

Patience and Persistence

Information sheet B3

The need for patience in successfully photographing the mountains

It is easy to prove that in an entire year there are only a few minutes, or at the most, a few hours in which the conditions are perfect for exposing a plate. Let us say that only during three months is the ground free of snow. Of these ninety days the large majority will be either stormy, or overcast, or very windy, and the remainder some will be densely smoky, or too brilliant, so that the problem quickly narrows down to a possible ten perfect days. In each of these there will be only one or two hours in which the direction of sunlight is favourable for any given picture, and during these hours only a short time in which the ever-drifting clouds are properly grouped, the water surface unruffled, and the sunlight falling on the foreground, or distance, or wherever you desire it to be.

Wilcox, Walter. *The Canadian Rockies*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1913

Harmon's persistence

One of Harmon's expeditions to Jasper in 1924 lasted seventy days. His group, including the writer Lewis Freeman, explored the Columbia Icefield and climbed the surrounding mountains, often taking the most difficult path to provide exciting photographs. They had been forced to wait eight days for suitable light conditions on Mount Columbia, one of the last mountains Harmon felt he needed for his collection.

It wasn't until the afternoon of the eighth day, after time, food, and patience were exhausted and the pack train had been sent down the valley, that Harmon, lingering behind, caught his image. The light played on the summit for less than forty minutes. At the end of those minutes, Freeman recalled, "The black rectangles of paper torn from Harmon's film packs were piled up behind his tripods like the brass shells around a hard-pumped machine gun at the end of a battle.

Robinson, Bart. "A biographical portrait of Byron Harmon." *Byron Harmon: Mountain Photographer* / Carole Harmon and Bart Robinson. Banff, Alberta: Altitude Publishing, 1992, p.13