

Reverend Salton's Magic Lantern

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Long before there were PowerPoint aids for illustrating lectures, there was another piece of equipment that was as much a source of entertainment and education. In the early twentieth century, there were many presenters who used magic lanterns and their glass lantern slides to illustrate dialogue of distant lands, exotic animals, travelogues, etc. The lantern slides were the wow factor of presentations of their day.

Like many institutions the collections at The Manitoba Museum include lantern slides. The greatest number of lantern slides in its history collection, were originally owned by Rev. Dr. George F. Salton. As a noted lecturer, Reverend Salton made numerous public presentations, often assisted by his magic lantern slides and his biunial projector. An article published 29 May 1937 in the *Winnipeg Tribune* states that hundreds of Winnipeg people made his acquaintance not only as a minister but also as a lecturer on art. The nights when he gave a lantern slide lecture on the famous painters were memorable ones.¹ In his history of Crescent Fort Rouge Church, Walter T. Hart records that Reverend George F. Salton, the minister of Fort Rouge Methodist Church from 1913 to 1917, "... was a strong platform man, with a keen appreciation of the masterpieces of Art; owned beautiful lantern slides of many of the world's finest paintings"² which he used to illustrate his sermons. The United Church Book Committee wrote in *A Century of Caring* that his audiences frequently taxed the seating capacity of the Church and it was not an uncommon experience to find every seat occupied 30 minutes before the evening hour of worship.³

Although the exact origin of the magic lantern is uncertain, what is clear is that the projection of hand painted glass images on walls was already a couple centuries old when the magic lantern became popular in the mid-nineteenth century. The magic lantern was composed of various components: the lantern body, which in later versions was typically a wooden exterior with a metal interior to contain the heat of a light source, a smoke stack



Crescent Fort Rouge United Church

George Fletcher Salton (1858–1943) came to Winnipeg in 1912 and was the minister of Fort Rouge Methodist Church until 1917. He retired from active ministry around 1921 and died at Winnipeg.

to vent smoke and various lenses to guide and sharpen the projected image. Over the history of the magic lantern the light source evolved from candles and kerosene burners, but grew in intensity and projection power, with lime light—an oxygen-enriched calcium pellet that burned bright but dangerously hot, sometimes resulting in fires. The introduction of a bright incandescent bulb brought a degree of safety to the magic lantern shows. To direct the light, on the inner rear side of the lantern body a small concave mirror reflected as much light as possible out a front condensing lens.⁴ A horizontal slide guide, mounted on the outside of the lantern body, enabled the lantern slides to be quickly and smoothly introduced into the light stream and likewise changed. Light passed out the condenser lens, through the glass lantern slide and into a projection lens that allowed the image to be focused on a screen 6 to 12 feet away. Although the early magic lanterns were limited to a single projector, later models employed



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The Manitoba Museum

Reverend Salton's magic lantern

two or three projectors that could be focused on a single spot allowing for a blending from one image to another and special effects.

Like the more recent vinyl slide, the magic lantern image is a positive image, except rendered on a piece of glass. Producing sufficient lantern slides by hand for any sort of presentation was originally a tedious task. Fortunately two brothers, William and Frederick Langenheim, invented a process that could mass produce glass lantern slides at a reasonable saving of time and money. John Hannavy says of the Langenheim brothers, that "... they perfected a process of depositing light sensitive albumen materials on glass ... the resulting process, which they patented in 1850s, coming known as the hyalotype."⁵ After creating the image on glass, the image was usually masked by opaque paper around the edge, to highlight a portion of the image, not unlike the process that photographers use in printing photographic images. If a coloured image was desired the positive black and white image was hand tinted with transparent oil paints. Then a second piece of glass covered the print and mask, thus protecting the image from dust and scratches. The edges of the two pieces of glass were bound together by gummed paper. Throughout the history of the magic lantern, the lantern slides could be found in a variety of sizes. Hannavy states that the European standard size was ... 3.25" x 3.25", and it was this format, which became the standard for photographic images, although the 3.5" x 4" format endured in France, America, and Japan.⁶

The hyalotype lantern slide was created in one of two processes, either contact or reduction prints. In an article about lantern slides, by the University of South

Florida, it states that contact prints were made by placing a negative over a piece of light-sensitive lantern glass and then developing the image by exposure under controlled light. For a reduction print, the photographer affixed the negative to a window with a clear view, and photographed the illuminated negative directly onto the light-sensitive lantern glass with a camera.⁷ The hyalotype enabled manufacturers to cover a wide variety of subject themes, for educational purposes, scientific study, and the ubiquitous travelogues that comprise many collections today. Due to this popularity and use of lantern slides a number of manufacturers produced sets of lantern slides to cater to those who made such presentations, with York and Company of London and McAllister & Brother of Philadelphia being two of the largest suppliers. Hannavy suggests that lantern slides as entertainment developed as a separate but equally important entity, with companies creating elaborate tableaux exploring moral and social issues such as the evils of drink, and producing narrative sets of slides to illustrate their themes.⁸

Reverend Salton came late to the use of the magic lantern; others such as John Taylor (1812–1884) missionary and Canadian agent, had made use of this novel instrument of entertainment and learning considerably earlier. Taylor, who brought Icelandic settlers to New Iceland utilized the magic lantern as part of his involvement with the community. Wilhelm Kristjanson wrote of John Taylor's interaction with the Icelandic settlers that "at the Christmas Eve Concert at Gimli in 1878, he showed magic lantern slides of people, places, and animals."⁹

Reverend Salton undoubtedly saw the usefulness of multimedia presentations from the experiences of other colleagues of his era, especially other Methodist ministers such as James Shaver Woodsworth. In his thesis, Eric



The Manitoba Museum

Temple of Dakka ruins



The Manitoba Museum

Amiens Cathedral, France

MacDonald says that Woodsworth, as a senior minister in the Methodist Church in Manitoba, was an experienced evangelist and was preoccupied with the new social ideology that was being developed within Protestant Christianity.¹⁰ MacDonald's thesis mentions that in Winnipeg Woodsworth originated the People's Forum where it became a platform for those like-minded social gospellers who could voice their opinions and remedies to the social problems facing Winnipeg.¹¹ Developing in late 1910 as an outgrowth of the weekly programming of the All People's Mission, the People's Forum covered a wide assortment of topics, both political and social in nature. Woodsworth would incorporate radical new forms of multimedia into the People's Forum. He purchased the materials necessary to include moving pictures in the lectures.¹² Reverend Salton could not help but be influenced by the success that he saw Woodsworth achieving with his approach to the Social Gospel. However, for whatever reason Reverend Salton took a different approach to multimedia; rather depending on motion pictures as Woodsworth had done, Salton utilized a vast resource of magic lantern slides, many of which he purchased in ready-made thematic presentations.

An ad in the *Winnipeg Evening Tribune* for 31 March 1923 showed that Salton used his magic lantern beyond just the pulpit. The ad promoted an illustrated talk by Rev. Salton, at the conclusion of regular services on "The Nile Valley – Its Tombs and Pyramids; ... illustrated by beautiful

photographs."¹³ Many of the lantern slides in Rev. Salton's collection that depict Egypt were purchased from image shops like McAllister & Brother (Philadelphia) or E. G. Wood (London). Typically his presentations incorporated lectures about the great masterpieces of art or a travelogue of beautiful European cities such as a presentation at the University Women's Club on 26 January 1924, promoted in *The Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, "Sunny Italy" when he showed remarkable views of interiors of cathedrals and galleries, taken by himself, and of world famous paintings, making the evening one of intense interest.¹⁴ He was apparently adept at doing them all.

In addition to Reverend Salton's biunial projector, The Manitoba Museum also possesses a large number of lantern slides from Salton's personal collection, among others. In total it possesses an impressive 2,072 magic lantern slides, on diverse topics: insects, First World War, steel rolling mill, Spanish Armada, types of crosses, cities of India, the Canadian provinces, various nursery rhymes, the military, cathedrals of Europe, great masterpieces of art, Canadian Industry, various countries; some groups accounting for as few as three lantern slides on Iceland or as many as 187 lantern slides on Egypt alone. Today, boxes of glass lantern slides are relegated to museum storage shelves awaiting their discovery by an enquiring researcher or museum curator. ☞

Notes

1. "Rev. and Mrs. G. F. Salton will mark golden wedding on the last day of May," *Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, 29 May 1937, p. 15.
2. Walter T. Hart. *Sixty-three Years of Uninterrupted Service: Fort Rouge Methodist Church, 1883–1925; Crescent Congregational Church, 1910–1925; Fort Rouge United Church, Crescent United Church, 1925–1935; Crescent-Fort Rouge United Church, 1935–1945: Historical sketch*. Winnipeg: The Author, 1947, p. 46.
3. *A Century of Caring*; Winnipeg: Crescent Fort Rouge United Church Book Committee, 1983, p. 110.
4. "Curious Matters: The Hocus-Pocus History of Glass Lantern Photography," Yosemite National Park, <https://www.nps.gov/yose/blogs/Curious-Matters-The-Hocus-Pocus-History-of-Glass-Lantern-Photography.htm> (accessed May 2016)
5. John Hannavy, ed., *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography*; New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2008, p. 825.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 826.
7. "About Lantern Slides," University of South Florida, <http://www.lib.usf.edu/special-collections/arts/about-lantern-slides> (accessed May 2016)
8. *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography*, p. 827.
9. "John Taylor and the Pioneer Icelandic Settlement in Manitoba and his Plea on Behalf of the Persecuted Jewish People" by Wilhelm Kristjanson, *MHS Transactions*, Series 3, Number 32, 1975–76 Season.
10. Eric MacDonald. "All Peoples' Mission and the Legacy of J. S. Woodsworth: The Myth and the Reality," MA Thesis; University of Ottawa, 2013, p. 1.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
13. "At Central Church," *Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, 31 March 1923, p. 11.
14. "Society," *Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, 26 January 1924, p. 8.

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