

“Enduring Shadows,” (regarding Frederick Coombs) 26 March 1851

(keywords: Frederick Coombs, history of the daguerreotype, history of photography)

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ENDURING SHADOWS.—In no part of the country probably, have our people so much cause to bless the art which has reduced the expense of miniature likenesses to within the limit of every man’s purse, as in California. Separated so widely from many and loved friends, it is truly gratifying to be able occasionally to gaze upon the shadow of their faces. Those of us who are here, know the pleasure we experience through this medium, trifling as it may appear; and we ought to be able to appreciate the value of such little “treasures” to the “friends we left behind us.” Indeed, there are probably few of us, who receive letters from the Atlantic, that have not often been made to know by strong appeal, the interest which absent friends take in these little mementos.—Those who are disposed to gratify the wishes of their friends, in this respect, would do well to call at the rooms of Mr. Coombs, Daguerrean artist, in Wells’ & Co.’s new building. His numerous specimens will convince all that he is an adept in the art, and fully competent to the work he undertakes.

[End of text.]

EDITOR’S NOTES:

A whole-plate daguerreotype in the collection of the Bancroft Library depicts a corner of the Wells’ Co. building. Coombs’ gallery sign, “DAGUERREAN,” is visible in the extreme right-hand side of the image.¹

Although considered “fire proof,” the building was destroyed in the fire of 4 May 1851. Coombs briefly recounts his perilous experience during the fire in his eccentric volume, F. Coombs, *The Dawn of the Millenium! Splendid Discovery!* (New York: F. Coombs, 1869): 44–48.

Additional information regarding Coombs is found in Peter E. Palmquist and Thomas R. Kailbourn, *Pioneer Photographers of the Far West: A Biographical Dictionary, 1840-1865* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000): 181–83.

1. <http://content.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/tf5k40054f/?brand=calisphere>

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