

Roger Fenton's photographic van.
He sailed from England to Crimea with 36 cases of assorted photographic equipment,
food and camping supplies just 16 years after the invention of photography to cover the Crimean War in 1855.
credit: TopFoto





The Rise of Press Photography and Picture Agencies 1842-1939

Imagery has always been used as the medium to present an instant message to the public. Indeed the image was used as the written word and today the use of imagery is essential to capture the attention of a reader.

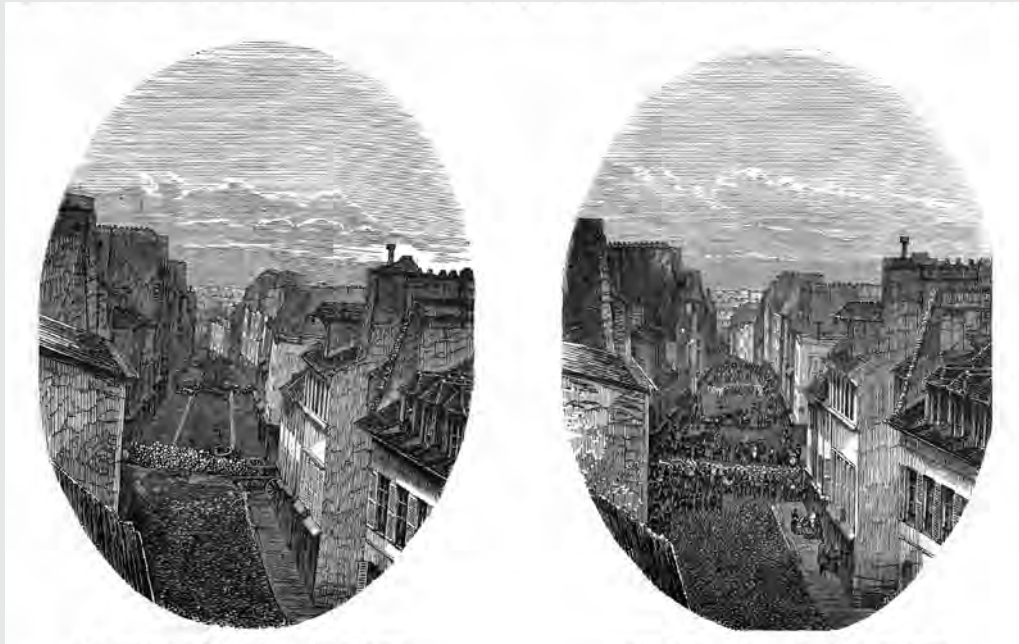
When Johannes Gutenberg invented his mechanical printing press in the 15th century the written word became mass produced but the image was left behind. The printing of images was time consuming and costly so only few woodcuts and copper plate engravings appeared in publications.

In 1842 the UK printer and newsagent Herbert Ingram, with first-hand knowledge that *pictures sell papers*, reversed the trend and published a weekly picture led publication called *The Illustrated London News*. Photography was still in its infancy and Ingram invested heavily in engravers to create the wood blocks that illustrated the weekly news but the investment paid off and circulation rapidly swelled. Similar publications soon appeared around the world that replicated the picture led format. One such publication in France, *l'Illustration* (est. 1843) was in the heart of the invention of photography and during the French Revolution of 1848 a pioneering photographer called Thibault disobeyed orders to stay inside and placed a camera on a roof overlooking Rue St. Maur in Paris to capture 2 daguerreotypes before and after the attack on the barricades by General Lamoriciere's troop on Sunday 25 and Monday of 26 June 1848. He then approached *l'Illustration* with his images and they immediately began work to reproduce them as engravings for publication in the following issue, 1 July 1848. This is the first authenticated use of photographs and considered the origin of photo-journalism. [It is claimed that the first use of an engraving from a photograph in publication was in the 4 June 1842 issue of *The Illustrated London News*. As it was an action image of the attempted assassination of Queen Victoria it can be discounted as the long exposures required to capture this event, using the photographic techniques of the time, makes this an impossibility].

The first instance of a photographic assignment is Roger Fenton's coverage of the Crimean War in 1855. He is widely regarded as the first photo-journalist because he was paid by publishers Messers Agnew and Sons of Manchester. The resulting photographs were displayed in an exhibition of 312 prints and although the photographs could not be published directly many were copied as engravings for publication in *The Illustrated London News*.



Above and right: Daguerreotypes taken by Thibault on 25 and 26 June 1848. *credit: TopFoto*
below: The copied engravings published in *l'Illustration*, 1 July 1848.
credit: Mary Evans Picture Library



It was the invention of the half tone in the late 19th century that revolutionised the printing of photographs just as the Gutenberg press had done for type. Journals and newspapers upgraded their presses and from the 1890's photographs were reproduced directly onto the page and as a consequence many of the estimated 10,000 engravers employed in London, plus the many others around the world (rarely credited for their work) were redundant.

If you search the Internet you will find some examples of daguerreotypes taken during the Mexican-American war of 1846-1848. It is no surprise that one of the largest press agencies that exists today emerged at the same time, *The Associated Press*. AP was founded by five daily newspapers to share the cost of transmitting news from this conflict. Although primarily a text agency the demand for photographs opened up new business opportunities to transfer the latest

An Elopement -
If the "yellows"
had their way cartoon
from *Life Magazine*,
1908.
Yellow journalism
was a reference
to journalism that
featured unethical
or unprofessional
practices
loosely defined
as "not quite libel".
credit: TopFoto



Four members of the White House News Photographers' Association, c.1922
Credit: TopFoto



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