

# Hulton|Archive – History In Pictures

*“An Aladdin’s cave of treasures... the finest in the world”*  
Harold Evans

At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Getty Images merged London based Hulton Picture Collection with Archive Film and Photos, New York creating Hulton|Archive, an awesome visual resource of over 30 million images contained within 1500 individual collections. Complimented by over 30,000 hours of archival footage and up to the minute coverage from our News, Sport and Motion divisions Getty Images now offers unprecedented access to the finest collection of editorial image content in the world.

Hulton|Archive is generally regarded as the greatest archive of photojournalism by those ‘in the know’ showing history in pictures over the last millenium. The Hulton collections are the direct descendant of the seminal British weekly *Picture Post* magazine and Archive Photos can trace their roots to *Pictorial Parade*, one of the oldest continuously operated photo syndication companies in the United States. Together they offer a wealth of original photographic material spanning the birth of photography to the present as well as engravings, maps, cartoons, etchings, lithographs, illustrations and related visual ephemera dating back to the very beginnings of printed media.

In 1937 British publishing magnate Sir Edward Hulton, inspired by the success of the pocket journal *Lilliput* magazine, appointed it’s editor Stefan Lorant, a Hungarian Jewish émigré, to create a national weekly to add to Hulton’s growing stable of titles. The result was *Picture Post*, a publishing phenomenon, which outstripped it’s original print run with a first issue circulation in excess of 1 million. Throughout the war years, *Picture Post* was required reading in Britain - at times its ‘readership’ was reported at over 80% of the population. The magazine’s liberal, anti-Fascist, populist editorial stance, coupled with candid 35mm photography by a whole stable of extraordinarily talented photographers, was a runaway success.

The approach of the magazine was similar to America’s *Life* magazine, which in turn had taken its lead from Stefan Lorant’s pioneering magazine work in Germany in the 1920s. Using the picture essay format the innovative, pedagogical Lorant commissioned articles and photographs on a range of subjects by the leading European photojournalists of the day. In all, between 1938 to 1957, over 9,000 articles were commissioned for *Picture Post*. Only 2,000 of these were actually run in the magazine and the other 7,000 were filed away. Around four to six photographs accompanied each published article, however the photographers regularly delivered hundreds, even thousands of negatives for consideration creating a colossal archive of unpublished often unprinted images which even today offer a tantalising reservoir of untapped history! In addition Stefan Lorant was also busy commissioning a series of articles on the history of photography and on world history, all accompanied by licensed images from around the world.

It was not long before Edward Hulton found himself more and more interested in his growing photographic archive and began actively acquiring new material. Collection after collection was added to the library, including the surviving archives of the London Stereoscopic Company, one of the world’s first professional photography companies; Augustin Rischgitz’ great collection of prints, engravings and early photography; t the renowned Hungarian agent Henry Guttman’s valuable archive of European imagery, and others like the Sasha (Alex Stewart) Collection of beautiful British studio and theatre photography.

By the end of the Second World War with *Picture Post* an established part of British life and the *Picture Post Library* housing an increasingly huge bank of images the problem of properly cataloging them became acute. In 1945 Edward Hulton commissioned Charles Gibbs-Smith of the Victoria and Albert Museum, to create the world’s first indexing system for pictures. Three years later Gibbs-Smith delivered a number of privately printed volumes containing his breakdown for all the keywording and classifications necessary to

catalogue 'every possible picturable image'. From that point on, every image arriving in the library was filed according to the Gibbs-Smith system – a system eventually adopted by the Victoria and Albert Museum, parts of the British Museum collections and remaining current in the Hulton collection until 1988.

Following Lorant's emigration to America in 1940 *Picture Post* thrived into the 1950's under the leadership of editor Sir Tom Hopkinson. A family of famous photographers like Kurt Hutton, Felix Man, and Bert Hardy and journalists of the stature of Fyfe Robertson and Trevor Philpot were sent out with no further brief than to come back with a good story. In one such case, a group was sent to a great country house for several days. The end result was several thousand negatives on four or five different themes ranging from 'What the Butler Saw' to the nature of agri-business in post-War Britain. The story that actually ran was 'A Day in the Life of a Chambermaid' with text by James Cameron and photographs by Bill Brandt.

Similar teams of journalists and photographers were sent off to cover the Korean War from which Hardy and Cameron sent back a sensational documentary about the execution of South Koreans by their fellow countrymen whilst under the guard of British and US regiments. Edward Hulton, with a knighthood pending, refused to run a story that he felt was scurrilous and anti-United Nations and sacked Hopkinson. The end came to *Picture Post* fairly rapidly after that, as editors and journalist alike left the magazine in protest against Hulton's autocratic rule, and in 1957 Edward Hulton folded *Picture Post* magazine and sold the photographic collections to the British Broadcasting Company.

Where the Hulton Picture collection had a contemporary feed of images from *Picture Post* in addition to its positive acquisitions policy, the BBC were primarily interested in using the archive for their own in-house publishing needs and to a certain degree the collections stagnated. However the Hulton name continued to attract collections of national importance. In 1982 the BBC Hulton Library purchased the archives of the *Daily Express* and *Evening Standard* newspapers and continued, albeit in a rather ad hoc way, to fill out its collection of photographs and images to cover all world events.

However by 1988 the BBC had decided to focus its interests on its core businesses and sold the picture archive into the private hands. The new owner, a cable TV entrepreneur, quickly doubled the size of the Hulton by acquiring the Keystone archives, made up of three major Fleet Street press collections and a New York based agency, with over 4 million images in total. The physical library moved from its then four sites to its present location in West London where the millions of images, many of which were over 150 years old, could be safely housed. Staff was hired to hunt through and identify the earliest and most rare images. The process was likened to an archeological dig, uncovering calotypes, daguerreotypes, and carbon prints and vintage prints by 19<sup>th</sup> century greats such as Lewis Carroll and Julia Margaret Cameron to 20<sup>th</sup> century masters of photography like Brassai and Man Ray.

By now it was widely recognised that electronic access was the key that could provide greater access to the collections at reduced costs. In 1990, ahead of all the competition, Hulton and publishers Hutchinson embarked on a joint digital project, the first British multimedia encyclopaedia, the *Hutchinson Multimedia Encyclopaedia* produced on the short-lived CD TV format. It was a first step for the Hulton darkroom staff and researchers to learn the new technology of capturing and manipulating digital images.

This was quickly followed a year later with the *People* disc, employing many keywords from the original Gibbs-Smith classification system. The *People* disc contained 10,000 images of 4,500 different personalities. When we entered 'Churchill' in the free text section, 150 'hits' came up. When we added 'Winston', the result was reduced to 55. If we added 'smoking' we had five pictures and when we then put in 'scheming', we ended up with one picture of Churchill at Yalta with a fat cigar in his mouth, plotting the post-War division of Europe with Stalin and Roosevelt.

Another innovative deal soon followed working with Philips to whom we supplied 1,000 images for the new Cdi generation of players and in return Philips supplied Hulton with expensive hardware, programming time and license revenue, allowing us to create a heavy duty search and retrieval engine. In 1993 Hulton began production of a *Decades* series of discs with Apple. Each disc contained 2,500 images from a single decade of the 20th century. Based on Gibbs-Smith cataloguing systems a unique set of

metadata was appended to each digitised image allowing us to couple images to creative applications, even, if one wished, to find images that had eponymous applications.

In April 1996 the Hulton Collection was sold to The Getty Communications Group, now Getty Images. A year later 'Hulton Getty' launched its own web-site. Developed from our custom-built in-house retrieval system Index Plus, which in turn had grown out of the success of the Decades Discs, and using our staff's expert librarianship Hulton Getty established industry standards for inputting metadata and writing dictionaries of terminology, keywords and standardised caption information.

In 1998 the modest darkrooms were refurbished and under the new title The Stefan Lorant Darkrooms they were professionally equipped to supply another new venture The Getty Images Gallery. Using traditional methods the hand printed, hand retouched, limited edition exhibition prints are available for the consumer and corporate markets and now supplemented with digital prints from our contemporary news and sports files.

2000 saw the beginning of a massive digitisation process for Archive Photos, streamlining the collections to reflect the cream of American and international content. A year later the website was relaunched as [www.hultonarchive.com](http://www.hultonarchive.com) with a quarter of a million digitised assets, offering clients a unique window into the massive analogue files. Today acquisitions continue, the website is continually reviewed, edited and quality controlled and a core collection of e-commerce enabled creative imagery has been made available worldwide through Getty Images mastersite [www.gettyimages.com](http://www.gettyimages.com). In 2003 a migration program began to transfer the digital files from hultonarchive.com to Getty Images Editorial site, sitting alongside a contemporary live feed of news, sport and entertainment images on a fully e-commerce enabled platform.

A massive investment program into the storage of these remarkable and historical important collections has created an Analogue Centre of Excellence where the collections are housed in a temperature and humidity controlled environment with a rolling program of museum standard conservation projects to preserve 'history in pictures' for future generations.

#### **Key Dates**

1938	<i>Picture Post</i> magazine launched in the UK
1947	Hulton Press Library officially incorporated
1950	Gibbs Smith Classification system published in the <i>Journal of Documentation</i>
1957	<i>Picture Post</i> magazine folds
1958	Hulton Press Library sold to the BBC
1988	BBC Hulton Picture Library sold to cable TV entrepreneur Brian Deutsch
1990	First digital product launched
1991	US agencies Pictorial Parade and Frederick Lewis Stock Photos merge to create Archive Film and Photos in New York
1992	The Image Bank acquires Archive Film and Photos
1995	Getty Communications Group incorporated
1996	Getty Images acquires Hulton Picture Collection
1998	Getty Images Gallery opens
1998	Getty Images acquires The Image Bank, incorporating Archive Film and Photos
2000	Hulton Picture Collection and Archive Photos merge to create Hulton Archive
2001	<a href="http://www.hultonarchive.com">www.hultonarchive.com</a> launched
2003	Migration of H A digital files to Getty Images Editorial site commences.