

The Early Days of Commercial Photogrammetry— A Pictorial Review

A display of panels, one for each of six commercial firms in business for over 50 years, was exhibited at the 1978 ACSM-ASP Annual Convention.

INTRODUCTION

ONE MIGHT SAY that photogrammetry became a profession with the advent of aircraft that were sturdy enough to hold a passenger carrying an aerial camera. The photogrammetric technique advanced rapidly during World War I. When that war ended, the United States Government put up for sale a large quantity of aircraft and photographic equipment. A few adventurous entrepreneurs saw an opportunity for the commercial use of photogrammetry. They purchased the surplus aircraft and equipment, and went into business during the "Roaring Twenties." A few of these early pioneers are still in business today.

In the spring of 1977, ASP President Vern Cartwright requested the Archives Committee to plan a project that would present to the membership a reminder of the colorful heritage

ABSTRACT: At the 1978 ASP-ACSM Annual Convention, an interesting display of historic photographs caught the attention of many of those attending. The display consisted of six panels, each assembled as a collage of old photographs by a commercial photogrammetric company that had been in business for over 50 years. The exhibit was organized for the convention by the ASP Archives Committee. Before the panels were returned to their owners, each was photographed for the record. With the permission of the sponsoring companies, the photographs have been reproduced on the following pages as a reminder of the colorful and often hazardous beginning of the photogrammetric profession.

of the photogrammetric profession. The committee decided to approach commercial photogrammetric companies that were at least 50 years old for a collection of early photographs that might be in their files. It was requested that such photographs be arranged on a display panel as a collage or a mosaic or a grouping of photographs from the early days. Plans were made to exhibit the panels at the 1978 ASP/ACSM Annual Convention.

Six of the companies that were contacted agreed to participate in the display. Arrangements were made for the delivery of the finished panels a few weeks before the convention. A special mounting frame was constructed for the exhibit by the Kelsh Instrument Division of Danko Arlington. This frame was designed to fit around one of the support columns in the registration area of the Washington Hilton.

The display at the convention was entitled "*Fifty Years of Commercial Photogrammetry—The Early Days.*" The six participating companies were:

Abrams Aerial Survey Corporation
Aero Service Division of Western Geophysical

Chicago Aerial Survey
 Mark Hurd Aerial Surveys
 The Sidwell Company
 Tobin Surveys, Inc.

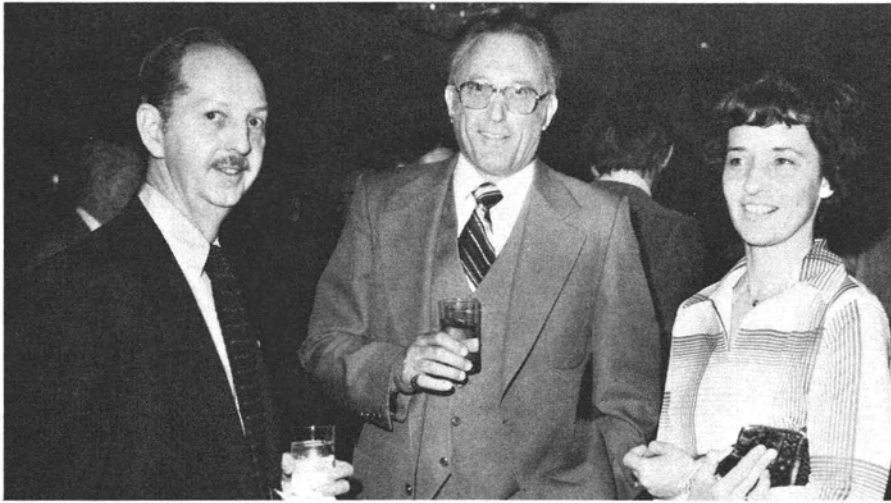
The exhibit proved to be a popular one at the convention. The old aircraft, cameras, and instruments reminded the observer of the colorful and often hazardous beginning of the photogrammetric profession.

In stark contrast to the pioneer equipment in the photographs was the exhibition in the next room of the sophisticated computer electronics and technology that is the state-of-the-art of photogrammetry today. One could only marvel over the remarkable advances that have been made in the profession over the past 50 years, and ponder over the exciting predictions for the future.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Before returning the panels to the contributors, photographs were taken of each panel, and permission was obtained for the publication of the photographs. The Archives Committee and the Editors of *Photogrammetric Engineering and Remote Sensing* thought it only fitting to reproduce these panel photographs in our journal. (See Figures 1 to 6.)

The Archives Committee is grateful to the following persons who were responsible for the research and compilation of the respective panels from their companies: Dr. Talbert Abrams, Chairman of the Board, Abrams Aerial Survey Corporation, Lansing, Michigan; Mr. G. L. Delahanty, Vice-President of Photogrammetry, Aero Service Division of Western Geophysical, Houston, Texas; Mr. Jerry Robinson, President, Chicago Aerial Survey, Des Plaines, Illinois; Mr. Allan Bock, President, Mark Hurd Aerial Surveys, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Mr. Robert W. Meiborg, Aerial Services Manager, The Sidwell Company, West Chicago, Illinois; and Mr. Claxton R. Brown, Vice-President, Tobin Surveys, Inc., San Antonio, Texas.



2nd Vice President McHail (left) and friends at Convention Cocktail Party.



Opening Day Ceremonies draw the attention of our honored guests.

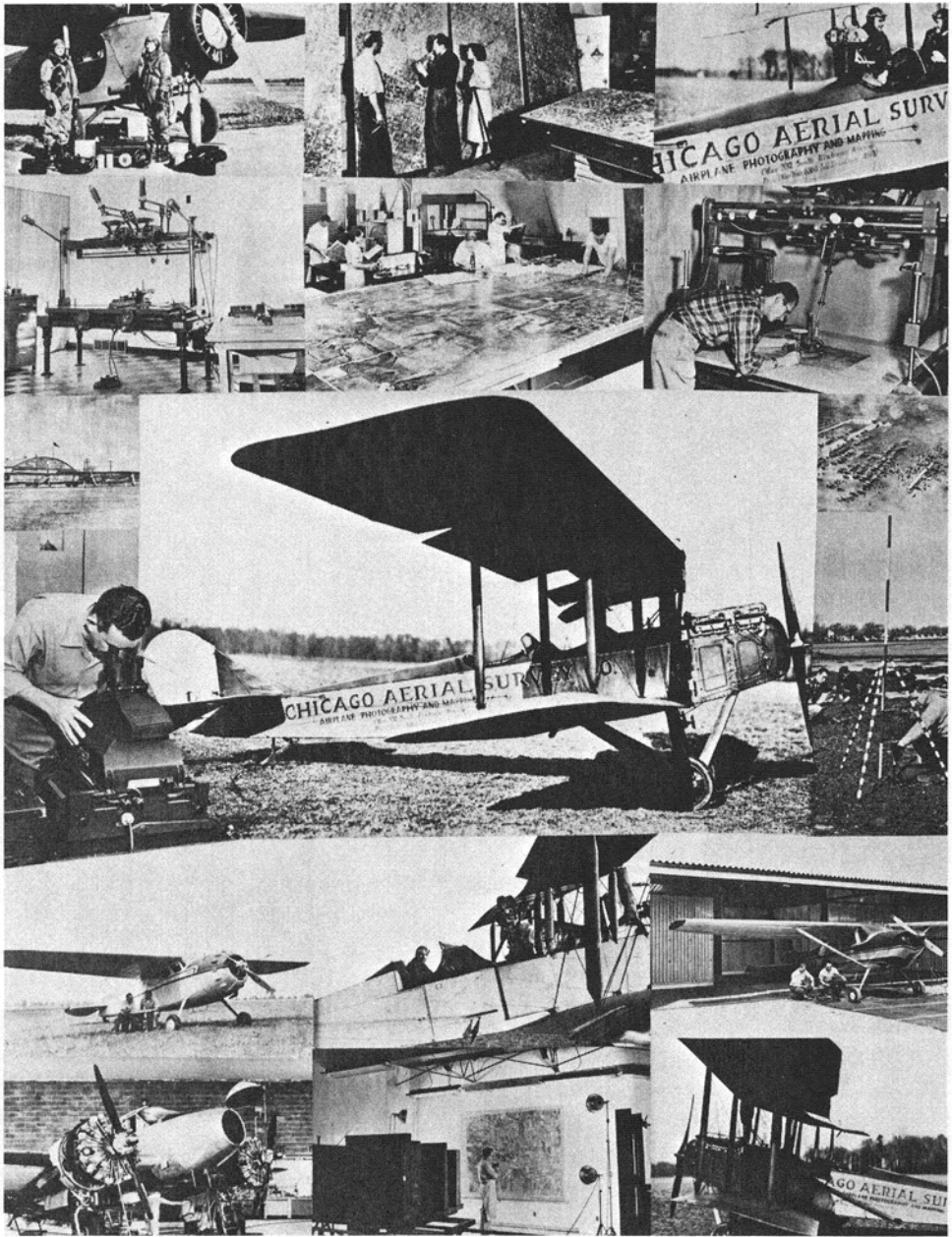


FIG. 2. Chicago Aerial Survey started with a Curtiss "Jenny".

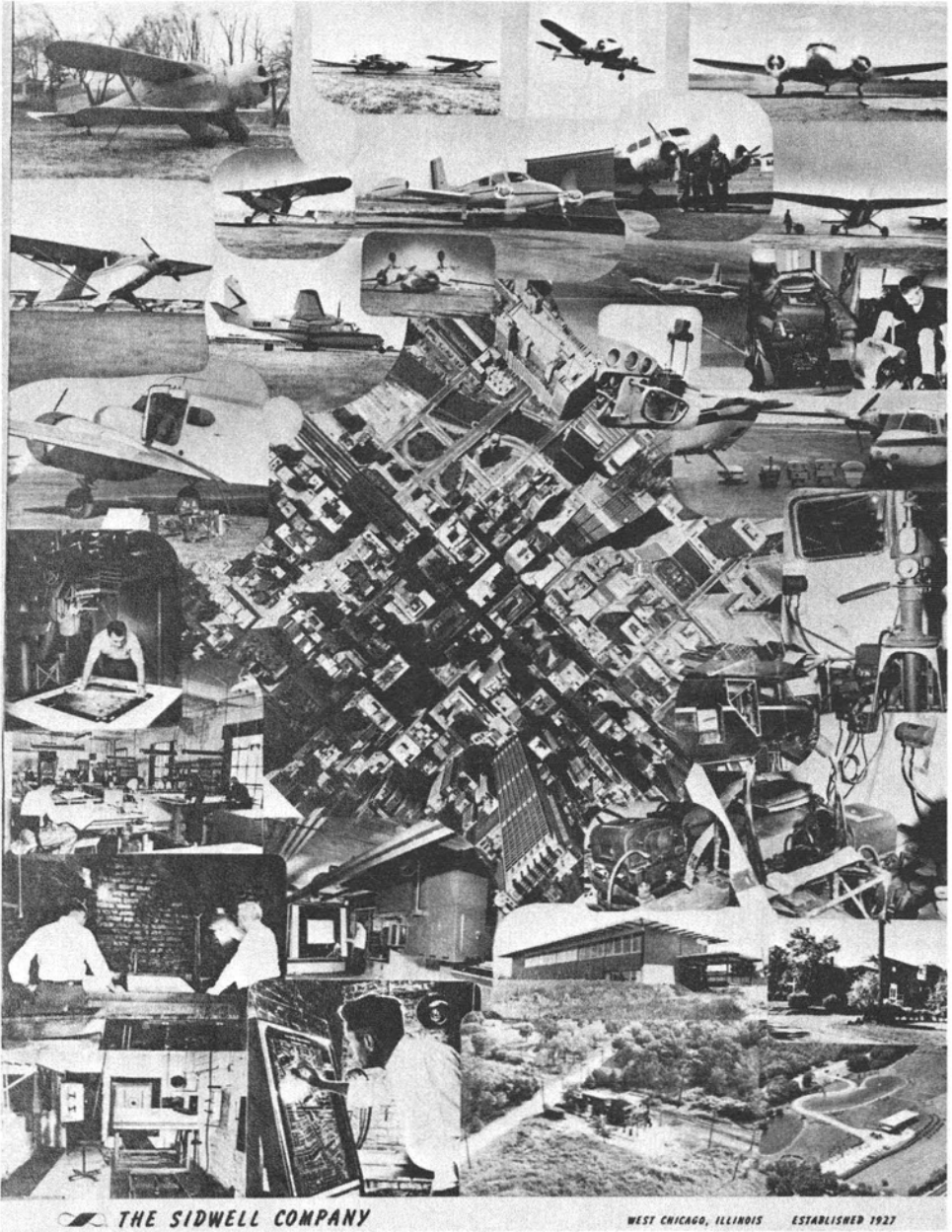


FIG. 4. The Sidwell story surrounds the heart of Chicago.

TOBIN



San Antonio, Texas



FIG. 5. Tobin Surveys had a fleet of DeHavillands.



FIG. 6. The Abrams "Explorer" was especially designed for mapping.