - at least in the western world - must follow a rigid left to right, top to bottom, formula to absorb the words in their proper sequence. Furthermore, each language in the western world is organized by specific grammatical rules, which determine the meaning being expressed. This structuring of language is a key element to be considered in understanding the way in which words communicate, as has been explained by media analyst Marshall McLuhan, whose books such as "The Gutenberg Galaxy" challenged conventional thought in his theory of the development of 20th Century communications.

McLuhan believed that the type of medium - whether writing or television or anything else in between - affects our way of thinking. Therefore a key development in the history of western thought came with the introduction of the alphabet and the printing press as well as the subsequent proliferation of the written word. Together, they turned the western world toward thinking that is logical, sequential and linear. Thus, writing readily expresses what is logical, sequential and linear, such as the narrative meaning that is lacking in photography. And thus, it also readily expresses abstract thought and rhetoric, two elements that are also lacking in photography.

Despite the rather rigid character in which language is structured, words themselves can be particularly evocative and connotative. They can make the reader dream,

giving him or her the freedom to interpret the meaning of each word, because a word is a step removed from an image in that it is less concrete, less grounded in reality.

The word, after all, consists of only letters, which are merely symbols of reality and have no visual parallel for what they represent. As such, they are a mediatory principle between this world and the supernatural, between ourselves and nature. "Might nature be necessarily approached by us through the gift of the spirit of words?" (Burke, 1968, p.378).

The communicative strength of words thus lies in this suggestiveness, or connotative nature. Words can shift a sentence from description to reflection. They can arouse all sorts of rich images in the viewer's mind, serving as a springboard for the viewer's imagination. This quality, when added to a photograph, can raise the quality of the photograph from a merely denotative quality to a connotative one.

Kenneth Burke wrote extensively on this subject in "A Grammar of Motives", "A Rhetoric of Motives" and "Language as Symbolic Action", books that probe the communicative strength of words, the role of ambiguity in writing and the manner in which writing has led to rhetorical and abstract thought.

Mainly using Burke's analysis of writing, this chapter will go on to discuss further the characteristics of writing and to compare those characteristics with those of

photography in order to facilitate an understanding of what happens when the two media are combined. By understanding this, then if a particular photograph lacks one characteristic, then writing can provide that missing characteristic in the caption.

The main characteristics to be discussed about writing are its ambiguity, its abstract nature and its narrative capability. The evocative nature of the medium has already been described.

Kenneth Burke writes about the power of ambiguity to reach readers and thus, be effective rhetorically. If a subject is shown to have conflicting sides, contrasts and tensions, then the readers become involved in the subject because they are forced to come to their own conclusions about the subject. Readers are firstly grabbed by the incongruities, and then held there by being involved in the process of making a decision about these incongruities.

Burke writes that it is in the areas of ambiguity that transformations take place; in fact, without such areas, transformation would be impossible. Distinctions arise out of a great central moltenness, where all is merged. In merging, the distinctions can be remade in new combinations, thereby creating different distinctions.

This ambiguity derives from the complexity of language, which can express meaning from the most concrete to the most abstract and which can express ambiguity or specificity. Photography, on the other hand, is often

ambiguous and has difficulty expressing what is specific. Therefore, writing can either add an expressive ambiguity to a photograph that only has denotative meaning in order to increase the photograph's expressive power. Or the writing can be specific and thereby reduce the ambiguity of the photograph. The determining factor is the objective of the communicator who is combining the caption and photograph. This quality of ambiguity in a caption and a photograph will be explored in the thesis project.

Similarly, the capacity of writing to express abstract thought can add an element of abstraction to a photograph as well as the element of rhetorical thought. Since writing is a mental instrument, allowing us to think in ways not grounded in concrete reality, its addition to a photograph in a caption can expand the photograph's meaning beyond the more concrete content of the photograph.

Thus, language can interpret the photograph's content in a rhetorical manner in much the same way that Burke illustrates how language can make an abstract idea concrete. Burke illustrated how language becomes rhetorical by the use of myth, which in turn induces an action or an attitude. One of the major ways in which rhetoric succeeds, as Burke shows in his analysis of "Mein Kampf" by Hitler, is to make an idea or principle concrete.

Burke shows that Hitler's ideas came from his own experience and that Hitler shaped those ideas into a forceful ideology by finding concrete objects upon which the

insecure German people could focus. Their need for unity was focused by Hitler on one geographic centre - Munich; one leader - himself; and one common enemy - Jews. Burke shows the literary acrobatics displayed by Hitler, who managed to transform hate for Jews into Aryan love and who drew a doctrine of war out of a doctrine of peace. He spiritualized the material and materialized the spiritual to suit his ends. His skill was not so much in the use of words but in the combining and blending of ideas to create a new brew - his own philosophy, Nazism.

In a similar manner, Burke explains how the character of a people is expressed through the description of their country, as Carylyle did in "Heroes and Hero-Worship" to describe the Arabs among whom Mohammed was born. "Consider that wide waste horizon of sand, empty, silent, like a sand-sea, dividing habitable place from habitable place. You're all alone there, left alone with the universe; by day a fierce sun blazing down on it with intolerable radiance; by night the great deep heaven with its stars. Such a country is fit for a swift-handed, deep-hearted race of men...The correlation between the quality of the country and the quality of its inhabitants is here presented in quite secular terms" (Burke, 1969, p.7).

As in these two examples, words can be used to add interpretative elements to the content of a photograph in such a way, for instance, to make concrete an abstract idea or to link the character of a people to their surroundings

in order to express their particular character. This too will be explored in the thesis project.

This thesis has already pointed out that photographs cannot express narrative meaning. The sequentiality of written language, however, invites narrative meaning since this type of meaning comes from understanding cause and effect as seen over the passage of time. Within a photograph, however, only an instant of time is expressed, thus inhibiting the expression of narrative meaning. Obviously, writing, because of its ability to discuss past and present and everything in between, is well equipped to add narrative meaning, and can thus add this missing element to a photograph. This too will be explored in the thesis project.

Although several differences between photography and writing have been discussed, the two media do share two characteristics. Both media reduce our anxiety about the world, bridging the gap between the isolated self and the world around. Sontag and Barthes describe photography as an attempt to defeat death by freezing an instant of time. Writing too can be described in the same way, since it too is an attempt to come to terms with the gap between the self and the world around.

And in both photography and writing, it is in silence and emptiness where meaning occurs. McLuhan points this out by telling how the Chinese use the blank or the interval between things as a primary means of getting in

touch with situations. In the Chinese religion, Taoism, the vacuum is all potent because it is all containing. Only in a vacuum is motion possible. The same thought is expressed about photography: "Photography's true gift may not be the closeness it provides, but the distance it allows" (Grundberg, 1986, p.27). Writing too can be described in the same way.

The fact that photography and writing share these characteristics makes their communicative power all the more powerful when these characteristics are combined in photograph and caption.

Thus, when text and image are combined - and depending on how they are combined, the level of communication has great potential to expand. This chapter and the previous one have discussed the characteristics of photography and writing. What are some of the ways these two media can be combined and what is the effect of these combinations?

For Hicks, words are equal partners with the photograph, which contributes to the possibility of a strong response by the observer. He calls the addition of words to a photograph an imaginative plus. The viewer can respond to both powerful media.

For Berger, photographs are weak in narrative meaning; therefore, words fill in this gap. The caption, for instance, can place the photograph within a specific time and space. And words, which are generalisations, gain

specificity from the photograph. Since all photographed events are ambiguous, except to those whose personal relation to the event is such that their own lives supply the missing continuity, the caption adds the missing information. Together, the two - photo and captions - work together to produce a powerful unit.

Hicks believes that words and photographs should complement each other and be equal in strength to each other. By doing so, they create a communicative effect in the observer's mind - a sort of third medium that happens in the observer's mind and is more powerful than either of the other two media alone. "Unity of effect can be obtained by a use of words in counterpoint to picture. The subject matter of the mediums might differ completely and yet, through an ironic or other interplay, produce a singleness of effect in the fusion process" (Hicks, 1973, p.5).

He points out the danger of inequality between the two media. "There can, however, be an inequality in their communicative values, the value of each medium being the clarity, coherence and force with which, in its own way, it says something about a given subject. In some instances the picture can have a value in excess of the accompanying words, in other instances the opposite can be true. The ideal is reached when the values are equal and in balance, for then the single expressive statement has maximum impact" (Hicks, 1973, p.5).

Barthes too stresses the importance of the relationship between photographs and words, and the power of the two combined. "The totality of the information is thus carried by two different structures (one of which is linguistic). These two structures are co-operative but, since their units are heterogeneous, necessarily remain separate from one another: here (in the text) the substance of the message is made up of words; there (in the photograph) of lines, surfaces, shades. Moreover, the two structures of the message each occupy their own defined spaces, these being contiguous but not 'homogenized', as they are for example in the rebus which fuses words and images in a single line of reading" (Barthes, 1977, p.16).

Sontag sees a different relationship between photographs and words, believing that the words speak louder than pictures. "Captions do tend to override the evidence of our eyes; but no caption can permanently restrict or secure a picture's meaning" (Sontag, 1980, p.108).

Barthes believes that a shift has taken place in society so that today images are predominant over text, the opposite of what once was. "The image no longer illustrates the words; it is now the words which, structurally, are parasitic on the image" (Barthes, 1977, p.25). Previously the text was connotative and needed the denotation of the image to back it. Now the power of connotation lies in the image, and the text sublimates or rationalizes the image. The text has become a secondary vibration, almost without

consequence, he explains.

Images have clearly become predominant in our society. Sontag goes so far as to say that today everything exists to end in a photograph, whereas she points out that Mallarme once wrote that everything in the world exists in order to end in a book.

Another use of captions is to introduce new information to the image, thereby changing the overall impact. "'They were near to death, their faces prove it,' reads the headline to a photograph showing Elizabeth and Philip leaving a plane - but at the moment of the photograph the two still knew nothing of the accident they had just escaped" (Barthes, 1977, p.26).

The text can even introduce contradictory information, again changing the overall impact. "An analysis by Gerbner (The Social Anatomy of the Romance Confession Cover-Girl) demonstrated that in certain romance magazines the verbal message of the headlines, gloomy and anguished, on the cover always accompanied the image of a radiant cover-girl; here the two messages enter into a compromise, the connotation having a regulating function, preserving the irrational movement of projection-identification" (Barthes, 1977, p.26).

A study by Fedler, Counts and Hightower showed the strength of photographs over cutlines. The study involved showing several observers the same photographs, but with captions that differed by a few significant words. The

photographs were controversial. For example, one showed an accident victim. Some people in the study were shown the photograph with a caption that said the person died; others were shown the same photograph with a caption that said the person survived.

However, the overall response by observers to the photograph was the same - they didn't like it. The observers were responding to the photograph more than the information in the caption about the photograph. They were disturbed by the photograph, regardless of the caption.

Although this study shows the predominance of the photograph over the cutlines, it should be remembered that the photographs in this study were particularly forceful - shocking and disturbing - and thus would naturally have greater impact than the words themselves.

Another type of caption is that which tells the observer how to react. Often ideological or moralistic, this type of caption is used to ground the image, preventing any subjective choice or intuitive response on the part of the observer. Communication is kept at a superficial level. "The text is indeed the creator's (and hence society's) right of inspection over the image; anchorage is a control, bearing a responsibility - in the face of the projective power of pictures - for the use of the message...the text has thus a repressive value and we can see that it is at this level that the morality and ideology of a society here above all are invested" (Barthes, 1977, p.40).

Barthes raises another point about the way photographs and captions are perceived. The manner in which they physically relate to each other on the page has an effect, he says. The closer they are to each other, the more they affect each other. The denotative power of the photograph affects the caption, if placed close to the photograph, which makes the caption also seem denotative, even though it may tend more to the connotative. "It is true that there is never a real incorporation since the substances of the two structures (graphic and iconic) are irreducible, but there are most likely degrees of amalgamation...The caption...by its very disposition, by its average measure of reading, appears to duplicate the image, that is, to be included in its denotation" (Barthes, 1977, p.126).

If an aesthetic effect is sought, rather than a merely informative one, the photograph must have elements that are symbolical and abstract so that the observer will react on an intuitive level beyond his or her particular culture. "The ultimate wisdom of the photographic image is to say: 'There is the surface. Now think - or rather feel, intuit - what is beyond it, what the reality must be like if it looks this way'" (Barthes, 1985, p.23). Another view states: "In themselves appearances are ambiguous, with multiple meanings. This is why the visual is astonishing and why memory, based upon the visual, is freer than reason" (Berger, 1982, p.133).

All of these views about the combination of text and image are valid, each one depending on the particular photograph and caption. For instance, whether the words or the image are more expressive - or whether the two are balanced or not - depends on the particular photograph and caption, and - above all - on the intention of the communicator. Does the communicator want to add narrative meaning or specificity to a photograph to ensure that a particular interpretation by the observer results? Or is the goal to increase the photograph's ambiguity in order to challenge the observer to participate in interpreting the photograph?

These various possibilities as well as the problems and benefits of adding captions will be explored in the thesis project.

Chapter 4: The Thesis project

Photography and writing were used by the author of this thesis to explore from an ethnographic and historical viewpoint the village of Hatley in the Eastern Townships of Quebec. Various combinations of text and image were used to put into practise theories by leading media analysts such as Berger and Barthes. Three main aspects to life in Hatley were studied - the historical, the natural setting and the community life. Between July and December 1987, approximately 470 photographs were taken in this village, located about 30 kilometers south of Sherbrooke, and information was gathered from interviews with five residents and from a book on the history of the village.

Hatley was chosen as a subject because it is small and has specific boundaries. Only about 225 people live there. It is not particularly complicated as a subject either since the village has no commercial life.

Its historic nature and rural setting are particularly appealing to photograph. Furthermore, the residents have a busy community life, with both churches active and with seldom a week going by without some sort of activity. And once a year - on July 1 - the population swells to about 4,000 when the village celebrates Canada Day with a big parade and all sorts of festivities.

About 10 day-long visits were made to the village between July 1 and Dec. 29, 1987 to photograph and interview

residents. The photographs were mainly of three types of subjects - the residents, community events, views of the village and its buildings.

Five people were interviewed, having been chosen for their knowledge of the village and their involvement in community life. Four of the people are elderly and have lived all - or almost all - their lives there. They are Ruth and Bill Cutler and Howard and Pauline Ayer. One is a relative newcomer - George Jobel, but he is the prime organizer of the July 1 celebration as well as many other activities in the community during the year. He is also a municipal councillor. The interviews with the five people were taped and extracts were used as captions for some of the photographs.

Having known Hatley for 20 years, mainly by attending its July 1 celebration and by visiting a friend there, I wanted to portray the village as I knew it. Hatley to me was a quiet, picturesque English-speaking village, deeply rooted in Eastern Townships history. Only through the interviews did I discover the extensive community life that goes on there throughout the year. Although the village long ago lost its commercial and educational life, Hatley has become a centre for social life for many English-speaking residents of the surrounding area. For instance, there are people living 12 kilometers away in North Hatley who attend the United Church in Hatley because of the busy community life around the Hatley church, compared with the less active

United Church in their own town.

Almost no opposition was encountered by me in photographing the village and talking to some residents. I explained what I was doing and why, and always asked permission to attend any events and photograph them - except for July 1st when just about everyone is taking pictures anyway. I also gave copies of photos taken of particular people to them and helped out with serving and tidying at the community supper I attended.

Most of the people I asked if I could photograph were happy to comply, whether I met them in the street or if they were at an event. Only a few times did I sense some hostile looks while photographing at the community lunch - possibly because not everyone knew why I was there and what I was doing. During another visit to the village, when I asked the only farmer who lives in the village if I could photograph him, he declined. There was no problem in taking a group photograph of about 75 people at the Christmas party on Dec. 29. By then, I had gotten to know the organizer, having interviewed him, so that he was happy to get people grouped together for a village portrait.

The people who were interviewed were also photographed following the interview. After an hour or more of talking, the subjects were particularly relaxed about having their photographs taken. We had gotten to know each other somewhat. I photographed them in their own setting - the Cutlers in their back lawn by their garden with the

hills stretching beyond; the Ayers on the front porch of their century-old home and then in their garden, where they insisted on picking vegetables for me. George Jobel seemed particularly at ease in his living-room showing me his scrapbook of past Hatley events, of which he is proud as the organizer of most of them. When I asked the Cutlers if I could return to photograph their living-room wall, which is covered with family photographs, they readily agreed and went to great trouble removing furniture that posed problems for my camera.

The photographs are about the people of Hatley - who some of them are and what their involvement in community life is. They are seen in their homes, at a community lunch and at the July 1st celebration. They are typical of English-speaking residents in an Eastern Townships village, founded in the early days of settlement. However, the village itself is no longer typical - but instead rather unique now in that it is one of the few villages whose residents consist almost entirely of English-speaking Townshippers. Most other villages have become blends of English and French-speaking residents.

The village is also no longer typical of an Eastern Townships village, having lost its commercial and educational life. Where a creamery, school, stores, gas station, post office - even a hotel once operated, now the village only consists of homes and churches, as well as a few service buildings such as the community hall (once the

school), town hall and fire station.

Hatley has become a corner of the Townships for retired people, for younger people who seek the quietness of the village and/or their ancestral ties to it and for artists who are drawn by the peacefulness, natural setting and beauty of the village.

As Maude Gage Pellerin writes in "The Story of Hatley", "One young man, who went some years ago to supposedly greener pastures, was heard to remark, 'There is no industry in Hatley which will give me work to support my family, therefore I cannot live there now, but when my working days are over, I hope to go back and die there.' Doubtless this wish is echoed by many others, and with reason, for the two well-kept cemeteries are spots of restful beauty, where one might fold their robes of death about them and lie down to pleasant dreams" (Pellerin, 1967, p.82).

The handsome New England style buildings, the huge maples that line the main street and the common - the focal point of village activities - create a setting that seems removed from modern North American life. There is no sign of commercialism, and many of the buildings in the village look the same as they did more than 100 years ago. The village has retained its character, not because of any tourist-driven municipal regulations to preserve the past, but simply because it has not developed the same way many other Townships villages have. As one resident explained,

Hatley has no lake, river or mountain to draw tourists. If someone arrives in Hatley, they can't even buy a coffee, much less find a room for rent. A description of Hatley in "The Townships Sun" captures the atmosphere of village life: "The elderly of Hatley often take a walk around the Common, the same as their forefathers did. The environment doesn't change much, and so the people are more acutely aware of the changes that do take place. They come home from their walk, and tell you about the first robin of spring, the tree fallen down in the storm, the leaves of fall, the first frost, the flight of birds at sundown. And they will tell you stories about Hatley as if everything that ever happened in the village is part of their own personal history, and it is" (Townships Sun, May 1976).

The village is particularly interesting as a subject because of its relation to the passage of time and because of the relationship of photography itself to the passage of time. Here in Hatley the sense of the past is ever present in the architecture, the look of the village and the talk of the residents. The photographs catch glimpses of this span of time, giving them the sense of melancholy described by Barthes.

(a) Analysis of Text/Image Combinations

Since the goal of using photographs and writing is to communicate, the choice of how to combine the two media rests ultimately on what type of communication is sought. The goal may be to create an informative effect or an aesthetic one. By knowing the goal strived for and by understanding the communicative characteristics of photography and writing, the choice of how to combine text and image becomes clearer.

The photographs and captions in this thesis project have been assembled to illustrate many of the theoretical points made in chapters 1 to 3, to explore five different ways of combining text and image, and to portray the village of Hatley from an ethnographic and historical viewpoint. The theoretical issues raised in previous chapters are translated here into practical applications in the ways text and image are combined. At the same time, a portrayal emerges of the Eastern Townships village of Hatley.

Since the subject of this thesis only involves the use of captions with photographs, the photograph was always the first medium to be considered. The captions were added to the photograph, not the reverse. Therefore, the choice became whether to add captions at all, and if so, what sort of captions.

The communicative goal and effectiveness of each photograph were therefore primary considerations. The

photograph was analyzed as to its content - whether denotative or connotative, specific or universal. The adding of a caption was used either to eliminate ambiguity or to further the ambiguity already present in the photograph; to add the narrative element missing in photographs; or to add an abstract element to the photograph. The ultimate goal was to explore the combinations of text and image that would maximize the overall communicative effect.

The photographs in the thesis project were chosen as being the most representational and expressive of life in Hatley from among the 470 photographs I took. The captions were chosen either to inform, interpret or add another dimension to each photograph. I aimed to avoid repeating in the caption what was obvious in the photograph, but rather to add information, expand interpretation or add another dimension. I tried to combine text and image in ways which might reach the observer on an emotional, intuitive level whenever possible.

I also kept in mind the many similarities between writing and photography. Both come from the same root; both are two-dimensional media communicated by visual perception; both can be ambiguous, informative and aesthetic. If they are used in the same way together, the result can be either communicative overkill or a reinforcement of the photograph's message. When captions say the same thing as the photograph, they do not add anything communicative but merely repeat what is obvious. This can be tiresome for the

observer, eliminating the possibility of an aesthetic response, but it can also ensure that the photograph's message is well understood.

The photographs for this thesis were divided into three main subjects (People of the Village; Community Events and Views of the Village). The photographs of the People of the Village were chosen to show some of the residents of the village - both young and old. They are shown in their environment to portray the natural setting that is so much a part of village life. The photographs of Community Events show the highly social nature of village life and its openness to outsiders who come for community suppers or the July 1st celebration. The captions expand on this, giving insights into village ethnography. The Views of the Village express the historic nature of Hatley and its relation to the surrounding countryside. The captions enhance this with quotes from a book on the history of the village.

The photographs divided into these three main subjects were used to illustrate the five main types of combinations of text and image prevalent in documentary photography: 1) Photographs of People of the Village (photographs 1a-1f) are used to illustrate the use of a short, factual caption; 2) Photographs of Community Events (photographs 2a-2g) were used to illustrate the use of longer, more descriptive captions that help interpret the subject of the photograph; 3) Views of the Village (photographs 3a-3g) were used to illustrate the use of

captions to add another dimension to the photographs; 4) A variety of photographs from each of the three subjects was chosen in which the subject matter includes words in order to explore this particular device; 5) A sequence of photographs, also from the three subject areas, without captions, but with a list of references at the end, was chosen to illustrate the narrative effect made possible without the addition of text.

In making each choice of photograph and captions, I kept in mind the characteristics of the photograph and my overall communicative goals in adding the caption.

1) People of the Village

This first sequence serves to introduce some of the people of Hatley, for what is a village if not the people who live there? Without them, it is a mere collection of buildings and roads. Together they form the social context of the village, being the inheritors of the village's past and the movers of its present day community life. They are the people who have raised families, gone to school, seen the rise and fall of commercial life. Today, they help run the numerous community events, they keep in touch with their neighbours, they note the passing of the seasons in their gardens and on the village common, and they mark the births, marriages and deaths of the people of the village in the churches there.

The portraits of these villagers make the observer familiar with the social context of Hatley in the manner in which Berger describes as the ability of a photograph to communicate a synchronic coherence and thus, quote from appearances. By freezing a moment of time, the photograph reveals a reality overlooked within the flow of time and expressed by the appearances within the photograph.

The captions accompanying these six photographs are only informative. They tell the observer who the subject of the photo is, what his or her occupation is, and when the photograph was taken. In this way, they set each photograph within time and space, an element that a photograph cannot do on its own. They also reduce the ambiguity inherent in a photograph.

The words in this instance are secondary to the image, allowing the observer to respond mainly to the image. The observer has an opportunity to become familiar with a few of the villagers on a mainly superficial level. The effect on the observer is more likely to be that of Barthes studium, by which the observer merely gets to know the villagers on a fairly superficial level. A punctum effect would likely only occur if the observer knew someone in the photographs, or were reminded of someone in a photograph. For instance, photograph 1e could cause a response on a deeper level than the informative if it reminded the observer of his or her grandparents seated on the porch of their home. This could have somewhat the punctum effect as

the Winter Garden Photograph had on Barthes.

Does it really matter that the people's names, occupations and dates are added? By adding this information, the people in the photographs become part of the mythology of the village of Hatley. In a sense they are caught in an instant of time in the life of the village, and the photograph ensures that they are forever there at that moment. In this sense, they defeat death and become part of the mythology of the village.

The photographs also give the observer information about the villagers on a symbolical level, telling the observer something of the particular culture there. For instance, photograph 1b includes a scrapbook with a Canadian flag, which is expressive of the nationalism of the villagers in holding a Canada Day parade every year for the past 75 years. In photographs 1d and 1e the villagers are shown in their settings, expressing in 1d the close ties to the land and in 1e the New England style homes in which they live.

The limited use of captions also allows the observer to react with greater spontaneity and immediacy than if faced by an extensive caption. For instance, in photograph 1a, the direct gaze and proximity to the camera encourages the observer to respond to Howard Ayer with the forcefulness Barthes describes. "In it nothing can be refused or transformed" (Barthes, 1985, p.91).

2) Community Events (photographs 2a-2g)

These photographs portray two community events - the Canada Day celebration (photographs 2a-2d) and a community luncheon (2e-2g).

The Canada Day celebration is more than just one busy day of the year. It serves to deepen the sense of belonging of these people, because the villagers have worked together for 75 years holding the celebration, a celebration which is popular enough to draw approximately 4,000 visitors each year. It affirms the importance of the village to the surrounding Eastern Townships, and the villagers draw strength from seeing many former residents return from their new homes, perhaps in other provinces and cities, to celebrate the day with them. The celebration is also an affirmation of cultural identity within this English-speaking community, which identifies more strongly with the maple leaf flag of Canada than the fleur de lys flag of Quebec.

Through the details and actions in these photographs - the occurrence of the maple leaf flag, the greetings between people, the old-fashioned costumes, the cultural context of the village is expressed.

In the photographs of the community luncheon - the camaraderie, the working and eating together by the people of the village, the cultural context of village life is also explored. A village is a network of people living in close

proximity, who strengthen their ties through such events, thus gaining a feeling of security through participation.

In this series, the captions take on an equal strength with the photographs, both interpreting and explaining what is going on. The captions do not tell in an outright manner what is happening, but rather allow the observer to discover for him or herself, thereby increasing the observer's involvement. The observer is discovering the photographs and being driven more deeply into them by curiosity.

The captions are all excerpts from interviews with villagers. Their comments relate to the event shown in the photograph. However, their comments are not directly about the photograph, since none of the villagers saw these particular photographs.

Without the captions, the photographs alone would be ambiguous. For instance, photograph 2c needs a caption to hint or tell why these women are dressed in old-fashioned dress. Photograph 2a needs a caption to say why people are gathered together on the Hatley common.

Therefore, the captions resolve the ambiguity of the photographs, but without being overly directive. Instead, the comments of the villagers reveal what is going on, and they add the narrative element which is lacking in a photograph, as Berger explains. For instance, the caption in photograph 2b lets the observer know that the subject is a float in a parade. But beyond that, the caption also adds

another dimension to the observer's experience of the village by describing some of the conflict that goes on amongst villagers in organizing an event. The caption thus adds an abstract element - that of village conflict - which the photograph cannot express by itself. Furthermore, the caption with photograph 2d gives the observer the added information that many people have left the village of Hatley, but have strong enough ties that they welcome an opportunity to return. The expression in the photograph of people communicating warmly with each other is thus expanded upon by the caption. Although the information in the photograph and the caption are related, they do not say the same thing. In this way image and caption are equal, the two together creating a third level of communication in the observer's mind.

The use of the actual words of the villagers also increases the authenticity of the photographs. Here you see the villagers taking part in events and there in the captions you hear their distinctive way of talking about those events. In this way the communicative strength of the image and words are combined to produce a more complete communication than either photograph or caption would have on their own.

Photographs 2e-2g would be banal - or merely denotative - without the captions. They would simply show people working in the kitchen, getting and eating their food. There is a certain amount of connotative information,

such as the casualness of the clothes expressing the easy-going, unpretentious way of life in rural Quebec, but it is in the captions where the connotative information is really provided. From them we learn how the community suppers are organized, people's reaction to them and something of what goes on at them. Other examples of the same approach are seen in books such as "Time in New England" by Paul Strand. Published in 1950, the book consists of New England writings from the past two centuries juxtaposed with the photographs. "Words and pictures reinforce and illuminate one another with synergistic effect" (Newhall, 1964, p.117). His photographs often expressed a lyrical, intense view of people and landscapes around the world. He sought the feeling of the place, the land and the people living on the land.

Dorothea Lange and Paul Taylor in "An American Exodus" used a similar technique by adding captions that were excerpts of conversations overheard while the photographs were being taken. "In all of these, and in many other publications of similar nature, the chief characteristic is that the photographs assert their independence. They are not illustrations. They carry the message together with the text" (Newhall, 1964, p.150).

3) Views of the Village (photographs 3a-3g)

This series of views of the village from the outskirts and from within consist of photographs that alone are mainly informative. A family walks along the main street, an elderly couple works in their garden, the school bus arrives. Others show what the village looks like in its setting of mountains and fields. The photographs serve to establish the environmental context, or natural setting, of Hatley.

However, captions have been added from a short history book about Hatley, adding greater impact to the photographs. These photographs thus gain the added dimension of being about the passage of time and the deep roots of Hatley in Quebec history. Each caption tells something of the history of the village - when it was settled, what the children did for schooling, how food was raised, how the people lived and how religion was practised.

The addition of the captions therefore fills in for the narrative lack of the photographs. Together the present day image and the description of life in the past bring together the nearly 200 years spanned by life in Hatley. Therefore, the experience of the observer to the photographs is heightened through experiencing the passage of time in the photographs. The observer not only learns more about the village but also experiences the passage of time too. Photograph 3b is particularly evocative because of the

backlighting of the subjects, which gives the impression of time passing as these three generations of people walk along a road laid out between 1810 and 1813.

Insofar as photographs are about death and resurrection, as Barthes says, these photographs are doubly so. They are particularly reductive of anxiety by not only arresting time but also through the subject matter of the photographs themselves. The subject matter shows a village that has been largely untouched by time. Furthermore, the solidity of the buildings mirrors the traditional, conservative values of church, home and country held by many of the villagers.

These captions also are more or less equal in strength to their photographs, since they provide the dimension of time. However, the captions themselves are not as expressive as the voices of the villagers in the second series of photographs. The words of people in conversation have a greater authenticity than those from a book because speech is often more revealing than writing. When people speak, they have little time to edit what they say, and therefore, a deeper level of meaning can be expressed that arises out of spontaneity and lack of control by the kind of editing that can take place in writing.

However, in both these series, the captions are not particularly directive, allowing the observer to become involved in the combined image/text. Since the observer is not told how to react to the photographs, he or she takes in

the information given by both media and comes to their own conclusions.

In another example of a similar approach, photographer Michael Lesy combined photographs of a rural region in the American midwest with quotes from period sources, such as local newspapers. "The quotations have nothing to do with the photographs but are correlated with them in an aleatoric, intuitive way, as words and sounds by John Cage are matched at the time of performance with the dance movements already choreographed by Merce Cunningham" (Sontag, 1980, p.74).

4) Words as Content (photographs 4a-4e)

These photographs were chosen to illustrate the presence of words as content within photographs. The photographs were not taken specifically to illustrate this, but were chosen because the words were present in several photographs. The fact that several photographs did include words expresses the extensive use of the written word in our society as a means of communicating beyond books, newspapers or magazines. A sign in the parade proclaims the 75th year of a Canada Day parade in Hatley (photograph 4a); a tombstone, nearly overgrown by grass, tells of an early settler. Some of the signs are merely informative. For instance, in photograph 4e the observer learns the use of this particular building by the sign. Photograph 4c tells something of the village's history. Together they provide the observer with more details of the cultural and social contexts of life in Hatley.

Photograph 4d is the most expressive of village life. By showing two institutional buildings - the church and former schoolhouse along with a monument to soldiers, the conservatism of village life is expressed. It tells of villagers who sent their children to church, to school and when called upon, to war, adding a particularly strong element to the photograph.

The use of words within the photographs tend towards communicative overkill because the observer is told too much

through the combined image and word. Only two of the photographs go somewhat beyond that information, by being evocative of the passage of time (photograph 4b) and of the character of the village (photograph 4d). In 4b the decaying state of the words carved into stone invoke a response in the viewer about death. In 4d, the conservatism of the village is emphasized by the words within the photograph, revealing to the viewer the type of society found in Hatley.

The inclusion of words in photographs upsets the freedom the eye normally has in viewing a photograph. No longer is the observer free to scan the photograph at will, but is now compelled to view it in a left to right manner in order to read the words. The result therefore hampers the potential for an aesthetic response by the observer.

However, on the more positive side, words can add visual interest to a photograph, providing additional impact through the intuitive response elicited in observers by certain types of graphics. Photograph 4b is such a photograph, which elicits a kind of melancholy.

5) Sequence of Photographs (photographs 5a-5j)

This sequence of photographs is evocative in a sense other than through the combination of text and image. These photographs are evocative through the fact that they are combined with other photographs. On their own, each of these photographs is not particularly expressive. However, as a sequence they gain in their ability to communicate. Any number of interpretations can be made in viewing the sequence, each observer interpreting in their own way and each interpretation being as valid as the other.

My own choice of the photographs for the sequence was made to try to express my views of the village. I aimed to express the village's long history, its natural setting, its New England architectural character, the ancestral roots of the villagers, the community gatherings and above all, the passage of time. It is the story of an Eastern Townships village that has attained a mythical character because of its uniqueness in North America based on its lack of commercial life and on the retention of traditional values and also because of its uniqueness in Quebec based on its English-speaking character and deep historic roots.

Although a photograph alone cannot be narrative, a sequence of photographs can be, as Berger points out. Each photograph invites the next one in the sequence and each one affects the preceding and following ones. The observer fills in the gaps between each photograph as does a listener to a

story told them. As a result, the observer becomes particularly involved in viewing the photographs, heightening the possibility of an aesthetic response. Each particular image and sequence of images create an overall effect different in each observer. This depends on the observer's particular experience and memories, all of which he or she brings to interpreting what is seen.

Photograph 5a was chosen to introduce the village - the central role played by church, community hall (or former school) and by the common - a characteristic of villages in England. The huge maples also symbolize the village, for its main street is lined with old maples. That symbolism can even be expanded to the Canada Day celebration, when the country's symbol, the maple leaf, is seen everywhere.

Photograph 5b expresses the passage of time as does the tolling of a bell. Photograph 5c shows the rural character of the village, the central position of the church and the mountainous countryside beyond. Photograph 5d again expresses time through the light cast by the early morning sun and the dog moving across the foreground. The house exhibits the New England architecture. Photographs 5e and 5h again emphasize the New England architecture, the historic character of the homes, and the sense of home - a door being a welcome into a home. Photograph 5f expresses the passage of time denotatively through the use of gravestones and connotatively through the casting of shadows by the early morning sun. Photograph 5g shows an English-style decoration

on a house number, expressing the cultural character of the inhabitants.

Photographs 5i and 5j are juxtaposed once again to show the passage of time and the ancestral roots of many of the villagers. Photograph 5i shows many of the villagers gathered for the community Christmas party, while photograph 5j is a photograph-covered wall in Ruth and Bill Cutler's home, where numerous family photographs are displayed. The two final photographs echo each other, both consisting of small faces looking at the camera - those in the present in the first and those from the past in the second photograph. Together they form a final, strong statement about the villagers - their ties reaching back through time. The villagers here are resurrected on the wall of the Cutler's home and in the group photograph from the Christmas party.

The list of plates at the end provides factual information. The fact that this information is physically removed from the photographs decreases its impact. The information is there merely as a reference, but has little impact on the observer.

In John Berger's book, "Another Way of Telling", a series of photographs without captions is presented with effective result. The captions are only added at the end as a reference. "No words redeem the ambiguity of the images... the reader is free to make his own way through these images" (Berger, 1982, p.284).

Berger writes of the sequence of photographs by Jean

Mohr in another of their books, "A Seventh Man - Migrant Workers in Europe", that the photographs in sequence make a statement that is equal and comparable to, but different from, that of the text.

And Berger also compares a photo story to a told story. The told story has discontinuities between the words and events, which the listener fills in himself. The same thing happens in a sequence of photographs, leaving the observer to join into the narration and become part of the subject. Berger also says that a photograph should attract the photograph that follows in the form of a contrast, an equivalence, a conflict or a recurrence. "In each case, the cut becomes eloquent and functions like the hinge of a metaphor... such an energy then closely resembles the stimulus by which one memory triggers another, irrespective of any hierarchy, chronology or duration" (Berger, 1982, p.288).

Newhall draws attention to the role of a sequence of photographs in giving overall meaning. Documentary photographs, no matter how beautiful, cannot stand alone. In their requirement of a context, a series of photographs can provide this lack. "A series of photographs, presented in succession on exhibit walls or on the pages of a book, may be greater than the sum of its parts" (Newhall, 1964, p.150).

In the famous book, "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men", by photographer Walker Evans and writer James Agee, 30

photographs are presented at the beginning of the book with no words of explanation. "They were, Agee wrote, "...not illustrative. They, and the text, are coequal, mutually independent, and fully collaborative'" (Newhall, 1964, p.150).

(b) The Five Sequences Combined

These five different ways of combining text and image taken together form a sequence of photographs and text that examine the village of Hatley with considerable depth. The social, cultural, historical and environmental contexts of the village are expressed by the particular evocative communicative power that results from combining text and image. On their own, many of these photographs would be mundane - a church, a school bus, a monument - yet coupled with well-chosen words, together they take on a mythic quality that reaches deeply into the community.

Together the five sequences provide multiple views of one reality, giving the observer a more extensive view of that reality. Hatley is not just a quaint village set in the rolling hills of the Eastern Townships - though it is that too. More so, it is a village with a rich life and a rich history, revealed by this combination of photographs and text. By seeing photographs of the people in the village, the architectural setting, the historical character, and by reading the words of the villagers and something of their

history, the span of time and space is expressed in a way that neither photographs nor words alone could do. The place becomes real and the villagers human - they are people who talk of the first robin of spring, the tree fallen down in the storm, the first frost, the flight of birds at sundown as if they were part of their personal history, and they are.

The words were chosen and combined with the photographs to contextualize the individual images and channel the range of community life there. Together they are bound together, making specific what otherwise would have been general.

As Berger has written, photographs nourish our sense of being, confirming our relation to the world. These photographs of Hatley reach the observer because they portray real people living fairly simply in a complex world. The people of Hatley are linked to their past and dependent on their neighbours in a way that has largely been lost in modern-day North America. The photographs and text describe the village in a way that elevates it to a mythical level, reconciling contradictions in our society. The suggestiveness and connotative quality of the words coupled with the photographs produce an effect of certainty, even dogmatic assertion, as Berger writes. The flow of time is broken by these photos - as in all photos, allowing the observer to read across the appearances and see another reality that is normally hidden by the passing of time.

Furthermore, the sequence provides the narrative quality lacking in a photograph that stands alone.

And as Barthes writes, photographs express the passing of time and the relationship between life and death. The Hatley photographs and text are largely about history, expressed by the use of light and the casting of shadows in the photographs. The photographs with their text are a powerful means of reaching the observer because meaning is imposed in one stroke, without analysis or dilution.

Chapter 5: The Conclusions

A photographic study combined with words is a particularly evocative way to explore a village both aesthetically and ethnographically and to express its character. Several types of combinations of text and image can be used to reveal various aspects of life there and reach into some depth about the community - regardless of how tiny or seemingly uncomplicated that village appears to be.

Several conclusions about the relationship between text and image in captioned and uncaptioned documentary photography can be summarized from this study.

Firstly, an understanding of a photograph is needed before a caption can be added. When a caption is added, the reason for its addition must be clear. The reason will then determine what sort of caption is required.

Barthes' distinction between the denotative and connotative power of photography must be kept in mind. The photograph should be analyzed for its denotative or connotative power. Then the communicative goal should be decided upon. If the photograph is meant to inform, then the caption should provide more information, such as situating it in time and place. The photographs, *People of the Village*, are examples of this. However, if the photograph has connotative qualities and the goal is to enhance these qualities, then the caption should not be informative or

directive, but rather expansive. The photographs, Community Events, attempt to do this by adding excerpts from interviews that might reach the observer on a personal level.

Secondly, seldom should a caption repeat what is obvious in the photograph. It should only be there to add information, to clear up ambiguity, to interpret the subject matter of the photograph, or to add another dimension to the photograph. Among those ways the caption can interpret or expand meaning is the use of excerpts from interviews or from books relevant to the photograph's subject matter. In the photographs, Views of the Village, excerpts from a book about the history of Hatley are used to add a narrative quality to the photographs, as discussed by Berger, and to emphasize the passage of time, as described by Barthes.

Thirdly, the caption can ground the photograph by explaining what the photograph is about. This lessens the possibility of an aesthetic effect; however, it ensures that the photograph is clearly understood. The explanation of what the photograph is about often has a moralizing and socializing effect, as described by Barthes. Such captions have often been used to try to bring about social change, such as anti-poverty and anti-war legislation.

Future studies could go into other types of combinations of words and images, such as the use of the spoken word heard while the observer looks at a photograph.

Fourthly, the use of photographs that have words as their content should be used sparingly in documentary photography since they can become overly blatant ways of communicating. However, this aspect of photography deserves greater exploration for this type of photograph combines the communicative strength of an image with the communicative strength of words. The addition of visual interest by the words is also an important consideration. New and imaginative uses of this type of photograph are being probed by artists using photographs as their medium. Documentary photographers could also explore these possibilities to find new forms of expression.

Fifthly, a sequence of photographs without captions is particularly expressive because of the involvement of the observer in reacting to the photographs and in filling in the gaps between them. The photographs gain a narrative quality, as described by Berger, since they become part of a flow of images. And without captions until the end of the sequence, the photographs become particularly open to an aesthetic response by the observer, as described too by Berger. The gaps between photographs and the lack of captions close to the photographs allow the space needed by the observer to find meaning in the photographs out of his or her own experience.

This study opened with a question: We know that a single picture is worth a thousand words. But how do we know which words any given pictures is worth?

In the example shown in this thesis of text and images of Hatley, the answer is that the words worthy of each photograph are those that are an integral part of the subject itself. The words that enhance the communicative power of the photographs are those spoken by the people of the village, those written by a villager about the history of Hatley, and those words enscribed on the buildings and monuments of the village.

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Appendices

1) People of the Village

1a

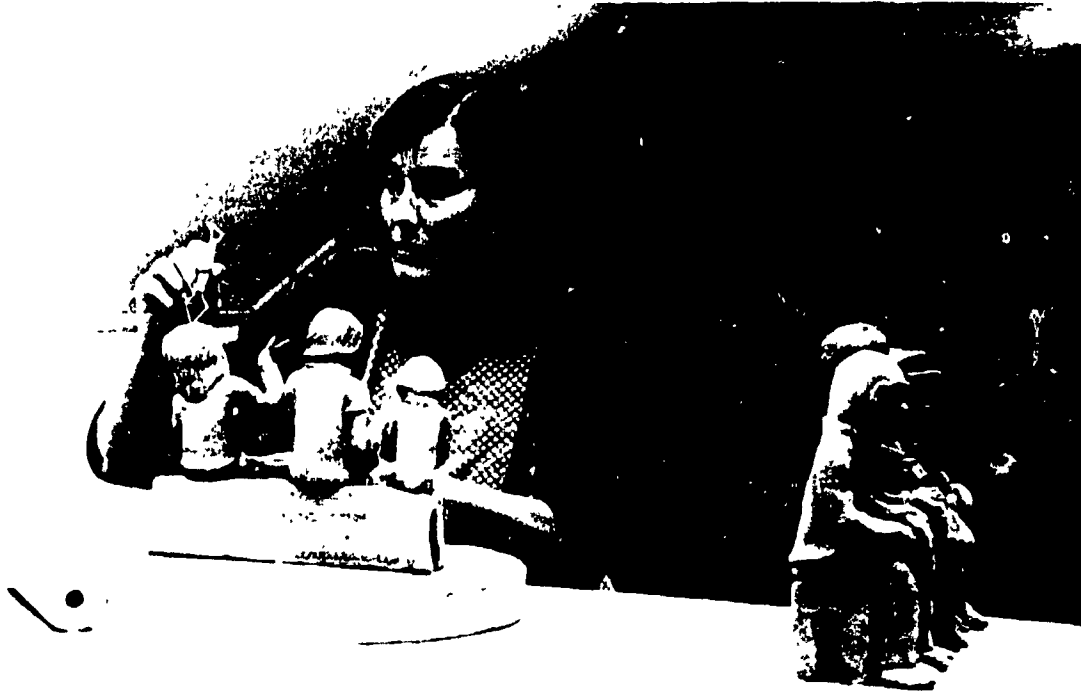


Howard Ayer, July 14, 1987, retired insurance salesman

1b



George Jobel, Aug. 27, 1987, chairman of the Hatley Community Association and retired printer



Loni Todd Campbell, Aug. 10, 1987, sculptress



Ruth Cutler, community correspondent for The Record,
and Bill Cutler, retired farmer and Southern Canada
Power employee, June 23, 1987



Howard Ayer, retired insurance salesman, and Pauline Ayer, home-maker, July 14, 1987



Stephanie Quirion, high school student,
Oct. 18, 1987

2) Community Events

2a



If you want to get in, come about 8 o'clock in the morning, because probably from 8:30 they start, and it's just bumper to bumper. Lots of times the parade is held up because they can't get the traffic in through. Most of the traffic comes up through and parks in the field back of the school. I'd say there's 4,000.

(Ruth and Bill Cutler)



This year everything seemed to fall into place. For instance, we promoted the deal that instead of having all the floats, they should have floats and cars and floats - mix the whole thing up. The other thing we promoted was we should have a sort of an outline as to the judges as to what they're going to give each float in terms of points and this sort of thing, so as to give them enough criteria to work for. And oh no, people said there's no way. So what happened was this year, the people that were asked to be judges said that, yeah as long as you give us some criteria to work with. So the thing fell into place even though I harped on it for three or four years, and I just bit my tongue. The same as the floats - once they did it for the first time, of course they got an awful lot of comments from people outside the association - how good the parade was because they changed the thing. Then they suddenly realized that's the way it should go.

(George Jobel)



It's a lot of work to build the floats. Lately we've had some come from Stanstead. They have a parade there a few days before and they come down with theirs. For the last three or four years, Redikers - the big semi-trailers - come down for it. We have quite a few old cars. The Women's Institutes from North Hatley and Ayer's Cliff; the Golden Agers sometimes. Lots of times you put a lot more into a float than you get for a prize, not counting the work.

(Ruth and Bill Cutler)



A lot of people figure, well, we'll go to Hatley. We'll see our old friends. It's old home day really, you know. A lot of the people that moved to Ontario always plan to be back to Hatley for the 1st. We had a family here two years ago. One of the boys was down and he says, I'm going home, and they were all here the 1st of July. Brothers and sisters. They all rented costumes and went in the parade - big bird and the bear and all that.
(Ruth and Bill Cutler)



The supper's free. There's a basket or a box by the door. You can put in what you want. Sometimes you get almost enough to pay for the meat. The money that is made the 1st of July is what sponsors the community suppers. If it's a casserole supper, everybody brings a casserole and the association will furnish ice cream and cookies or sometimes it may be a roast beef supper, which is usually between Christmas and New Year's. We have to bring the leftover sweets from Christmas. You've never seen such a variety of plates of sweets and cookies. Everybody has a good time.

(Pauline Ayer)



Everybody belongs to the municipal association. It's just the Hatley people. There's only about 12 or 15 that go to the meeting once a month. But then they have a supper and everybody goes. And we have a great age range. One time we had it from two weeks old up to 85 or something like that. It's quite something. Lots of times Howard Ayer's sister comes down from Rock Island and she's 90 now. She enjoys it because she knows a lot of people around.

(Ruth Cutler)

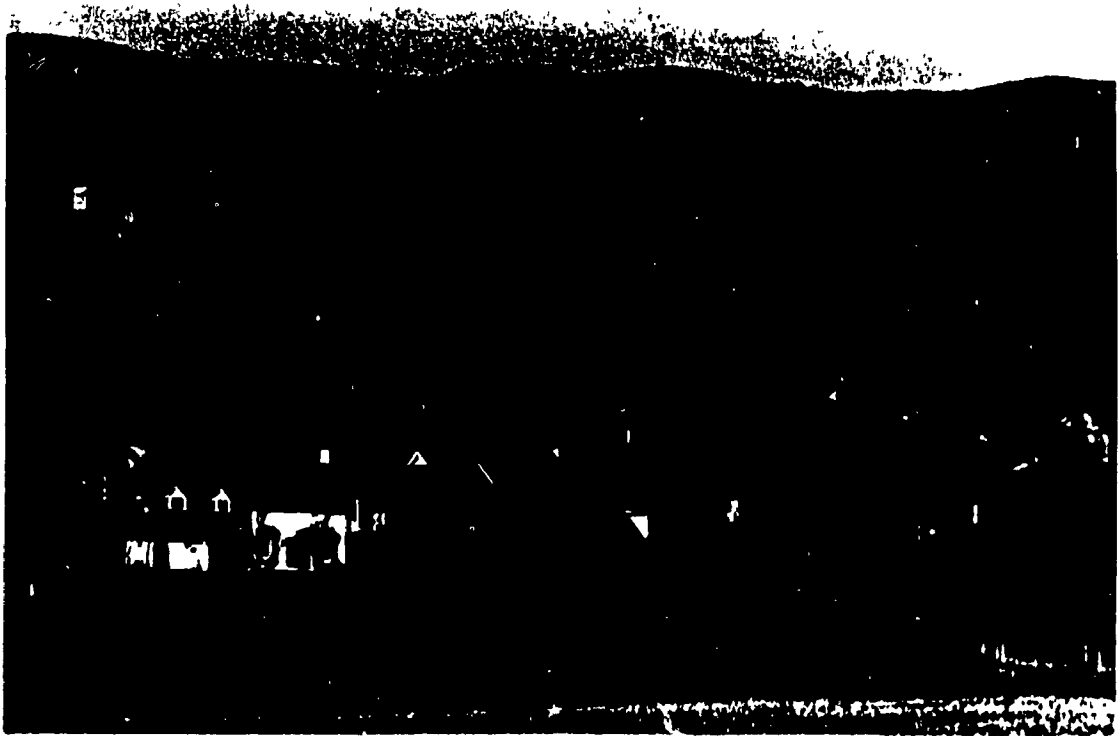


There's a lot of people that haven't shown up. Yet it's worked out very well. You get the same crowd. It's a get together and everybody passes what information that's around and what local news they have. It's a get together and it works out quite well.

(George Jobel)

3) Views of the Village

3a



In 1795 this section was surveyed and divided into lots and ranges by James Rankin who is said to have made a bad job of it, much of it having to be done over in later years. The surveyor gave it the name of Hatley, after a town of that name in England.



The road now forming the main street of the village of Hatley, running north and south, was laid out somewhere between the years 1810 and 1813. A deed of property bordering on this road given in 1810 makes no mention of a road, but a deed of the same property given in 1813 names the road as its eastern boundary.



Mrs. George Hartwell's ancestors, the first of the Leavitt family to come to this section, took up land some little distance east of the present North Road, around the year 1804. Their children walked four miles through the woods, following a blazed trail, to the nearest school. Small children could only attend school during the summer months, as they were not able to wade through the deep snow, but the larger boys and girls went in the winter, when their help was not so much needed by their parents.



The principal articles of food in those days were meat, mostly wild, fish from the streams, corn, which had many different uses, beans, potatoes, maple sugar and milk, if they were fortunate enough to have a cow. In summer there were edible roots, greens and wild berries.



Most of the cabins had a floor of hard packed dirt, with a platform at one side where the beds were spread. The central heating plant as well as the kitchen range, was a large fireplace made of sticks and mud, or of stones and mud.



After a few years they were able to raise various grains among the stumps. These were cut either with a sickle, a curved knife with a small handle, or in later years with a cradle, a scythe to which was attached a frame of wood with long teeth, which caught the grain as it fell and left it in bundles.

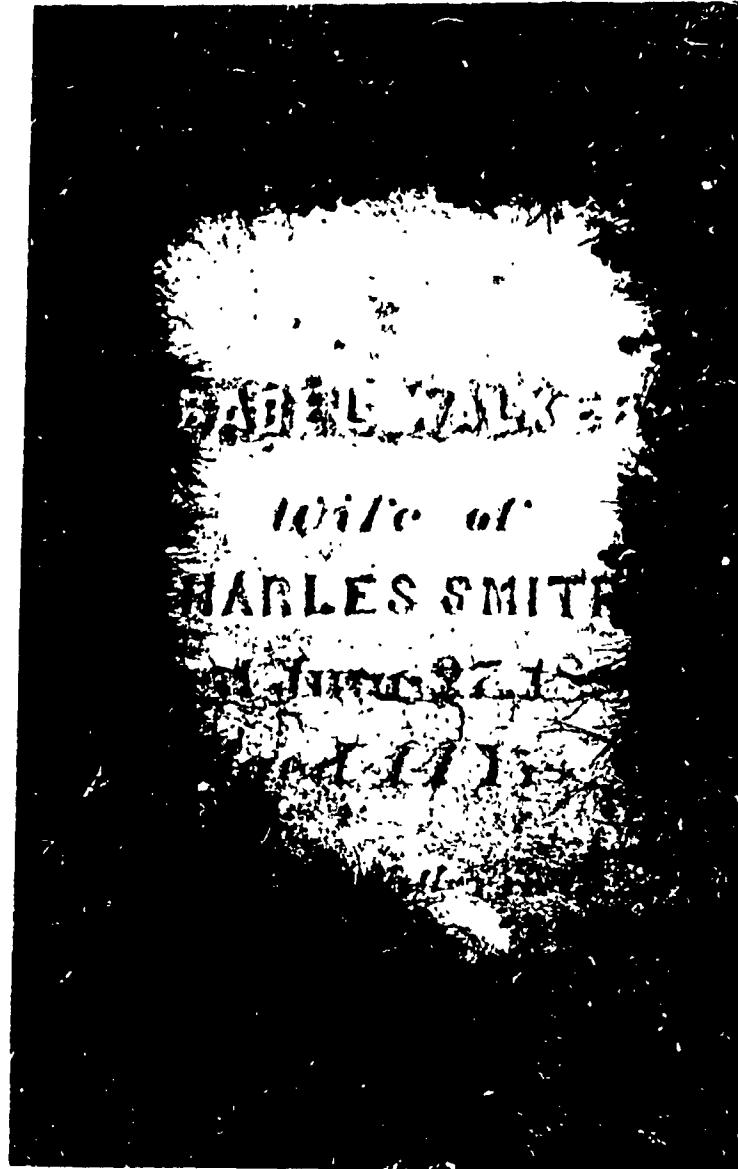


In the main these early settlers were devout and God fearing people. At first when the scattered cabins were many miles apart, there was family worship, with the head of the house reading the scripture and offering prayer. All joined in singing some of the well loved hymns. Whenever possible a number of families gathered in the largest cabin, where services were often taken by travelling missionaries of different denominations, coming mostly from the United States.

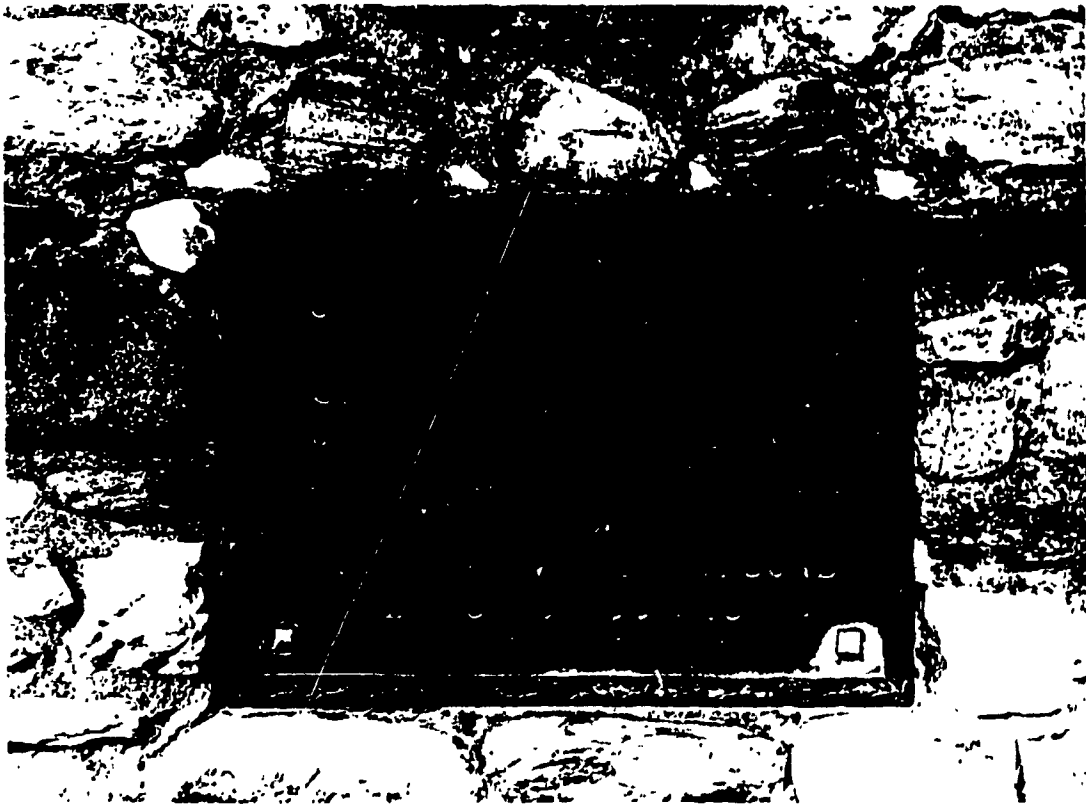
4) Words as Content

4a





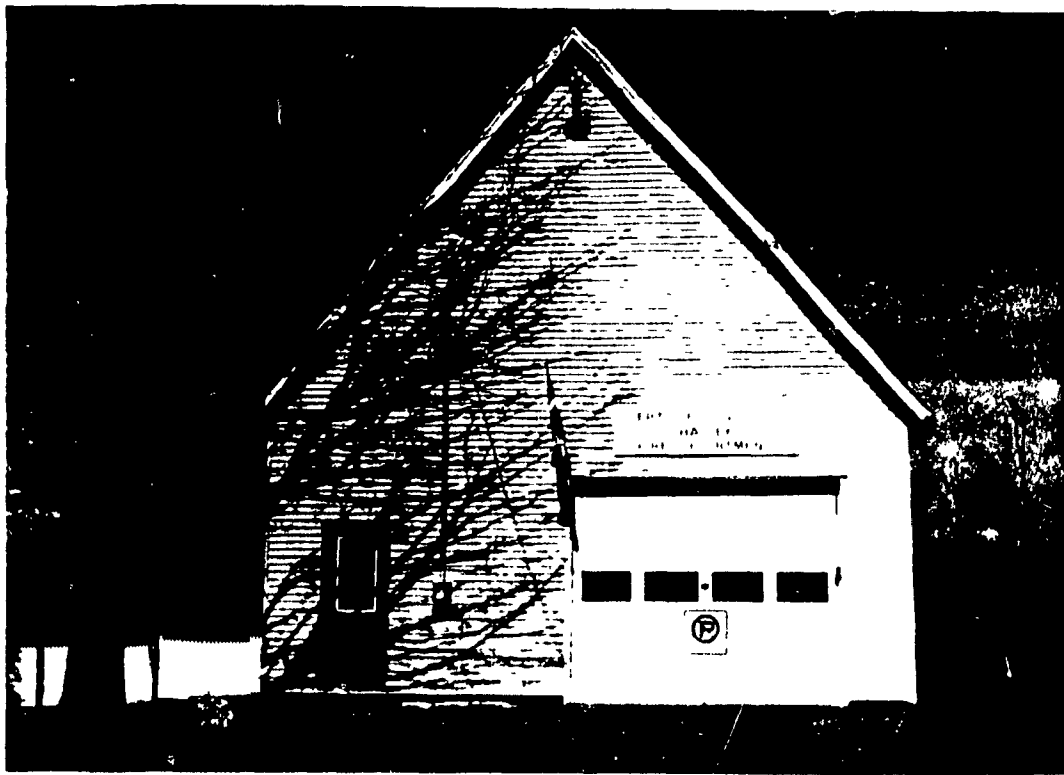
4c



4d



4e



5) Sequence of Photographs

5a



5b



5c



5d





5f

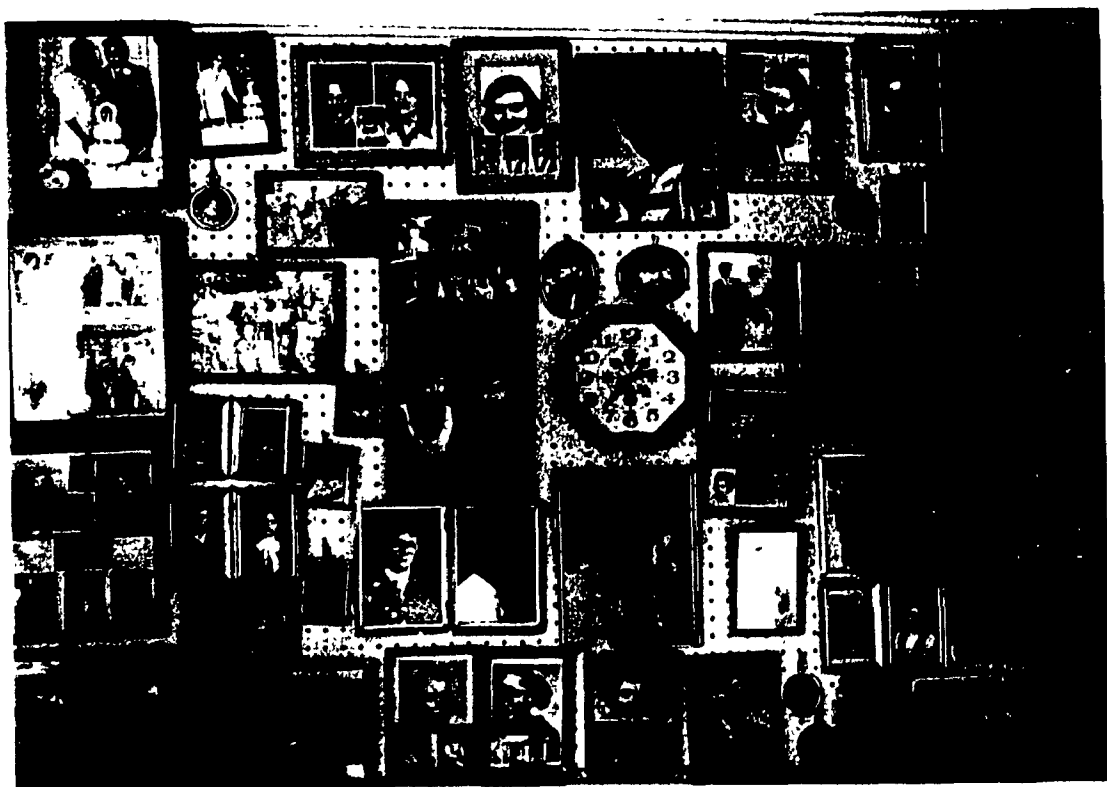




5h







List of Plates

- 5a - Hatley Common
- 5b - St. James Anglican Church
- 5c - Hatley
- 5d - Hatley
- 5e - House in Hatley
- 5f - North Road Cemetery
- 5g - Decoration on house in Hatley
- 5h - House in Hatley
- 5i - Hatley villagers and friends at
Dec. 29, 1987 Christmas party
- 5j - Wall in Ruth and Bill Cutler's home