



Detail from
the panorama's
second plate.

Sterling C. McIntyre's Panoramic Views of San Francisco

Mike Robinson

INTRODUCTION

IN THE TIME OF HOMER AND THE TROJAN WAR, Jason and his band of heros, according to Greek mythology, set sail on the *Argo* in search of the Golden Fleece. Strabo, the ancient geographer in Christ's time suggested that the Golden Fleece originated from mining technology practiced by the Soanes of Caucasus, in the hillsides above the Black Sea.

It is said that in their country gold is carried down by the mountain-torrents and that the barbarians obtain it by means of perforated troughs and fleecy skins, and that this is the origin of the myth of the golden fleece . . .¹

Gold seekers in mid-nineteen-century America rushed in by land and sea to gather the gold dust carried down by the torrents of the California hillsides. The ocean journey for these real-life Argonauts ended in the Yerba Buena bay at the port of San Francisco.

DURING THE FIRST YEAR of the California Gold Rush the population of San Francisco had increased from 1,000 to 25,000 inhabitants. The city rapidly grew to serve the influx of fortune hunters heading for the hills. Hotels, warehouses, theatres, restaurants, and entertainment facilities in town were constructed at a frantic pace. It has been said

that three new buildings per day were appearing on the streets below the surrounding hills, the rapid growth pressing the waterfront to expand into the bay on piers and wharfs. The harbour was choked with hundreds of sailing vessels abandoned by crew and passengers. To make room for the ceaseless tide of ships and men, the least seaworthy vessels were dragged to Rincon Point and recycled for their wood, or sunk to add to the foundation for wharf expansion. Daguerreotypist Albert Southworth, in company with 124 men of the Bunker Hill Trading Company, left Boston on the ship *Regulus* on March 5, 1849, and arrived in San Francisco mid-September—a voyage of 192 days. The *Regulus* served as a ship-store at the foot of California Street until 1857 when it was observed to be “now undergoing the dissection by the Chinamen and vanishing piecemeal.”² All the while the city grew at a fantastic pace, only to be reduced to ashes but quickly built again. San Francisco would suffer six major conflagrations over a sixteen-month period between Christmas 1849 and the summer solstice in 1851.

The vivid and colourful story of San Francisco's early gold rush era can be rediscovered in daguerreotype images taken at this time. This article tells the story of one of Sterling C. McIntyre's five-plate panoramas of the City of San Francisco, the context of its creation, its provenance, and its recent restoration.



FIGURE 1

THE RECENT HISTORY of this Panorama of San Francisco begins in the January/February 1998 issue of *The Daguerreian Society Newsletter*. In this issue Rick Wester of Christie's Art Photographs took out a full-page ad announcing an upcoming sale (fig. 1). The ad illustrated the second plate of a five-plate panorama with the description, "Daguerreian Unknown / View of Telegraph Hill with Station / one plate from a five half-plate daguerreotype panorama of San Francisco, 1850's." In the catalogue for Christie's sale No. 8884 of April 8, Wester included his carefully researched description:

Lot 106

DAGUERREIAN UNKNOWN

Panoramic View of San Francisco from North Beach to Rincon Point.

5 half-plate daguerreotypes forming a panorama of San Francisco, the middle plate tarnished. [C]irca 1851. Each contained in brass mat and preserver. Framed.

President Polk's 1848 announcement that gold had been discovered in California made an enormous impact on Northern California, especially, San Francisco. The subsequent onslaught of fortune-seekers and the international interest the announcement created led eager daguerreotypists to the city – between the years 1850 and 1864 approximately fifty of them were in business. As the city expanded rapidly and opportunities abounded, the Gold Rush was one of the first events with worldwide interest to be documented photographically. The mid-nineteenth century was a time of pride for California's residents, and they were eager to share it with the world. Experienced or not, daguerreotypists from all over the United States and Canada grasped at the opportunity to fulfill the public's desire for a glimpse of the City of Gold.

Gold Rush panoramas were made between 1850–53. This one, like the one illustrated in the collection of the George Eastman House (not in the sale) date from 1851 or earlier. The numerous fires that plagued the Bay between the winter of 1849 and the summer of 1851 help date the images; the First Presbyterian

Church, as seen in the second panel from the left, located on Dupont between Pacific and Clay was destroyed in the fire of June 22, 1851. Other identifiable buildings are the Vallejo Street Catholic Church and Telegraph Station atop Telegraph Hill in the second panel to the left; and the El Dorado and the Jenny Lind Theatre (later City Hall) in the second panel from the right. When this panorama was taken, it was estimated that approximately 800 ships filled Yerba Buena Cove. Used as warehouses or hotels after the occupants headed for the gold, some were eventually abandoned altogether. Although the vantage point and the maker are unknown, there were a few daguerreotypists working at the time from similar or somewhat lower points. Among them, a man by the name of S. C. McIntyre, formerly a dentist from Florida, turned to daguerreotypy and made a panorama described in the *Alta California* of February 1, 1851,* as the first of its kind: *Decidedly the finest thing in the fine arts produced in this city, which we have seen, is a consecutive series of Daguerreian plates, five in number, arranged side by side so as to give a view of our entire city and harbor, the shipping, bay, coast and mounts opposite, islands, dwellings and hills – all embraced between Rincon Point on the right, to the mouth of our beautiful bay on the left, included between lines proceeding from the hills to the west of the city as the point of vision.* (c.f. Newhall, *The Daguerreotype in America*). It was from McIntyre's panorama that the French artist Charles Méryon** made a widely known etching. Robert H. Vance, the noted Bay Area daguerreotypist, exhibited three hundred panoramas of the west in New York in 1851, including a San Francisco view. Later, after this panorama could have been made, William Shew made five-panel views from a similar point, one of which is now in the Smithsonian. This previously unknown panorama came from the family of Samuel Bigelow Wood, a Sea Captain from San Francisco whose descendants moved to the East in the mid-1940s.

Very few panoramas of San Francisco survive intact. In addition to these plates, other five

and six-panel views are in the collection of: The Oakland Museum; The Smithsonian Institution; The Society of California Pioneers (4 of 5 panels) and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1 of the 5 panels); Zelda Mackay, San Francisco (left side) and the Library of Congress (right side); The American Antiquarian Society of Worcester, MA; and Billy Pearson, San Francisco.

Estimate: \$20,000–30,000

- * The notice of McIntyre's panorama occurs in the *Daily Alta California* on January 19. Wester was quoting from Newhall's, *The Daguerreotype in America*, which has the date incorrect.
- ** Charles Meyron's etching, dated 1855, shows buildings not in San Francisco during McIntyre's time. According to Peter Palmquist, by 1855, Sterling C. McIntyre was living in Nevada City, California, practicing his first profession, dentistry,³ and seems to have given up daguerreotypy.

Christie's auction house wished to preview the panorama in Paris and Los Angeles and, according to Rick Wester, the original frame was a mess and not able to withstand the rigours of travel. A modern metal frame was constructed to protect the plates. On the evening of the sale Matthew Isenburg had spoken to Gold Rush-collector Steven Anaya in California, who mentioned that the daguerreotypes were originally in a wooden frame. On the day of the sale, Matthew was feeling quite unwell with a temperature of 104°F but, not wishing to miss the sale, had his driver take him into New York whereas normally he would have driven himself.

He arrived early hoping to track down the original frame knowing it could add several thousand dollars to the value. He asked a woman from Christie's to go downstairs and search for it. A half-hour later she returned to the auction floor with the frame in hand. Matthew then asked for the wooden backing boards. She went downstairs again to retrieve the panels and again she returned with them. He then asked for the original framing brads. At this point the woman had had enough—this wasn't going to happen. The sale was about to begin.

Matthew simply had to have the panorama for his Gold Rush collection at any cost, and had made sure to transfer enough funds to his checking account to cover twenty times the low estimate. Society-member and dealer Ken Nelson was in the room at Christie's

for the sale, and sitting beside him was Hallmark's Keith Davis. Ken recalls that when Lot 106 came up, Matthew held his paddle in the air, not lowering his arm until the sale was concluded.

PROVENANCE

THE MAKING OF THE PANORAMA

THE S. S. *CALIFORNIA* arrived in San Francisco harbor at nine o'clock in the morning on November 21, 1850, as announced with an "Extra!" in the *Daily Alta California*. The most famous passenger on board was Col. John C. Fremont, whose later exploits and expeditions were chronicled and revisited by daguerreotypist and author Robert Shlaer in *Sights Once Seen, Daguerreotyping Fremont's Last Expedition Through the Rockies*. Also on the passenger list, and more relevant to our story, is the name "J. C. McLutry" (fig. 2). The typesetter at the *Daily Alta* undoubtedly mistook the first initial and compounded the mistake by inserting the "n" into the composing stick upside down.

Sterling C. McIntyre was trained as a dental surgeon in Paris by renowned American expatriate Dr. Cyrus Starr Brewster, graduating in 1840. McIntyre most certainly would have been aware of the daguerreotypomanie taking place in the city of photography's birth and must have been caught up in the fervor. Within a few years daguerreotypy evolved from its experimental beginnings to a practical commercial art and by 1844 McIntyre was advertising himself as a dentist and daguerreotypist in Florida, and then moving on to South Carolina. By the end of the decade McIntyre was operating a studio at 663 Broadway in New York. He must have felt the pressure of competition with so many studios on Broadway vying for clientele that he longed for more lucrative environs. The news of wealth and prosperity coming from California had to have been irresistible for McIntyre.

The quickest, but also most expensive, route to San Francisco from New York was to board a U.S. Mail steamer to Chagres on the Isthmus of Panama, cross upriver and overland to Panama City, and then board a second Pacific Mail steamship headed to San Francisco. Knowing McIntyre arrived in San Francisco on the S. S. *California* on November 21, 1850, would suggest he travelled to San Francisco via the Panama route. The *California*, launched in New York two years

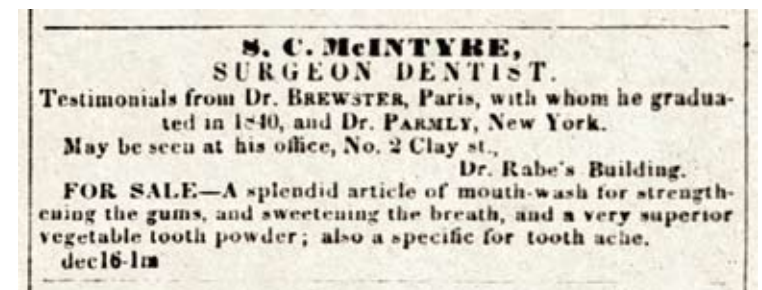


FIGURE 2 [ABOVE]

Daily Alta California,
November 21, 1850

FIGURE 3 [RIGHT]

McIntyre's advertisement ran in the *Daily Alta California* for one month beginning December 16, 1850. For the first seven days the ad consisted of only the top six lines, but on December 23 McIntyre added the additional three lines of "FOR SALE" text.



Panorama of San Francisco by McIntyre

earlier, and having passed through the Straits of Magellan, served the Pacific mail route between Panama City and San Francisco. She entered San Francisco four times in 1850: March, June, August and November. According to U.S. Mail records, the steamer S. S. *Georgia* left New York on October 11, 1850, arriving at Chagres on October 23. That would have allowed about a week to cross the Isthmus of Panama, by riverboat and mule train, to connect with the S. S. *California* on November 1. Had McIntyre boarded the *Georgia* on October 11 when it left New York, the entire trip would have taken him forty-one days, however, his name does not appear on the S. S. *Georgia's* passenger list that month. There is a "J. McIntyre" listed on an earlier *Georgia* voyage, one which had left New Orleans on February 12, 1850.⁴ If this passenger is Sterling McIntyre we can only speculate that he waited out the spring and summer in Chagres, perhaps gathering supplies and practicing dentistry to save enough money for his California ambitions.⁵

McIntyre, within three weeks of his arrival, had set up a dentist office in Dr. Rabe's building at No. 2 Clay Street, three doors west of Montgomery Street. Though he operated portrait studios prior to and after this time in San Francisco, based upon his advertisements in the *Daily Alta* it seems unlikely that he made portraits during his five-month stay in San Francisco (fig. 3). Perhaps his office on Clay Street was impractical for such a purpose. In any case, it appears that by mid-February 1851 he had closed his dental practice and posted for rent his furnished room in Dr. Rabes' building. His activities in San Francisco then seem to be entirely focused on making daguerreotypes of outdoor views.⁶



FIGURE 4 [RIGHT PAGE, DETAIL ABOVE]
Attributed to Sterling C. McIntyre. Portsmouth Square, San Francisco, California.
Half-plate daguerreotype.
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, DAG no. 1331.



THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS holds two half-plate daguerreotypes taken in early 1851 that are most certainly the work of Sterling McIntyre. The *Daily Alta* described McIntyre’s view of the row of buildings along Washington Street that front Portsmouth Square (fig. 4). All of the buildings on this row were built after the fire of May 4, 1850, destroyed the entire block. At the time of taking, the block was again complete. In this view we can see, from west to east along the Plaza, the following buildings: The California Restaurant, The *Alta California* newspaper office, a Drugs and Medicines Wholesaler and Retailer, an unnamed white building, and the hotels Louisiana, Bella Union and Sociedad. The scene was described in the *Daily Alta* on January 28, 1851:

VIEW OF THE PLAZA.—We are indebted to Doctor S. C. McIntyre for a very spirited and faithful Daguerreotype of the plaza, or Portsmouth Square. It embraces all the buildings from the old adobe to the corner of Kearny and Washington street, including the office of the *Alta California*. The buildings and



Denotes the row of buildings shown in Figure 4, the *Alta California* office is in darker green.

Graphic by Mark S. Johnson



FIGURE 5 [LEFT PAGE, DETAIL ABOVE]
Attributed to S. C. McIntyre. *View of San Francisco harbor*.
Half-plate daguerreotype.
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, DAG no. 1330.

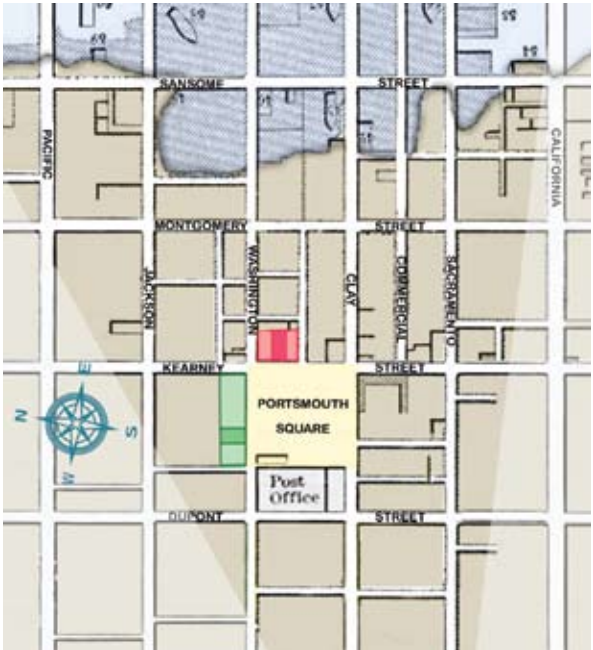
figures in the foreground, the background and in fact all the minutiae of the scene is admirably taken. It was executed literally instantaneously. Dr. McL. is the gentleman who has been engaged in getting up the panorama of San Francisco for the World's Fair. His pictures prove him an [sic] adept in the interesting art daguerreotypic [sic].⁷

The second plate at the Library of Congress is a view from the hillside just south of Sacramento Street, the camera aiming northeast toward the harbour (fig. 5). Included in the vista, on Kearny Street and fronting the east side of Portsmouth Square, can be seen [L-R] the El Dorado Hotel, Parker House [red dot], and Union Hotel. To their left, on the northeast

corner of Washington and Kearney, is the Verandah Hotel [yellow dot]. Also on Washington Street, crossing Kearney, can again be seen the smaller structures of the Sociedad, Bella Union, and Louisiana hotels. Three important details in the area of Portsmouth Square help to establish very precisely when this image was taken. First, the Parker House does not yet have the "PARKER HOUSE" sign on its roof. Second, the land adjacent to the Verandah Hotel on Washington Street is still vacant—the buildings having burned to the ground on September 17, 1850. And lastly, further to the left along Washington Street, on the northwest corner of Portsmouth Square, can be seen the wood framing of a new three-story building with a peaked roof, the building not yet sided [green dot]. This last detail is key to dating the image. The first two details

help to establish the chronology between this and the two extant five-plate panorama daguerreotypes by McIntyre.

A December 11, 1850, editorial in the *Daily Alta* describes having just received a "neatly executed lithograph of the Grand Plaza of San Francisco" that does not exactly resemble the Plaza in its current condition as it shows a full row of buildings on the west side of the square. According to the article, "The fine row of buildings between the Post Office and Washington street are not yet built . . ." The article goes on to say, "A sketch of any point, as it is now, would scarce be recognized a week afterwards." This rate of construction is hardly an exaggeration. As an example, according to historian Katherine Chandler, when the Dennison Exchange burned during the first great fire on December 24, 1849, it was quickly rebuilt.



Denotes the El Dorado Hotel, Parker House/Jenny Lind Theatre, and Union Hotel. The Parker House is in darker red.

Graphic by Mark S. Johnson

A Mr. Cornwall contracted to rebuild the Dennison Exchange within sixteen days at a cost of from \$25,000 to \$30,000, agreeing to forfeit \$150 for each day in excess of the sixteen. He completed it on time, even though wages were high and materials scarce⁸

It is likely that the Library of Congress' view showing the harbour was taken during the first or second week of January 1851, based on that wood-framed building going up on land the *Alta's* editorial had mentioned was vacant on December 11.

This image is a singular half-plate view from the hillside above town looking down on the city. It has been established that McIntyre arrived in late November and it stands to reason that he would make single views to explore various vantage points and test his process before attempting the more complicated panoramic composite.

THE PROVENANCE OF THE TWO McIntyre daguerreotypes of San Francisco at the Library of Congress adds an interesting dimension to this story. These two plates came to the institution as part of the David D. Porter family papers acquired in 1934. David Dixon Porter, was U.S. Naval officer who served in

the Mexican–American War and later served as a high ranking naval officer during the Civil War. Porter took leave from military service just after the Mexican War to gain experience piloting steam ships and was employed by the Pacific Mail Company from 1849 to 1853. He piloted his first ship, the *S. S. Panama*, around Cape Horn from New York to Panama City in 1849, and then served as Ship Master for the *S.S. Georgia* from 1850 to 1853. The *S. S. Georgia* on the Atlantic side steamed in sync with the *S. S. California* on the Pacific side to serve the U.S. Mail service on the Panama Route. One of the first stops in town for the captain of a vessel landing at San Francisco would have been the office of the *Alta California*. The captain would provide a list of passengers newly arrived, as well as place notices of consigned goods available for pickup, or sale. This information would be published daily.

McIntyre wisely chose this vital communications link to promote the sale of his daguerreotypes. Those having business at the *Daily Alta* would have a chance to view and purchase his daguerreotypes. It is quite plausible that this is how Captain Porter came to own these two daguerreotypes and, as they were both made during the first weeks of January, they were most likely acquired at the same time.



FIGURE 7
LEFT, a detail of Figure 5, and BELOW, a detail from the third plate in the George Eastman House's five-plate panorama, *Panorama of San Francisco*, 1851, 1/3 plate. 1979:3101:0003.

Courtesy of the George Eastman House, Rochester, NY.

In the LOC's plate, the vacant lot to the right of the Verandah Hotel [yellow dot] is, in the GEH's panorama, filled with buildings. And the new construction [green dot] has, in the GEH panorama, been competed [dark building].



CHRISTIE'S APRIL 1998 AUCTION CATALOGUE illustrated two five-plate panorama images for Lot 106 (fig. 6). The central plate of the top panorama, the one up for auction, is completely obscured by thick black tarnish. The panorama shown below was for reference and not part of the sale—it is held in the collection of the George Eastman House. Joe Struble, GEH archivist, notes that Beaumont Newhall acquired this panorama for the museum in 1951 from Joseph A. Heckel, a print dealer in New York City. These two panoramas were taken at very nearly the same time as the Library of Congress' view of the harbour from the hillside, Figure 5.

The third plate in the GEH's panorama is taken from the a similar vantage point as the Library of Congress' view, a point between California and Sacramento streets, both views taking in Portsmouth Square and the harbour. A comparison of details

taken from these two plates (fig. 7) shows the vacant lot to the right of the Verandah Hotel on Washington Street in the LOC's image, is now, in the GEH third plate, filled with buildings. And the newly-framed construction on the west side of Portsmouth Square has now, in the GEH panorama, been competed. This suggests that the Library of Congress' image was made first but within weeks of the George Eastman House's panorama.

The fourth plate in the panorama purchased by Matthew Isenburg in 1998 is taken from a position slightly more to the north of the other two views, on the hillside directly in line with Sacramento street. There are two gingerbread houses in the foreground of this panorama that do not exist in the other two views. Either they were out of the field of view, or they did not exist when the LOC and GEH views were taken. The fact that McIntyre moved slightly for



FIGURE 6
Composite image from page 55 of Christie's sale No. 8884 of April 8, 1998.



FIGURE 8

A red dot denotes the same sloped-roof structure in [ABOVE] the Library of Congress' *View of San Francisco harbor*, Figure 5, and [LEFT] in the third plate from the George Eastman House's five-plate *Panorama of San Francisco*.



FIGURE 9 [RIGHT]

Detail from the newly-conserved fourth plate in Isenburg's panorama. A red dot denotes the same sloped-roof structure shown in the above daguerreotypes, and the yellow dot points to the building now under construction on what had been an empty adjoining lot.



this view could be explained if some new construction blocked the previous view's vantage point. We can be certain the panorama Isenburg purchased was taken later than the GEH's panorama. In the foreground of both the LOC and GEH images, there is a building with an attached shed having a sloped roof (fig. 8). To the left of this building, the lot is vacant. In the panorama sold at Christie's there is a new wooden building on this lot and other buildings in the foreground under construction (fig. 9). And, in the distance, the Parker House now has its name on the roof, prominently displayed in large prismatic letters set within a rectangular frame—and having the shine of gold leaf (fig. 10).

MCINTYRE'S FIRST SUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT at a five-plate panorama was announced in the *Daily Alta* on January 19, 1851, the week before the "View of the Plaza" editorial was printed.

DAGUERREOTYPE OF SAN FRANCISCO.—Decidedly the finest thing in the fine arts produced in this city, which we have seen, is a consecutive series of Daguerreian plates, five in number, arranged side by side so as to give a view of our entire city and harbor, the shipping, bay, coast and mountains opposite, islands, dwellings and hills—all embraced between Rincon Point on the right, to the mouth of our beautiful bay on the left, included between lines proceeding from the hills to the west of the city as the point of vision.



FIGURE 10

Detail from Figure 9 of the Parker House's roof-top sign. Note also the large banner or sign between the columns on the building's second level.

This picture, for such it may be termed, although the first attempt, is nearly perfect. It is admirable in execution as well as design. It is intended for the "World's Industrial Convention" in London. We venture the assertion that nothing there will create greater interest than this specimen of Art among us, exhibiting a perfect idea of the city which of all the world carries with its name abroad more of romance and wonder than any other. It is a picture, too, which cannot be disputed—it carries with it evidence which God himself gives through the unerring light of the world's great luminary.

The people of Europe have never yet seen a picture of this, to them, most wonderful city. This will tell its own story, and with the sun to testify to its truth. We would suggest that a subscription be raised to put it into a frame equal to its merits, Californian in style and richness, inlaid with native specimens of gold and auriferous quartz. This would make it a perfect gem. The views were taken by Mr. McIntyre of this city. He proposes, if his efforts meet with sufficient encouragement, to finish and furnish duplicates of this excellent and artistical picture to the lovers of art, at one hundred dollars. It may be seen at this office.⁹

The next day the *Alta's* editors again had high praise for McIntyre's panorama.

THE PANORAMA OF SAN FRANCISCO—A large number of gentlemen called at our counting room yesterday to examine Mr. McIntyre's admirable Daguerreotypic [*sic*] panorama of San Francisco. They all expressed themselves highly pleased with it. It is certainly the only picture of any description ever produced giving anything like a correct idea of the extent of our city.¹⁰

WE HAVE ESTABLISHED that the earliest these works were made is just before January 19, 1851, and they were taken in the following sequence: first was the Library of Congress' harbor view, then the George Eastman House's panorama, followed by the Isenburg panorama. The Christie's auction catalogue description places the date of the Isenburg panorama to sometime before June 22, when the First Presby-

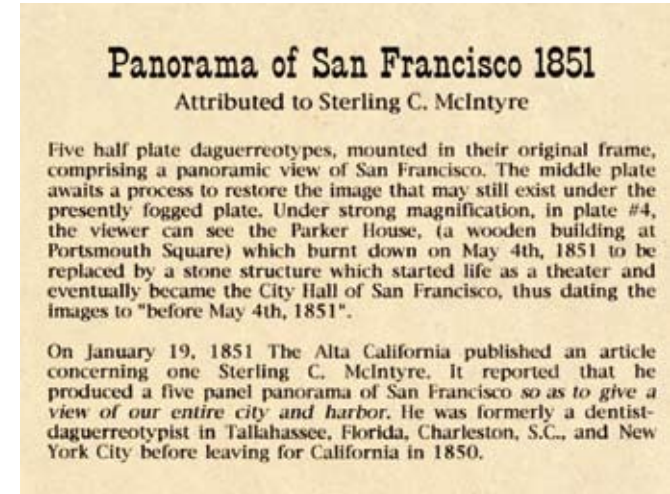


FIGURE 11
Matthew Isenburg’s paper label used to cover the tarnished centre plate.

terian Church, on Dupont between Pacific and Clay streets, was destroyed by fire. Matthew narrowed the timeframe further when he discovered that the first Jenny Lind Theatre in the Parker House had been lost in the May 4, 1851, fire. A second Jenny Lind Theatre was built on the site and it too was completely destroyed, only *seven* weeks later, in the June 22 fire. The building was *again* replaced, this time in brick, and became known as Third Jenny Lind Theatre, until it was taken over to serve as the new San Francisco City Hall. By the time of the last great conflagration, Thomas McGuire, the owner of the Parker House and Manager of its Jenny Lind Theatre, had lost everything to fire and rebuilt *six* times!

WHILE THIS PANORAMA was on display in Matthew Isenburg’s attic-gallery, the central heavily-tarnished plate was covered by a printed piece of paper (fig. 11) in which he proudly noted the panorama’s plates were “mounted in their original frame. . .”

According to the Christie’s catalogue description the panorama came from the family of Charles Bigelow Wood, a sea captain from San Francisco. Captain Wood had piloted the steamer, the S. S. *New Orleans*, owned by the Empire City Line, from New York to San Francisco—arriving on September 24, 1850. He could have arrived two days earlier but thick fog caused him to miss the entrance to the Golden Gate and he sailed sixty miles off course.¹¹ The journey from New York

by way of Cape Horn had lasted 210 days with stops along the way. Wood then commanded the S. S. *New Orleans* in making Pacific runs between Panama City and San Francisco. His time with the S.S. *New Orleans* ended when the ship was sold at auction on July 12, 1851. Captain Wood had steamed through the Golden Gate four times: September 24 and December 11, 1850; and March 6 and May 3, 1851. His last landing was on the eve of the Fifth Great Fire. It is very unlikely that Wood acquired the panorama on this trip as McIntyre had already left town for Nevada City, his local daguerreian efforts having not been met with the hoped “sufficient encouragement.”¹² Captain Wood most likely would have seen the panorama on view at the *California Alta* and stopped by McIntyre’s address to purchase a variant view. This must have occurred just after Wood’s March 6 landing at San Francisco. McIntyre’s intention to furnish “duplicates” of

his panorama should be clarified. I believe they would not be copy-plates of a single panorama but rather, if commissioned, would be made during successive trips to the hillside overlooking the city.

MCINTYRE HAD INTENDED his panorama to be exhibited at the Great Exhibition at London’s Crystal Palace but he literally missed the boat. Two months would have been just enough time for his panorama to travel from San Francisco via Panama for the opening on May 1 but, due to the lacklustre effort of the U.S. Government in organizing the exhibits for the United States pavilion, the panorama never made it across the Atlantic.¹³ Had it made the exhibition McIntyre would likely have been disappointed by the judges opinion. One panorama did make it to the exhibition, the incredible 1848 view of the Cincinnati Waterfront comprised of *eight full plates* taken by Charles Fontayne and William Porter. The piece was not awarded a medal. The understated review from the judges reads,

A daguerreotype view of Cincinnati, by FONTYNE [*sic*] and PORTER (United States), is more successful. This is also taken in separate compartments: it is clear and good in colour, and forms an effective picture.¹⁴

Having missed the exhibition, McIntyre’s panorama eventually found its way to the New York offices of S. D. Humphrey, editor of the *Daguerreian*

Journal. In the July 1851 edition Humphrey reprints the first paragraph from the *Daily Alta* editorial and adds they also have in hand a single six-panel frame containing half-plate views of the “Gold Diggings.” Sadly, Humphrey closes with the news that McIntyre suffered severe losses in “the recent” San Francisco fire. This must have been the May 4 fire as news of the June 22 fire would not have travelled from San Francisco in time for the July first edition.

PANORAMA OF SAN FRANCISCO AND THE GOLD DIGGINGS.

WE have received, through the agents of S. C. M’Intyre, a fine panoramic view of San Francisco. It consists of five half plates, representing the city as seen from the most favorable point.

The *San Francisco Journal of Commerce* in speaking of these views, bears testimony of their truthfulness in the following words:—“A perfect and most beautiful photographic picture of San Francisco, embracing the whole city, as seen from one of the back hills, from beyond Rincon Point to the hill surmounting the North Beach and the Golden Gate; unfolding the entire harbor with its complicated shipping, Contra Costa, Diabolo, Yerba Buena and Angel and Bird Islands, the upper bay and its coasts and headlands, and the mountains faintly seen beyond San Pablo—whilst a gush of rose tinted light give an indescribable beauty to the sky of the picture just over the red-wood summit of Contra Costa. It must have been a lucky hit—though our friend is sanguine that many such pictures, its equal, and some its superiors, will follow his renewed exertions.”

From the *Alta Californian*:—Decidedly the finest thing in the fine arts produced in this city, which we have seen, is a consecutive series of Daguerreian Plates, five in number, arranged side by side, so as to give a view of our entire city and harbor, the shipping, bay, coast and mounts opposite, islands, dwellings and hills—all embraced between Rincon Point on the right, to the mouth of our beautiful bay on the left, included between lines proceeding from the hills to the west of the city as the point of vision.”

The Gold Diggings are beautifully illustrated on six half plates matched and contained in one frame. Picturing “all sorts”—men, with spade and tin pan in hand, eagerly looking after the *dust*; some examining a lump just found, others up to their knees in water, and, among the rest is, in a bent position, a man, pan in hand, looking up with a grin, exhibiting “something” in his pan which he no doubt would try to make us believe was the metal. This may all be, but with the HILLOTYPED there will be no use—can’t pass off stones for gold!

Our daguerreotypists will bear in mind that Mr. M’Intyre has met with a severe loss by the recent fire in San Francisco, and we would propose to all such as wish copies of these views, that we will furnish them at a reasonable rate, and give Mr. M’Intyre the *sole benefit, without any charge for our time in copying*. Such operators as wish, will furnish us such amount as they may deem these pictures worth, stating the size wished.¹⁵

To my knowledge the daguerreian community did not rally to support McIntyre by purchasing copies of the panorama held by Humphrey at the *Daguerreian Journal*. This panorama is very likely the one originally intended for the Crystal Palace that missed the boat, and the same one purchased by the George Eastman House in 1951 from Joseph A. Heckel in New York City. The chronology fits as it predates by a few weeks the panorama acquired in early March by Captain Wood. It seems that McIntyre may have made several five-plate panoramas of San Francisco, but only two escaped the conflagrations of San Francisco, the plates made in January 1851 intended for the Crystal Palace in London, and the other plates made in February 1851, saved by the desires of the captain of a steamship.

NOTES

1. Strabo, *Geography*, Horace Leonard Jones, editor and translator, Vol. 5, Bk XI, ch ii, 19 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press / London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1944), p. 215.
2. “Breaking up of Old Ships at the Rincon.” *Daily Evening Bulletin* (San Francisco, CA), 11 February 1857, p. 3.
3. Peter E. Palmquist, editor, “Sterling C. McIntyre,” *The Daguerreian Annual 1990* (Eureka, CA: The Daguerreian Society, 1990), pp. 190–93.

4. *Daily Picayune*, New Orleans, LA, 12 February 1850. “Passengers. – Per Steamship *Georgia*. – The following passengers left here this morning per steamship *Georgia*, for California, via Chagres” followed by a listing of approx. 300 names including “J. McIntyre” Mistaking “J” for “S” could be a common transcription error. With the passengers already aboard from New York the paper counted 460 total leaving New Orleans. Researched on the www.sfgenealogy.com website.

5. An entertaining and thorough account of the chaos in Panama at the beginning of the California Gold Rush, *The Isthmian Crossing* by Bruce C. Ruiz is online: www.bruce-ruiz.net/PanamaHistory/isthmus_crossing.htm.

6. See Gary Ewer’s editorial notes on Sterling McIntyre for further reading: www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8510026_MCINTYRE-PANO_DJ_1851-07-01.pdf.

7. *Daily Alta California* (San Francisco, CA), 28 January 1851.

8. Katherine H. Chandler (1876–1930) “San Francisco at Statehood,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 9 September 1900, available online: www.sfmuseum.org/hist5/oldsf.html.

9. *Daily Alta California*, 19 January 1851.

10. *Daily Alta California*, 20 January 1851.

11. A wealth of information on shipping in San Francisco can be found on The Maritime Heritage Project website: www.maritimeheritage.org/inport/index.html.

12. Peter E. Palmquist, Thomas R. Kailbourn, *Pioneer Photographers of the Far West: A Biographical Dictionary, 1840–1865* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 394.

13. For a review of the American showing at the Crystal Palace see Marcy J. Dinius, *Best in Show – American Daguerreotypes at the Great Exhibition*, Common - Place, online www.common-place.org/vol-09/no-04/dinius/.

14. *Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations 1851. Reports by the Juries on the Subjects in the Thirty Classes into Which the Exhibition Was Divided*, Vol. 1 (London: Royal Commission / Spicer Brothers, 1852), p. 277. Available for reading on Google Books.

15. *Daguerreian Journal* (New York) 2:4 (1 July 1851): pp. 115–16.

Conservation of the Panorama

Mike Robinson

SOMETIMES ITEMS ARE SO RARE that condition takes a back seat to desire. The Christie’s catalogue description makes mention that the centre plate is tarnished—an understatement if there ever was one! The plate was completely opaque having apparently existed without a cover glass for more than a century. The other four plates were also obscured in areas by a whitish veil. Christie’s Rick Wester, in promoting the sale, had reproduced the least-veiled plate (second from the left) in the *Daguerreian Society Newsletter*. After the sale, Matthew Isenburg sent all five plates to the Conservation Lab at George Eastman House in Rochester, New York, for evaluation. Grant Romer does not recall the panorama having been in his department, admitting he must have been away on one of his research trips at the time. Roger Watson, assistant to Grant and now curator at the Fox Talbot

Museum at Lacock Abbey, does recall the piece. Roger was careful to photograph every item that entered the conservation lab at the Eastman House. Fortunately he still had the Ektachrome slides that document the condition of the plates in 1998. It is very informative to compare the condition of the plates in 1998 with photographs of the plate in 2013. The plates had not changed much, if at all, during the sixteen years it was on display in Matthew’s attic-gallery. The cause of the plates’ whitish veiling is the subject of much speculation, not only with this panorama, but of other daguerreotypes as well. It is possible the plates were reacting with the wooden frame. There is evidence that sometime in the distant past these plates had been apart, perhaps just to clean the cover glass and dust the plates. All of them have mat abrasions, wipes and other damage due to mishandling, and the seals were not intact. Whether or not they had been chemically cleaned cannot be determined, though I suspect not. It is probable that whatever was the cause of the veiling, it had been exacerbated by storage in fluctuating conditions of heat and humidity combined with pollutants from the atmosphere or the wood frame. In any event, the advice offered by the conservators at the Eastman House was that the centre plate was too far gone to treat and the plates were returned to Matthew untouched. He displayed it, as it was, prominently on the shelf above his gallery’s vitrines. The descriptive label Matthew printed to hide the centre plate read, in part, “The middle plate awaits a process to restore the image that may still exist under the presently fogged plate.”



PLATE 1

Sterling C. McIntyre. *Panorama of San Francisco, February 1851*.
Five half-plate daguerreotypes in their original frame, after restoration.
The Isenburg Collection at AMC Toronto.

THE FIRST TIME I visited Matthew in Hadlyme, Connecticut, was in 2001. At that time we talked about the condition of the panorama and, since I was a practicing daguerreotypist, he wondered if I could make a new daguerreotype from a copy photograph to fill in the gap. But we never got together to attempt the project while Matthew owned it. When the Isenburg Collection came to Toronto and I began to work with the panorama my attention turned again to finding a solution for the problem of the centre plate. In 2008 I had developed an electro-cleaning conservation treatment to remove corrosion from daguerreotypes. My method was designed to address some of the risks and problems I had experienced with other electro-cleaning methods. Another popular treatment, one using thiourea-based silver dip cleaners, was not an option, as my research has shown thiourea to remove metallic gold from the plate.¹ Even though I had used my electro-cleaning on hundreds of daguerreotypes, modern and old, I did not feel that I was ready to attempt cleaning the black plate. I felt the corrosion was far too severe and any image details I may recover with treatment may also result in a flat lifeless plate that mismatched the rest. Remembering my conversation with Matthew, I felt that the best solution was to create a replacement for the centre plate.

I wondered if there was a way to somehow “see through” the silver sulphide on the plate. I had recently read an article in an international journal explaining how copying daguerreotypes using near-infrared, hyperspectral light could reveal obscured image information. The abstract for the article reads:

Abstract: Daguerreotypes consist of silver particles located on a highly polished silver surface. Over time, this surface is prone to the formation of tarnish which can severely obscure photographic details. In this paper the use of two hyperspectral imaging systems for the purpose of improving the legibility of daguerreotype images is described. One imaging system was used for visible (420–720 nm) wavelengths and a second imaging system was used for near infrared (650–1100 nm) wavelengths. In this study it was demonstrated that single 10 nm band images at longer wavelengths (>650nm) are especially useful for revealing photographic details that have become obscured by tarnish. The

visible and near infrared spectra that were acquired revealed that there were significant differences in the light absorption properties of tarnished and untarnished areas of a photograph. Furthermore, while the visible spectra showed only a gradual decrease in absorbance with increasing wavelength, the near infrared spectra revealed significant changes in absorbance between tarnished and non-tarnished areas. As a result of these spectral properties, the near infrared imaging camera was ideal for imaging through dirt or heavily tarnished surfaces of these historical photographs.²

The co-author of the article was Greg Hill, Photographs Conservator at the Canadian Conservation Institute in Ottawa. Greg and I have known each other for years since we taught some workshops together in Ottawa. So we discussed hyperspectral imaging of the centre plate to see if any image details could be recognized. In January 2013, I brought the plate to the Canadian Conservation Institute in Ottawa to be photographed with near-infrared and infrared light. Unfortunately, the success of this method is limited. Once the tarnish level exceeds a certain point no light—infrared or otherwise—is reflected back, all light being absorbed by the silver sulphide, and imaging is not possible.

Having unsuccessfully tried to see through the tarnish, and not willing to attempt tarnish removal, the next best option was to create a new plate by copying another extant daguerreotype. The centre plate from the GEH panorama was a close match but not perfect, having been taken a half block south of Sacramento Street and further up the hillside. Most significantly, the field of view presented was only about two-thirds of the scene that needed to be replaced. Combining details from the adjacent plate in the GEH panorama was not an option as the brass mats blocked a good deal of both images. Another panorama, from 1853 and made with six full-plates, in the collection of the Oakland Museum of California, had the needed areas of shoreline and horizon in its third plate (left to right). So the replacement image would have to be a collage from two other panoramas. Both institutions were able to provide high-resolution 250 MB digital files of the individual plates required. The digital retouching and merging of the two files required the services of a very skilled individual. Fortunately,



FIGURE 1 [LEFT & BELOW]

Author Mike Robinson and Carson Jones, owner of Toronto's Create Imaging, collaborate on the creation of the digital artwork to be used to produce a new centre-plate daguerreotype.

Photographs courtesy of Carson Jones.



one of the best digital artists in Toronto, Carson Jones, just happens to be my next-door neighbour. Carson, the owner of Create Imaging estimated it would take about twenty hours to create the digital facsimile.

Carson also required high resolution scans of the Isenburg panorama's second and fourth plates for reference, but it was first necessary to conserve them in order to reveal details hidden by tarnish and white film so I electro-cleaned the four good plates. In the foreground of the forth plate a newly constructed house with gingerbread trim extends to the plate's left edge. The remainder of the building would have to be invented with computer-generated graphics. I asked Carson to share his thoughts on the project:

Mike Robinson approached me to work with him on this project with the intention of combining all facets of photography, both old and new, in order to create the middle plate for this five-plate San Francisco Panorama series. Needless to say it was fascinating to combine the modern digital workflow with the Daguerreotype process (fig. 1).

The results turned out better than we could have hoped to imagine.

Knowing that we had to create the middle plate from scratch, we began the process by combining two provided plates, from separate panorama resources, in order to establish what the middle plate should be built upon (fig. 2). Once the rough composite was



FIGURE 2

The concept's rough starting point, showing colour-coded areas of the two donor plates. On the right are portions of the GEH panorama's third plate and on the left, in purple tones, are areas from the Oakland Museum of California's third plate of their six-full-plate panorama.

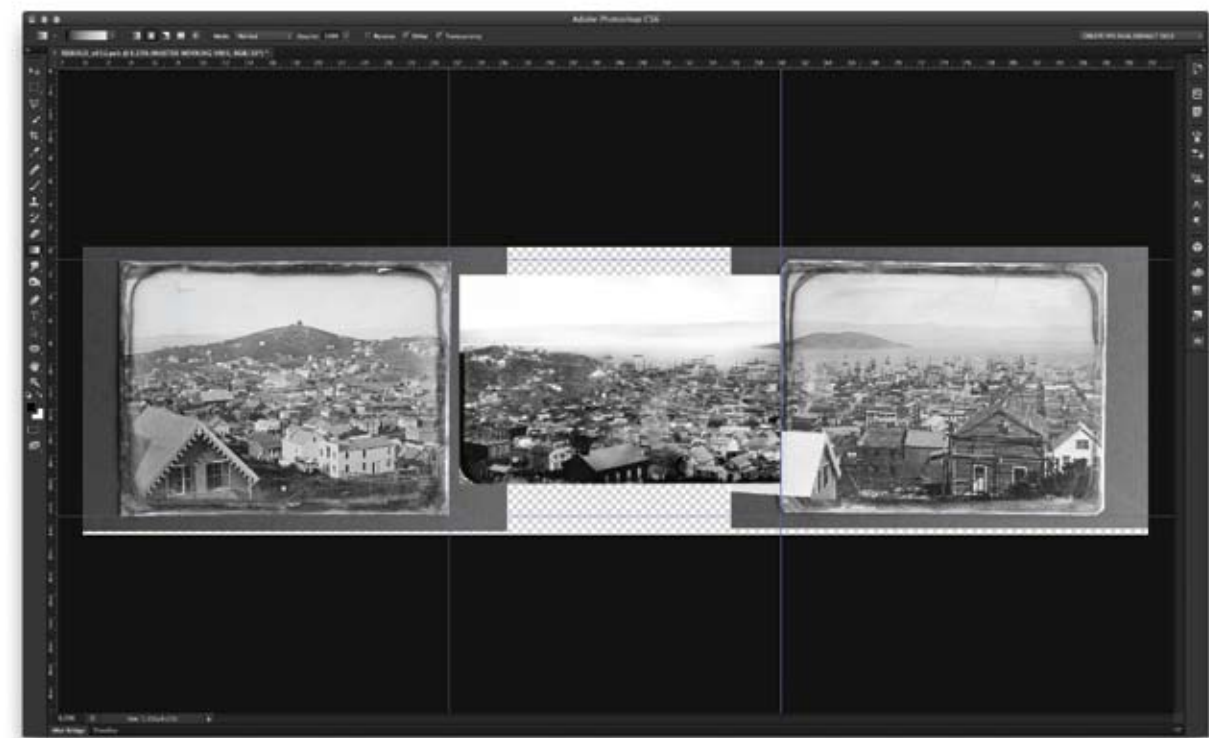


FIGURE 3

created using the two source reference plates we began to piece everything together.

Throughout the process we held the two adjacent plates from the series beside our working composite image (fig. 3). This ensured that the compositing and retouching choices made would properly reflect the overall series and would ensure that what was being constructed was based on the existing series and not simply ‘made up’.

Once the overall compositing was complete we began the process of retouching out the damage that existed in the original source plates used. What’s important during this process is to maintain a small footprint and ensure accuracy. By that I mean retouch only the damaged areas and maintain a high level of truth to the overall image and series.

Finally, with the compositing and retouching completed, we began the final stage of adjusting the zoom and scale of the image to match the others. We had to match the aspect ratio and proportions of the original remaining four daguerreotypes

from the series (figs. 4). The final step was to fine-tune the tonality and contrast of the image to match the set. Once this was complete, the final composite image was printed and was ready for the final stages of being photographed.

Working on a project like this meant combining the complete photographic process, both historical and modern, into a single unified process. By doing so we were able to create something that could never have been created any other way.

— Carson Jones

Once we were satisfied with the digital work we printed the file as a mirror image on matte-surface inkjet paper. Experience told me that a low contrast thirty-inch-wide print would serve best. I made a few test daguerreotypes to find the correct sensitizing and development variables to match the tone and contrast of the original plates.

When I conserved the four original plates I had decided to remove the white haze but leave a small amount of tarnish patina around the mat openings.



FIGURE 4

The final composite, shown on the computer’s screen.

The match of the new plate was very close but of course it looked too “new” compared to the rest. I intentionally wiped the sky and added some perimeter tarnish—I have to say it felt strange to distress my new daguerreotype—but in the end the result was a very convincing replacement (fig. 5).

For now, the blackened original plate is displayed alongside the restored panorama. The transformation is astonishing. Grant Romer, ever eloquent with his descriptions, said that before the restoration it was like “looking at Brad Pitt with his front teeth knocked out.” And after? “I have never witnessed such a splendidly successful, grand, and legitimate achievement in Photograph Conservation.”



FIGURE 5

The resulting half-plate daguerreotype, produced by the author, which was used to replace the tarnished middle plate in the S. C. McIntyre five-plate panorama.

NOTES

1. Eric Da Silva, Mike Robinson, Christopher Evans, Ana Pejovic-Milic, and Darrick V. Heyd. “Monitoring the Photographic Process, Degradation and Restoration of 21st Century Daguerreotypes by Wavelength-Dispersive X-Ray Fluorescence Spectrometry.” *Journal of Analytical Atomic Spectrometry* 25, no. 5 (2010): 654-61.
2. *Restaurator: International Journal for the Preservation of Library and Archival Material*, Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 1-16, ISSN (Online) 1865-8431, ISSN (Print) 0034-5806, DOI: 10.1515/res-2012-0001, March 2012

Portsmouth Square and Great Conflagrations

Mike Robinson

Tuesday, 23 June 1846

Unmoored ship this morning, and got under way about three o'clock and [moved] over to Yerba Buena or "mint village" a very appropriate name, for the people here are excessively addicted to drinking and for aught I know mint juleps.¹

RECORDED IN THE MARINE'S JOURNAL, Second Lieutenant Henry Bulls Watson's impression of the villagers in what was to become San Francisco was incidental to the importance of the day. Only weeks before, President Polk had declared war with Mexico and word was just now reaching his remote forces. On July 8 a courier from Monterey brought the news. Watson bemoaned, "*War, Bloody War,—The long talked of Mexican War has at length broke with a most dreadful carnage.*"²

Capt. John B. Montgomery, commander of the twenty-gun sloop-of-war USS *Portsmouth* had come to Yerba Buena "... to give protection to the American vice Consul"³ and the declaration of war made securing the port most important—even if some "foreigners" did not welcome the incursion. So on the morning of July 9, 1846, with Capt. Montgomery's written orders in hand, Watson led a contingent ashore to seize the village, surrounding countryside and waters for the United States of America.

I formed them in double column, when we displayed the flag, and proceeded with drum beating and fife playing yankee doodle, to the public square in the Yerba Buena, where the proclamation was read by the 1st Lieut. in English[,] and in Spanish by the vice Consul, when we hoisted the flag, with three cheers from the troops and the American settlers present.⁴

Yerba Buena was now American soil. And the town square where the flag had been raised was thereafter known as Portsmouth Square, in honor of the sloop-of-war that brought the Marines to their shore. Less than three years later Portsmouth Square would be the heart of Gold Rush San Francisco. Also known as the Plaza, it was where 49ers would find the Post Office, the Customs House, and the city's finest hotels—as well as its most notorious gambling houses.

In 1849 the first El Dorado, one of those notorious houses, was not much more than a large tent. Even still, it was located on prime real estate on the northeast corner of the Portsmouth Square, and the property values surrounding it were astronomical. Theodore Hittell, who joined his brother in California at the time of the Gold Rush and became one of its great historians, wrote of the Plaza,

The famous old Parker House, which was erected in 1849 on the east side of Kearny street, opposite Portsmouth Square, and on the site of what was afterwards the Jenny Lind Theater and subsequently the city hall, was a two-story frame building with a loft or attic and dormer windows. It cost, as before stated, thirty thousand dollars and was rented for gambling purposes at the rate of fifteen hundred dollars per month. The El Dorado, an adjoining gambling house on the corner of Washington street, was simply a tent; but it rented at the rate of forty thousand dollars per annum. Other buildings, that were in convenient locations, brought rents correspondingly enormous.⁵

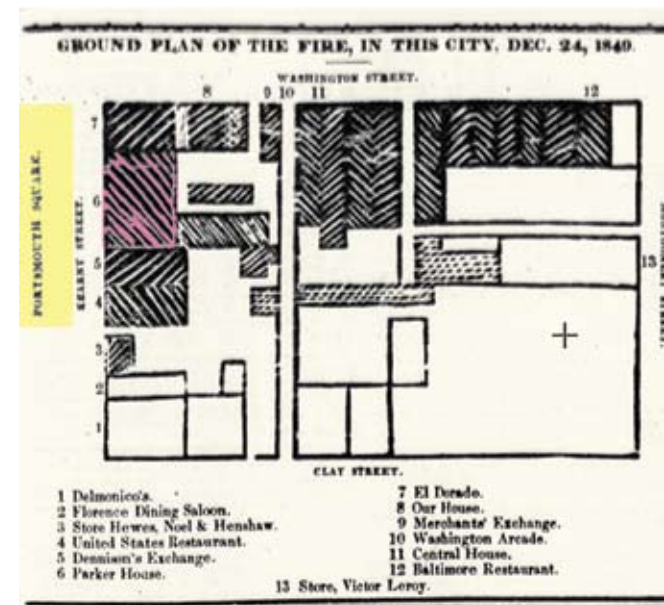


FIGURE 1 [LEFT]

A woodcut of what would become known as the First Great Fire, from the *Daily Alta California*, December 28, 1849.

A directional compass and color have been added to help orient the reader—the Parker House being highlighted in red.

THE FIRST GREAT FIRE, on Christmas Eve 1849, started in Dennison's Exchange and destroyed the adjacent Parker House and the El Dorado's tent (fig. 1). All of the buildings were rebuilt seemingly overnight as the land was too valuable to remain vacant. The property owners rebuilt more impressive but still-simple wooden structures, as was the El Dorado's replacement—no longer a tent (fig. 2). The lumber required for such rapid construction and reconstruction flowed in from five local sawmills, and they were in operation around the clock.

Everything in the shape of available timber near the city, such as the lofty and magnificent redwood forest that crowned the opposite mountains of Contra Costa, rapidly disappeared and hardly a vestige was left behind except the great stumps, from five to twenty feet in diameter, the remnants of which still excite the wonder of those who visit them. At the same time the lumber trade along

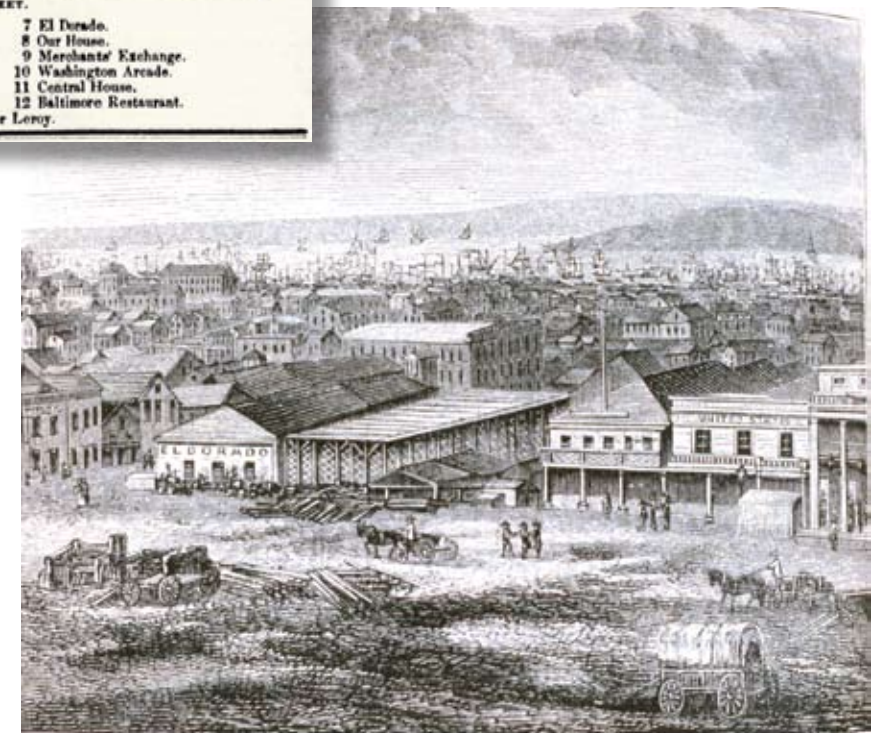


FIGURE 2

The illustration "East Side of Portsmouth Square, Spring of 1850" in *The Annals of San Francisco*, by Frank Soule, John Gihon, and James Nesbit (D. Appleton & Company, New York, 1855), p. 358.

The El Dorado has been rebuilt, the tent replaced using wood, and the adjacent second Parker House's first level, also of wood, is beginning to rise.

Courtesy of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration / Department of Commerce; NOAA Photo Library.

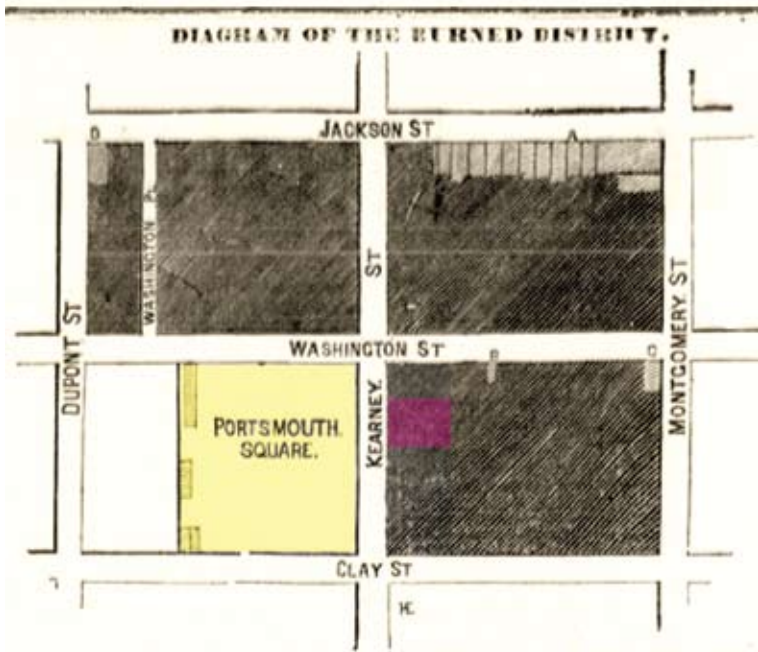


FIGURE 3

A woodcut of the Second Great Fire, from the *Daily Alta California*, May 7, 1850. As in Figure 1, the Parker House has been highlighted in red.

It was after this fire the El Dorado would be rebuilt in brick and that would be credited in helping save its neighbour, the Parker House, in the Fourth Great Fire. That fire is represented in the illustration below, showing cherished goods brought into Portsmouth Square for hoped safety.

the ocean coast north of Russian river and in Oregon was greatly stimulated; and ship-loads after ship-loads of planks and boards and scantling and shingles crowded into the harbor. Not only lumber for houses but houses ready built soon began to come.⁶

The buildings were little more than wood-sided frame structures with canvas or sailcloth roofs and often cloth covering the inside walls—highly combustible materials that were no match for wind-fanned flames. On May 4, 1850, the Second Great Fire started in the United States Exchange, which had been built on the site of Dennison's Exchange. The fire once again ravaged Portsmouth Square, burning the just-rebuilt Parker House and El Dorado (fig 3). The following day the *Daily Alta* reported that “a four storey brick building is to be erected on the site of the El Dorado.” Six weeks later, the Third Great Fire of June 14 spared Portsmouth Square, but not many blocks of properties to the south, including almost all of shipping merchants along the waterfront. It was the Fourth Great Fire, on September 17, 1850, that would again strike the Portsmouth Square-area. Fortunately the new El Dorado, now rebuilt entirely of bricks—at a cost of a dollar each—had been completed. It served as a firewall protecting its neighbour,



Graphic by Mark S. Johnson



FIGURE 4

View of the Procession in Celebration of the Admission of California, Oct. 29th 1850 / Crossing the Plaza of San Francisco, J. Prendergast, artist / Zakreski & Hartman, lithographers.

From the Robert B. Honeyman, Jr. Collection. Courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. BANC PIC 1963.002:1462–C.

the Parker House, which was not yet finished, from destruction. The *Daily Alta* of September 18, 1850, reported the damage,

With the exception of the “Verandah,” corner of Washington and Kearny, and an unfinished building corner Kearny and Pacific, the whole row on the east side of Kearny, between Washington and Pacific streets, was destroyed. On Washington, below the Verandah, four more buildings were burned, when the fire was stayed by pulling down a wooden house. The “Verandah” was saved almost miraculously. Nearly all its windows were on fire, and the flame seemed to cling and twist around it with irresistible violence. Its interior was much damaged. Nothing but its thick brick walls saved it from entire

destruction. The Parker House, not yet quite covered in was thought to be in much danger, but good management, together with the five [actually four] brick stories of the “El Dorado,” which stood between it and the flames, saved it; and with it, probably, the entire square in which it is located.⁷

After the Fourth Great Fire, Thomas Maguire, owner of the Parker House—his *third* one on the site—was able to complete rebuilding in time to open the first Jenny Lind Theatre, located on its second floor. The date, October 29, 1850, was the very day the city celebrated its admission into the Union (fig. 4). On the corner of Kearney and Merchant Street now stood the Union Hotel, made of brick. This structure replaced the United States Exchange, lost in the Second Great Fire, which had replaced the Den-



nison's Exchange, lost in the First Great Fire.

This is the row of buildings that can be seen in the Library of Congress daguerreotype, the George Eastman House panorama, and the 1851 McIntyre panorama now at the Archive of Modern Conflict in Toronto (fig. 5). The loss of the Parker House/Jenny Lind Theatre and Union Hotel in the Fifth Great Fire, of May 4, 1851, (fig. 6) is how we can be certain these daguerreotypes were made before that date—and, more precisely, before Sterling McIntyre's departure from San Francisco in mid-April 1851.

THERE ARE NO IMAGES EXTANT of the second Jenny Lind Theatre. Soon after the May 1851 fire it was rebuilt again, only to be lost within

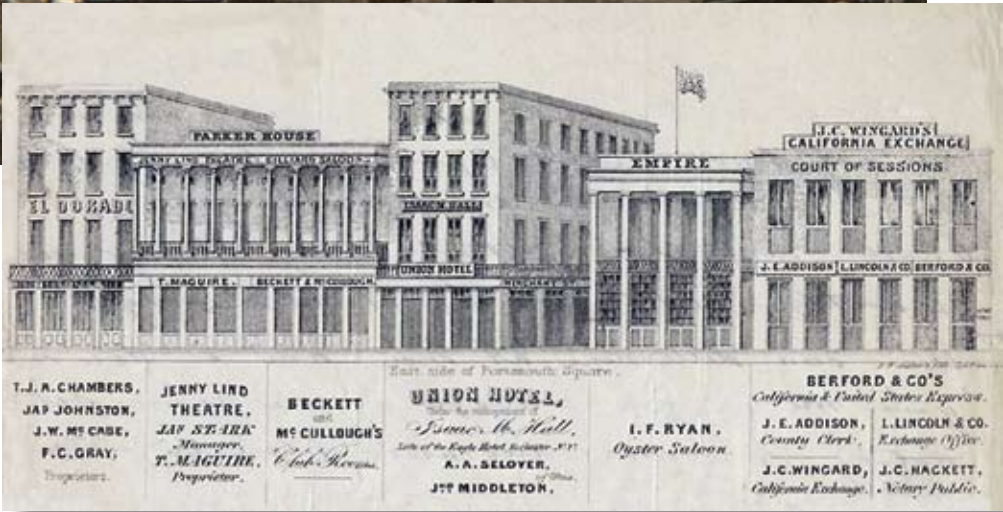


FIGURE 5
The detail of the daguerreotype [top] is from the fourth plate in the AMC Toronto's panorama and, BELOW, a detail of a lithograph letterhead of the buildings facing the east side of Portsmouth Square in early 1851, prior to the Sixth Great Fire on May 4.

Lithograph courtesy of the de Young Museum, San Francisco, CA, www.famsf.org.

FIGURE 6
The Fifth Great Fire, from the *Daily Alta California*, May 7, 1851. The Parker House is again highlighted in red and, in green, the row of buildings shown on page 22, including the *Daily Alta*, all of which escaped the flames. The dark blue shows the wharf built out over the bay that also burned.

weeks in the Sixth Great Fire on June 22, 1851. This time the Parker House was finally replaced with a fire resistant stone structure and reopened as the Third Jenny Lind Theatre on October 4, 1851 (fig. 7). The facade of the Jenny Lind Theatre was trimmed in fine masonry of yellow-tinted sandstone imported from Australia. Also lost to the fire was San Francisco's City Hall. For a while the town's officials had to operate out of various rented quar-

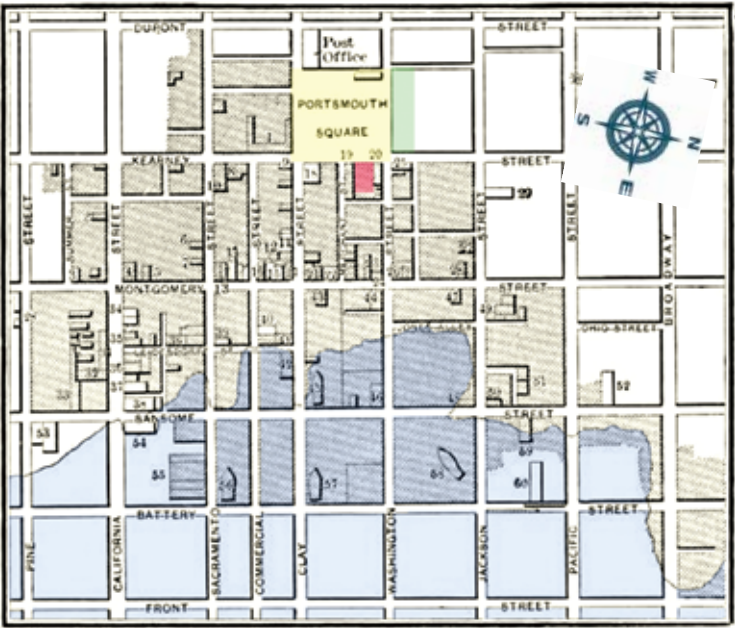


FIGURE 7
Celebration of Washington's Birthday, San Francisco, California, February 23rd, 1852. Pollard & Britton, lithographer and publisher. From the Robert B. Honeyman, Jr. Collection. Courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. BANC PIC 1963.002:0010-A

ters, until City Council agreed to purchase the Jenny Lind property as the new City Hall. They paid Thomas Maguire \$200,000 for the Portsmouth Square property, and the refitting would cost half as much again. The deal was made on June 4, 1852, despite the Mayor’s veto. Many townspeople felt “swindled” by the exorbitant cost and thousands, pro and con, turned out at Portsmouth Square rallies.⁸

The Sixth Great Fire also destroyed buildings along the north side of the Plaza on Washington Street. Lost were many of the buildings in McIntyre’s *Portsmouth Square* daguerreotype (p. 22), including the California Restaurant, the *California Alta* newspaper office, and the Louisiana Hotel. Saved were the Bella Union and the Sociedad Hotel property, at the corner of Kearny and Washington. In late May it had been refitted as a new Customs House, complete with a brand-new iron vault, purported to be fire and theft proof.⁹

COMPETITION ON PORTSMOUTH SQUARE

PERHAPS IT WAS THE PRESSURE of competition from newly arrived daguerreotypist Robert Vance that motivated Sterling McIntyre to leave the city. Robert Vance was in San Francisco as early as January 1851¹⁰ and was, by February 1, operating a studio.

DAGUERREOTYPE PANORAMA OF SAN FRANCISCO

Mr. R. H. Vance, a daguerreotype artist on Clay street, has taken ten different representations of this city, for the purpose of being exhibited a the World’s Fair in London. We have the pleasure of examining them, and in point of beauty, excellence and accuracy, they cannot be surpassed. We doubt not but they will attract great attention in London, and demonstrate to the world that California is not behind the age in the cultivation of the fine arts.¹¹

Vance’s Clay Street studio was a few doors west of Montgomery Street, on the north side of Clay, across from the Adelphi Theatre. This placed him quite directly across from McIntyre’s dentist office, on the south side of the street. Vance’s whole-plate views of the environs around the Plaza, and panoramic views from the hills, could not have gone unnoticed by McIntyre. Vance also intended to exhibit his views at the Crystal Palace in London, but he was unable to complete his work in time, having been interrupted by fire. The fate of his 300 whole-plate California views, thirty-one of which were taken in San Francisco before and after the fires of May and June, have recently

been traced by Vance-researcher Gary Ewer and he believes they too had been consumed by flames—in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871.¹²

WILLIAM SHEW had a better plan to combat fire. His was to build a grand mobile studio that could be rolled out of harms way. Having decided to construct his saloon on the Plaza, he drew the attention of the editors of the *Daily Alta* who wrote,

A good deal of curiosity has been expressed in regard to the object and intention of the big wagon which fills up a large portion of the plaza, and which was yesterday being covered with a frame. Some suppose that ‘the elephant’ which so many people come here to see was to be caged up in it and exhibited to greenhorns at a quarter a sight. . . It seems, however, that it is to be a traveling daguerreotype establishment, with which the proprietor intends to travel around the city and country, taking views and portraits.¹³

Shew sought permission to operate his saloon on the Plaza, but the city fathers were not enthusiastic, rather wishing to beautify Portsmouth Square, which was barren of grass and recently lined with new fencing. So Shew had to remove his “Daguerreian Saloon” and he located the wagon on the vacant lot adjacent the *Alta California* building which was nearing completion, the old one having been destroyed during the Sixth fire (fig. 8).

DAGUERREOTYPE DRAWINGS.—Mr. Shew had no show, it seems, before the Common Council, in reference to the matter of depositing his Daguerrean [*sic*] omnibus on the Plaza. After taking council in the matter, possibly they thought that the “Great Attraction” might attract more than its share of the sun’s rays from the Plaza itself, where they have been trying to raise a crop of grass for the last two years, and so concluded not to let him occupy the place asked for. Mr. Shew, therefore, to show his independence, trundled his studio—most artistically selecting one moonshiny night last week for the removal—on to the vacant lot on Washington street, opposite our office.¹⁴

THE PHOENIX-LIKE SPIRIT of San Franciscans during the extreme times of fire after fire and the short-lived reconstructions was observed by historian Theodore Hittell,



FIGURE 8
William Shew (attrib.), *Shew’s Daguerreian Saloon and the Alta California Newspaper Office*. Half-plate daguerreotype.

Courtesy of the Oakland Museum of California.

Afterwards for years people would refer back to and talk over the great fires as a wonderful experience; and individuals, who had been burned out several times, took a pride in relating with what elasticity they had risen superior to their misfortunes. Some had been entirely stripped four or five times. Dr. William Rabe, a very excitable man, who owned property on the south side of Clay street a few doors west of Montgomery and suffered several times, upon rebuilding, had the motto “Nil Desperandum” [Never Despair] placed upon his house in large letters, which still remain.¹⁵

Careful readers of our panorama’s history will note that Dr. Rabe’s building was the location where Sterling C. McIntyre first established himself in San Francisco. Perhaps Rabe could not convince him to stay.

NOTES

1. Charles R. Smith, ed., *The Journals Of Marine Second Lieutenant Henry Bulls Watson 1845-1848*, (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, 1990), p. 148 of the Vol. 2 transcription. A four-volume transcript is on: “Marines: The Official Website Of The United States Marine Corps.” www.marines.mil.
2. Ibid, p. 159, vol. 2.
3. Ibid, p. 148, vol. 2.
4. Ibid, p. 160, vol. 2.
5. Hittell, Theodore H. *History of California*, Vol 3 (San Francisco: N. J. Stone & Company, 1897), p 344.

consigned to R. H. Vance. *Daily Alta California*, 6 January 1851.

11. *Steamer Pacific News* (San Francisco, CA), February 1, 1851. From research by Gary W. Ewer.
12. This information is from Gary W. Ewer’s excellent presentation on R. H. Vance’s 300 daguerreotype views, given at the 2011 Daguerreian Society Symposium in St. Petersburg, FL.
13. *Daily Alta California*, 22 July 1851.
14. *Daily Alta California*, 6 October 1851.
15. Hittell, *California*, p. 359.

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