

“Respect for M. Daguerre,” 6 August 1851

(keywords: Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre, Charles R. Meade, Henry W. M. Meade, Meade Brothers, Jesse H. Whitehurst, history of the daguerreotype, history of photography)

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RESPECT FOR M. DAGUERRE.—We have stated that the celebrated discoverer or inventor of the photographic art died recently at his residence in the little village of Brie Sur Marne, near Paris. We are glad to observe that his memory is properly noticed in this City—the scene of the greatest triumphs of the art which bears his name. Nearly all the Daguerrean artists now in town have agreed to wear crape on the left arm for the space of one month, as a mark of regard for the morning star of their profession. It is a little singular that M. Daguerre would hardly ever allow himself to be pictured by his own process, and we have but two or three likenesses of him in this country—those are very fine ones, and are in possession of Messrs Meade, Broadway, who took them while at M. Daguerre’s house a few years ago. When Mons. Daguerre first developed his important discovery, he could scarcely have dreamed to what perfection and universality it would arrive; and even at the day of his death he had no adequate idea of the surpassing excellence of the artists of America above all others of his followers. We seldom see daguerreotypes taken by European artists, but the few that have fallen under our eye would never be exhibited by an American artist beyond the door of the chemical room. There is a picture of Lola Montes at Whitehurst’s in Broadway, and one of Catherine Hayes, at a place which we do not recollect, “Meade’s we think, but they look, among the splendid pictures by which they are surrounded, like the daubs of a boarding-school among the works of Guido and Claude Lorraine. In England, much is to be deducted for a cloudy and semi-opaque atmosphere; in France, where the sky is clear, and the atmosphere pure, the artists are still worse. It don’t take Yankees long to get the hang of any sort of new notion, and beat the inventor with his own weapons, and in the matter of Daguerreotype they have done it most decidedly, as the World’s Fair in London bears abundant witness in the contributions of the artists of New-York.

[End of text.]

EDITOR’S NOTES:

See also “At a Large and Enthusiastic Meeting,” *New-York Daily Tribune* 11:3217 (9 August 1851): 1.¹

Daguerre’s widow responds to this demonstration of mourning in a letter to the Meade brothers. See “Letter from Madame Daguerre,” *New York Herald* [no volume number]:6923 (9 October 1851): n.p. (second page of issue).²

It was the brother, Charles Richard Meade, who made the daguerreotypes of Daguerre. A contemporary provides additional details:

It may not be generally known, that Daguerre had so strong an objection to having his portrait taken, that he never (it is believed) sat to but one photographer; and this was our countryman, Charles R. Meade, of the firm of Meade Brothers, in New York. Mr. Meade being in France, in 1848, visited Daguerre's Chateau, at Brie-sur-Marne, for the purpose of taking his portrait,—not being aware of Daguerre's objection to being thus represented. Mr. Meade's request was politely but firmly negatived, as had been the request of many others,—among them two artists from the United States. Eventually, however, through the urgent persuasion of his wife and niece, Daguerre was induced to sit, and five or six daguerreotypes of him were taken by Mr. Meade, from which numerous copies were afterwards produced in the various modes of representation. The artist also took a daguerreotype of Daguerre's Chateau at this time.³

The Meade portraits of Daguerre are discussed in Rita E. Bott, "The Daguerre Portraits by Meade—A Review and a Discovery," *Daguerreian Society Newsletter* 22:1 (January—March 2010): 6–10. Matthew R. Isenburg also discussed the Meade portraits of Daguerre in the lecture, "The Many Faces of Daguerre," presented during PhotoHistory XIV—The 14th Triennial Symposium on the History of Photography, 2009, and also presented during The Daguerreian Society Symposium, 2009.

One of the Meade daguerreotypes of Daguerre is viewable on the web site of the J. Paul Getty Museum.⁴

Three illustrations of Daguerre, derived from the portraits by Meade, are among the graphics provided in this web site.⁵

At the time of this writing, the editor is engaged in extensive research regarding Robert H. Vance and his collection of three hundred full plate daguerreotypes of California. It was on this day that Vance, along with the collection, arrived in New York aboard the steamer "Empire City" (after a thirty-six day journey via the Isthmus of Panama). The exhibition at 349 Broadway would open exactly two months later.

If Vance had read this newspaper, this is likely the first he would have heard regarding the death of Daguerre. Perhaps Vance joined with the New York daguerreotypists in wearing crepe on the left arm in honor of Daguerre.

It should be remembered that Vance initially intended to exhibit the collection at the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London. Reading the last sentence of this text would have been an additional, disappointing reminder of his inability to do so.

1. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/N8510034_MOURNING_NYD-TRIB_1851-08-09.pdf

2. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/N8510031_MADAM-DAGUERRE_NY-HERALD_1851-10-09.pdf

3. M. A. Root, *The Camera and the Pencil; or the Heliographic Art* (Philadelphia: M. A. Root, 1869): 385.

4. <http://www.getty.edu/art/gettyguide/artObjectDetails?artobj=39402>

5. <http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/graphics-portraits.html>

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