

"At a Large and Enthusiastic Meeting," August 1851

(keywords: Daniel E. Gavit, S. E. Barker, Gabriel Harrison, Mathew B. Brady, Charles R. Meade, Henry W. M. Meade, William H. Perry, Silas Wright Selleck, James Perry, Andrew W. Paradise, James P. Weston, Mr. Stansbury [Joseph B. Stanbury], fifty-cent daguerreotypes, history of the daguerreotype, history of photography)

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Photographic Art-Journal (New York) 2:2 (August 1851): 123–24. The final two paragraphs are editorial comment on the preceding.

—AT A LARGE AND ENTHUSIASTIC MEETING OF THE DAGUERREOTYPISTS of New York and Brooklyn, held at Brady's Gallery, on the 8th inst., for the purpose of responding to a call made by the Syracuse Convention, D. E. GAVIT was called to the Chair, and S. E. BARKER chosen Secretary.

Mr. Gabriel Harrison called the meeting to order, and said, that the object of this meeting was to make a response to the Syracuse call for a Convention, to be held at Utica on the 20th of August, the purpose of which Convention—as we understand it—is to organize both a State and National Daguerrean Association; which associations are to look after the great good of the profession,—to meet occasionally in scientific organization, there to take into consideration the mysteries of our beautiful art, to promulgate all improvements, and to do away with all secrecy and petty jealousy; for one and all to fraternise, to make strong a bond of union, and, if possible, to have a moderate, and but one standard price for pictures throughout the length and breadth of the land.

Now, gentlemen, these things appear to me highly necessary—and as I expect to devote the rest of my life to the profession, I cannot help but feel a deep interest in the matter,—therefore I took the liberty of calling you all together. And it is really gladsome to see so many of the most worthy of the art here assembled, to take into consideration the construction of the new edifice, which I hope is soon to be finished and dedicated to our already famous profession. But, in putting together an edifice, particular attention must be paid to its foundation, for unless the commencement is good the whole will soon totter, and, in its fall to ruin, crush its constructors. The same rule is strictly applicable to organizations of every kind, and unless its commencement is honest, broadly democratic in its platform, equitable in all its parts, favor and selfishness left entirely out of the scale, the organization like the edifice, must, sooner or later, inevitably fall; and in its fall crush its constructors.

Now, gentlemen, I come not here for the purpose of finding fault with any particular individual in the profession; but, certain it is, that lately, a *Secret Society* has been formed in this city, I must call it a Secret Society, from the notorious fact, that not more than a dozen or two knotted and gendered for it in a corner, elected its President, and even appointed its foreign Plenipotentiaries, and most inapplicably christened it a National Institution. Three out of the dozen originators, are not practical Daguerreotypists, and one of the three holds the high and responsible office of Secretary. I respectfully ask if this is not unprecedented in the history of the formation of National Institutions. All this was

done without a single notice through the medium of the press calling together even the Daguerreans of the city, let alone from all parts of the Union, and at this moment, after they have had some eight or ten meetings, there is in this city some of the brightest stars the profession can boast of still uninvited, and even operators, the first that took up the art after the immortal Daguerre's discovery, the men who have been scorched over the furnace of the art, the identical men, too, that have by their *taste*, their *patience*, and their *genius*, elevated these men in the eyes of the public, and placed their mysterious art on the high and proud pinacles it now rests upon.

Gentlemen, I must be emphatic, and tell these partialists I cannot, *will not sanction* any such work as this. If we are to have a society for the good of *all*, why not invite all to come in? Why not invite the fifty cent man as well as the dollar or two dollar man? Let the corner stone of the institution be democratic. With such we will have union! Union is strength! and with strength we must prosper. Therefore let us here to night respond to these men of *Syracuse*, who were the first to move in the matter, and who have, in a noble and democratic manner invited every Daguerrean to come to their Convention at Utica on the 20th day of August, and there, in a proper manner, form a National Institution. I now offer, Mr. Chairman, the following resolution.

Resolved, That a delegation of ten be appointed to attend the Convention to be held at Utica on the 20th of August next.

The following gentlemen were then appointed:

D. E. Gavit, H. H. Meade, Charles Meade, G. Harrison, Wm. H. Perry, Silas Selleck, James Perry, A. W. Paradise, J. P. Weston and Mr. Stansbury, and H. H. Snelling as honorary delegate.

The Chair was then yielded for a few moments; and, after appropriate remarks, Mr. Gavit offered the following resolution:

Resolved, That, as Daguerreans, we express our deep and heartfelt sorrow at the sudden decease of Mr. Daguerre, the father of our mysterious and beautiful art; and, as a proper token of respect to his memory, the Daguerrean fraternity are requested to wear the usual badge of mourning on the left arm for the space of thirty days.

A motion was then offered:

That when we adjourn, we adjourn to meet at the Gallery of D. E. Gavit, 247 Broadway, on Thursday evening, 14th inst., 1 o'clock, and that a cordial invitation be offered to all the Daguerreotypists of the City of New York, Brooklyn and Williamsburg to attend and co-operate.

D. E. GAVIT, Chairman.

L. E. BARKER, Secretary.

The resolution in regard to the death of M. Daguerre does honor to the hearts and feelings of those assembled, and we trust it will be fully carried out by the Daguerreans of this country.

Besides this meeting of New York and Brooklyn Daguerreans, there has been a movement for the establishment of a society in this city, the proceedings of which were at first so questionable,—so far as we can learn—and so secretly kept from us, that we do not feel called upon to notice it further than this. We are, however, in hopes that those who have, as it were, by constraint, lately been admitted to take part in the proceeding, will set matters on a fair, impartial foundation.

[End of text.]

EDITOR'S NOTES:

An abbreviated version of this text is found in "At a Large and Enthusiastic Meeting," *New-York Daily Tribune* 11:3217 (9 August 1851): 1.¹

The wearing of crepe by daguerreotypists was mentioned three days prior in the article, "Respect for Daguerre," *New-York Daily Tribune* 11:3214 (6 August 1851): 4.²

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).³

Various efforts to organize photographic associations occurred around this time: "The American Heliographic Association,"⁴ "The New-York State Daguerreian Convention,"⁵ "The American Daguerre Association."⁶

The fifty-cent daguerreotype was the offering of the "cheap" operators. This reduction of price (and cheapening of the product) was decried by many gallery owners who felt that the art had been degraded. See other content in this issue: "By the Editor" [Henry Hunt Snelling], "The Daguerrean Art; its Present State and Future Prospects," *Photographic Art-Journal* (New York) 2: 2 (August 1851): 99–101.⁷

1. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/N8510034_MOURNING_NYD-TRIB_1851-08-09.pdf
2. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/N8510032_RESPECT_NYDTRIB_1851-09-06.pdf
3. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/N8510031_MADAM-DAGUERRE_NY-HERALD_1851-10-09.pdf
4. *New-York Daily Tribune* 11:3215 (7 August 1851): 1.
5. *New-York Daily Times* 1:37 (30 October 1851): n.p. (third page of issue).
6. *New-York Daily Times* 1:38 (31 October 1851): n.p. (third page of issue).
7. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8510006_SNELLING_PHOTO-ART-JOURN_1850-08.pdf

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