

“Mr. Vance’s California Views,” November 1851

(keywords: Robert H. Vance, lost daguerreotypes, three hundred daguerreotypes, history of the daguerreotype, history of photography.)

THE DAGUERRETYPE: AN ARCHIVE OF SOURCE TEXTS, GRAPHICS, AND EPHEMERA

The research archive of Gary W. Ewer regarding the history of the daguerreotype

<http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org>

EWER ARCHIVE P8510002

Published in:

Photographic Art-Journal (New York) 2:4 (October 1851): 252–3.

—MR. VANCE’S CALIFORNIA VIEWS.—

This collection comprises a complete panorama of the most interesting scenery in California. There are over three hundred daguerreotypes so arranged that a circuit of several miles of scenery can be seen at a glance. They are most artistic in design, and executed with a skill, evincing, not only a perfect mastery of the manipulatory art, but an exquisite taste for the sublime and beautiful. On looking upon these pictures, one can almost imagine himself among the hills and mines of California, grasping at the glittering gold that lies before him; wandering over the plains, along the beautiful rivers that flow into the California gulf, or through the streets of San Francisco, Sacramento and Monterey.

Almost every variety of scenery is presented to the view. Three or four hours can be very profitably and amusingly spent in studying Mr. Vance’s collection, and no Daguerreotypist, visiting the city of New York should neglect the opportunity of seeing one of the most interesting exhibitions of Daguerreotypes ever presented to the inspection of the public, in any country. Persons contemplating a trip to the gold regions should also avail themselves of Mr. Vance’s instructions, as he is intimately acquainted with all the places of note in California, and takes pleasure in imparting any information desired by his visitors.

Since writing the above, we have received the following testimony to the excellence of Mr. Vance’s Daguerreotypes, from one of our best landscape painters.

“I have seen nearly all of the painted panoramas that have been before the public for the last six years, and have frequently had occasion to express my delight at the many artistic beauties which they possessed.

“Form, in color, is perhaps the greatest charm upon which the eye can dwell, therefore a panorama in distemper colors, should be considered of paramount importance to one produced by the Daguerreotypes. We speak understandingly on this subject, and do not hesitate to say that Mr. Vance’s views of California created in us a greater degree of admiration than did Banvard’s or Evers’ great productions of the Mississippi and noble Hudson.

“Detail, with general effect, should be the principal aim of all artists, and if any desire to see this achieved to the highest state of perfection, let them all and examine the three hundred and one productions of Mr. Vance.

“Not a blade of grass, nor the most minute pebble—hardly perceptible to the naked eye—nor the fibres of the bark of the tree—nor the myriads of tinny leaves that compose the clustering foliage—nor the silver stretches in the zig-zag ripple of the water as it

glides gently on, or meanders among the rocks, washing up in its passage the little spangles of gold which have made California the great attraction of the whole world—but are wonderfully portrayed in these pictures in miniature most incomparable.

“Some of the pictures, so far as wild and romantic scenery and the general effect of the lights and shadows—the water especially, so life like in its reflections—are concerned, are the finest studies an artist can have from which to practice his pencil.

“There is one in particular, having in it a fallen tree over three hundred feet in length, sharp, angular rocks, &c., which we have no hesitation in saying, is the finest daguerreotype view ever taken.

“The pictures of Panama are also beautiful, and the one of the old cathedral, an edifice created at least two hundred years ago, is alone well worth the price of admission. In fact the whole collection reflects the highest credit on the artistic ability and indefatigable exertions of Mr. Vance. I sincerely hope that the expenditure of at least three thousand dollars, and a year of the prime of his life, to say nothing of his hardships, devoted to the advancement of his art and the gratification of the public, will be speedily and amply rewarded. Mr. Vance’s exhibition rooms are at the corner of Leonard street and Broadway, over Mr. Whitehurst’s gallery.”

[End of text.]

EDITOR’S NOTES:

Other reviews of Vance’s exhibition of California daguerreotypes are: *Literary World* (New York) 9:246 (18 October 1851): 311;¹ “Vance’s California Views,” *United States Magazine, and Democratic Review* (New York) 29:161 (November 1851): 480;² “Daguerreotype Panoramic Views in California,” *Daguerreian Journal* (New York) 2:12 (1 November 1851): 371.³

The exhibition was not well publicized. This author is aware of very limited runs of advertisements appearing in two newspapers: the *New-York Tribune*, and the *New-York Times*.⁴

A pamphlet catalogue accompanied the exhibition of views: Robert H. Vance, *Catalogue of Daguerreotype Panoramic Views in California* (New York: Baker, Goodwin & Company, 1851). The catalogue includes 131 entries; many entries are for multiple-plate views.⁵

Additional information regarding Vance and his collection of California daguerreotypes is found in Delores Kilgo, “Vance’s Views in St. Louis: An Update,” *Daguerreian Annual 1994* (Pittsburgh: The Daguerreian Society, 1994): 210–2; Peter Palmquist, “The Sad but True Story of a Daguerreian Holy Grail,” in Drew Heath Johnson and Marcia Eymann, ed., *Silver & Gold: Cased Images of the California Gold Rush* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1998): 43–73; Peter E. Palmquist and Thomas R. Kailbourn, *Pioneer Photographers of the Far West: a Biographical Dictionary, 1840–1865* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000): 559–566.

1. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8510003_VANCE_LIT_WORLD_1851-10-18.pdf

2. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8510004_VANCE_US_MAG_DEMO_REVIEW_1851-11.pdf

3. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8510001_VANCE_DAG_JOURN_1851-11-01.pdf

4. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/N8510001_VANCE_NY_TIMES_1851-10-07.pdf

5. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/F8510001_VANCE_CATALOGUE_DAG_VIEWS_1851.pdf

EWER ARCHIVE P8510002

URL: http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8510002_VANCE_PHOTO_ARTJOURN_1851-10.pdf

Document author: Gary W. Ewer

Creation date: 2008-08-12 / Last revision: 2012-05-11

Citation information: *Photographic Art-Journal* (New York) 2:4 (October 1851): 252–53.

Prepared from: photocopy from microfilm

Original spelling/punctuation/grammar generally maintained without correction. Any in-text corrections are bracketed.

The *source text* is Public Domain and may be freely quoted. As noted below, this document is copyright.

If citing directly from this document, please reference the Ewer Archive number and provide the following citation credit:

Gary W. Ewer, ed., *The Daguerreotype: an Archive of Source Texts, Graphics, and Ephemera*, <http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org>

THE NECESSARY DISCLAIMERS:

The document creator has made every effort to insure the accuracy of the transcription. However, the information provided in this document is provided without warranty, either express or implied. The document creator will not be liable for any damages caused or alleged to be caused directly, indirectly, incidentally, or consequentially by the information provided by this text.

The document creator assumes no responsibility for accuracy of fact; the text is prepared “as found.” Factual inaccuracies of the original text are generally **not** noted by the document creator. If this text is used in academic papers, accuracy should be confirmed by consulting original sources.

The document creator also assumes no responsibility regarding the correctness, suitability, or safety of any chemical or photographic processes that may be described by this text. Many of the chemicals used in early photographic processes are extremely toxic and should not be handled without a *thorough* knowledge of safe use.

The opinions expressed in this text are solely those of the original author and are not necessarily those of the Archive editor. Some texts may contain derogatory words. Any such word is certainly one that would not be used today. The words remain in the transcription, however, to maintain truthfulness to the original text.

© 2008, Gary W. Ewer. <http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org>
