

Additional remarks in re “the left-hand side” problem

In the report of 6/06 we neglected to mention what has already been identified as a problem for scanning on Alta California and The San Francisco Call. While the scanning agent will undoubtedly treat this problem in discussion, explaining how it was addressed, it can be described here from the standpoint of a master negative defect.

We refer to the phenomenon of higher densities and low definition in the frame area corresponding to the left-hand side of the newspaper sheets, relative to filming in the 1A position.

The density difference between the right and left-hand sides is often found to be on the order of one stop or more (log .3 or greater), and the separation between text and background is noticeably poorer in the left hand text column (s). The terms “soft”, “fuzzy”, or “washed out” apply.

After eliminating the duplication process as a significant contributor to the problem we found it difficult to pin down the cause of this defect. It may be a compound problem: uneven lighting across the copyboard is always an issue with large sheets, however the appearance of the material is more suggestive of poor film-plane flatness, lens aberrations, internal reflections in the optics or the camera, etc.

Regardless of the cause, there is little that can be done photographically by way of correction. Printing-lamp adjustments could be made to give more exposure to one side than the other, but this is a trial and error process, involving a lot of testing and densitometry, and it would leave our contact printer out of adjustment for the majority of the duping done here. Ultimately this step would likely not solve the problem in any case, as the higher local density is only a part of the problem, and “hot spots” exist in many parts of the frames, due to weak imprint, etc., but without the accompanying soft focus. Digital enhancement/ sharpening seems indicated, but these are decisions made after the material leaves our facility.

CS
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