

“John H. Fitzgibbon . . . passes away,” (published) 15 August 1852

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DIED OF HEART DISEASE.

**John H. Fitzgibbon, the Well-Known
Photographer, Passes Away.**

**His Unexpected Demise in a Sleeping-Car While En
Route East—An Eventful Career—The Re-
mains Brought Home for Inter-
ment—Funeral of the Late
Erskine E. Curtis.**

The remains of the late John H. Fitzgibbon, editor and proprietor of the Practical Photographer, who died in a sleeping-car between Dayton and Xenia, O., while on his way East in company with his wife last Saturday night, were brought to the city over the Vandalia Road yesterday morning, and are now at the Smithers' undertaking establishment. The body has been embalmed, and friends desiring to have a last look at the features of the deceased can do so by visiting the undertaker's to-day or to-morrow forenoon.

Mr. Fitzgibbon had been in excellent health and spirits of late. He left this city on the 4th of Indianapolis, where he remained until last Saturday in attendance as a delegate at the annual meeting of the Photographers' association of America. His wife was with him in Indianapolis, and left that city with him for his usual summer trip through the East. About 11:40 p.m. Saturday, while in his berth, he complained of being faint. Water was given him, the windows thrown up, a telegram sent to Xenia to have a physician in readiness when the train arrived, and every attention was paid and precaution taken to provide for his comfort and relief. He died, however, in twenty minutes. A post-mortem held in Xenia showed that the cause of his death was heart disease.

AN EVENTFUL CAREER.

Mr. Fitzgibbon was born in London, as he was fond of saying himself, “within the sound of the Bow bells.” His father, Michael Fitzgibbon, removed the family while the subject of this sketch was still young to America, and settling down in New Yorks became a well-to-do ship chandler. John's sister became a religious and is now Superioress of the Catholic Foundling Asylum in New York City. The deceased, when he became old enough to begin to think of striking out for himself, went to Philadelphia,

where he entered John Kelch's saddlery as an apprentice, remaining there until he had learned his trade. While there he married Miss Amelia Albright, who died suddenly in this city during the war, leaving him five daughters and one son, all of whom are still living. From Philadelphia he removed to Lynchburg, Va., where he kept a hotel until he heard of Daguerre's discovery, which was publicly announced in 1839, when he became interested, and went into the picture-taking business. He was successful, and after a few years removed West, sailing down the Ohio and making his way up to St. Louis, where, about thirty years ago, he opened a photograph gallery on Fourth, between Market and Chestnut streets. Afterward he had the largest gallery then in the city, having taken the sixteen rooms in the upper part of the house in which David Nicholson kept his store at the corner of Fourth and Market streets. He remained here until shortly before the breaking out of the war, when he went to Vicksburg and opened a gallery. The troubles in and around that place, and particularly the siege of Vicksburg, which occurred while he was in the beleaguered city, made him desirous of seeking more peaceful quarters. He tried to run the blockade, but was captured with others and taken to Cuba. After his release he went to New York, where Dan Bryant, the minstrel who married Mr. Fitzgibbon's eldest daughter, set him up in business. There he married Miss Louisa M. Dennis, of Buffalo, who is left to mourn his loss. Returning to St. Louis in 1869 he opened a gallery on Fourth near Pine, which we kept until the buildings were torn down to make room for the fine stone-fronts erected on their sites by the Lucases. About six years ago he retired from the business, turning his gallery at 927 Olive street, over to his wife, who ran it until about a year ago, when she sold the place. When Mr. Fitzgibbon retired from active gallery work he had begun the publication of the Practical Photographer, a monthly magazine, when he succeeded in firmly establishing and making very popular throughout the country.

THIS PUBLICATION WILL BE CONTINUED

by Mrs. Fitzgibbon. The deceased was in his 65th year and the oldest photographer except one in the United States. He was President of the St. Louis Photographers' Association, a member of the Press Club, and an honorary member of the Historical Society. Fitzgibbon was in every sense a modern man, full of the spirit of the day and ready to take a lively interest in every improvement made or suggested in his business. He was among the first to favor the dry-plate process and prophesied, when it was yet in infancy, that it would be the process of the future. This prophecy has already been realized. The deceased resided at 807 Pine street, His daughter, Mrs. Bryant, resides in New York; the second daughter, Mollie, is married to Wm. L. Cruikshank, manager of the James M. McCreery's dry goods store, New York; the third, Kate, to Wm. A Cranch, in business in this city; the fourth, Louise, to Mr. F. W. Peebles, in this city, and the youngest, Albertine, to Mr. John Smith, of Dubuque. His son, John C. Fitzgibbon, is in the railroad business here.

Last night the St. Louis Photographers' Association met at R. Benecke's gallery, Fourth and Market streets, and passed resolutions deploring the death of their President, and expressive of the greatest esteem and respect for his memory. The funeral will take place from the family residence at 1:30 p.m. to-morrow, leaving the Cathedral at 2 p.m. for Bellefontaine Cemetery, where the dead photographer will be laid to rest in the same grave with his first wife.

[End of text.]

EDITOR'S NOTES:

To state specifically what is referenced in this notice, Fitzgibbon's death occurred 12 August 1882.

A three-stanza memorial poem for Fitzgibbon is in Richard Smith Elliott, *Notes Taken in Sixty Years* (St. Louis: R. P. Studley & Co., 1883): 204.¹

A brief profile of Fitzgibbon, with wood engraving portrait illustration, is found in "J. H. Fitzgibbon, of St. Louis," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (New York) 4:92 (5 September 1857): 213.² See also the profile in "Fitzgibbon's Gallery," J. N. Taylor and M. O. Crooks, *Sketch Book of Saint Louis*. (St. Louis: George Knapp & Co., 1858): 311–14.³

Additional information regarding Fitzgibbon is found in Bonnie Wright, "This Perpetual Shadow-Taking: The Lively Art of John Fitzgibbon," *Missouri Historical Review* 76:1(October 1981): 22–30; Delores A. Kilgo, "Fitzgibbon, John (1817–1882)," Lawrence O. Christensen, edit. *Dictionary of Missouri Biography* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999): 301–2; Peter E. Palmquist and Thomas R. Kailbourn, *Pioneer Photographers from the Mississippi to the Continental Divide: A Biographical Dictionary, 1839–1865* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005): 254–59.

1. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/B8830001_ELLIOTT_SIXTY-YEARS_1883.pdf

2. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8570002_FITZGIBBON_BIO_LESLIES_1857-09-05.pdf

3. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/B8580003_SKETCH-BOOK_FITZGIBBON_1858.pdf

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