

Robert Taft photography correspondence

Section 30, Pages 871 - 900

This correspondence documents the research Robert Taft undertook in writing his works on the history of American photography. It includes letters he wrote and responses. Correspondents include staff in historical and other collecting institutions, family members of early photographers and expedition members, publishers, and other people researching early U. S. photographers. It also documents some preservation work he did on early photographs. See Taft's photography research notes as Kansas Memory unit 228066.

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Robert Taft photography correspondence

Nov. 30
1937

Mr. Beaumont Newhall
The Museum of Modern Art
14 West 49th Street
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Newhall:

Mr. H. Armour Smith of Yonkers writes me that you had his collection of Mexican war daguerreotypes at the Museum for the exhibition.

Did you photograph them while there, and, if so, would it be possible to obtain prints from No. 11 "Webster's Battery--- N. of Buena Vista" and either No. 5 "Virga. Rgt. Calle Real" or No. 8 "Genl. Wool and staff--Calle Real."

Smith seems to think that some photographer (presumably U.S.) set out to photograph the Mexican War but he apparently has made no serious study of the daguerreotypes. From the information which he sent me, it seems much more reasonable to assume that the daguerreotypes were made by a local daguerreotypist at Saltillo--even then (1846-47) a sizable city.

Have you worked on the problem at all? If not, I believe as soon as I get time, I will make an extended study of them and am sure that I can dig up more information than is known about them at present.

By the way, I happened to think the other day, that you might be interested in seeing a number of calotypes made by Talbot. Miss Margaret Talbot gave them to me. One or two are nearly identical with those in Talbot's Pencil of Nature. I also have a number of wax paper negatives made by a pupil of Talbot. Their date of origin isn't definite but they were made before 1865. If you are interested in seeing them, I'll send them on.

Yours,

Robert Taft

RT:NSR

Robert Taft photography correspondence

Director
XXXXXX
CURATOR OF MUSEUM

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA
VERMILLION

Dec. 1, 1937

Mr. Robert Taft,
The University of Kansas,
Lawrence, Kansas.

Dear Mr. Taft:

We have several photographs of Mr. Morrow in the Memorial Collection here and have selected two which seems to represent him best prior to 1880. These we are sending you under separate cover.

While we have about 400 old photographs here taken by Mr. Morrow from 1869 until 1883, there are none labelled as pertaining to the "Stanley Expedition of 1873", nor "the Yellowstone Expedition of 1876". There are several scenes of "Prickly Pear Canyon, Mont." but no date given. In 1876 he made several while with the Crook Expedition through the Black Hills and up to the Little Big Horn in Montana. This visit appears to have been for the purpose of burying the dead of the Custer Massacre. ^{are} There ₁ more than 100 photographs of Indian Chiefs and other Indian scenes.

If you think there may be any of the above interesting to your work, let me know about what you wish, and I will be glad to send them as a loan.

I do not know what information appeared in the Yankton paper of which you refer, But it is understood that Mr. Morrow learned his photography from Mr. Brady while both were stationed near Point Lookout, Md., during the early part of the civil war.

We would like these returned as soon as possible, and if used that the Museum receive credit. Yours truly,
W.H. Over, Director

W.H. Over

Robert Taft photography correspondence

The Museum of Modern Art

14 West 49th Street, New York, N. Y.

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2 December 1937

Prof. Robert Taft
University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas

Dear Prof. Taft:

Yes, we did have the Mexican War daguerreotypes photographed, and I am sending you some enlargements we have on hand, and shall send No. 11, "Webster's Batty---N. of Buena Vista" as soon as I can get it printed.

The photographs are disappointing because we could not clean the daguerreotypes. We felt a little disappointment in their artistic value; certainly they must be studied with more care than I have given them. Smith is very fussy about the distribution of the prints, and so I must ask you not to publish them without his written permission. The big prints that I'm sending come with the compliments of the museum. The little prints will be 10 c. each, size 4 x 5, and if you want the whole series, I'll have them made. I wish I could reciprocate and send you the negatives, but obviously I can't let them go out for somebody else may want prints.

I'd be most interested to see the Talbot material and the Talbot-pupil's work. I don't know whether I told you that I've been contemplating writing a life of T. Chief drawback at the moment is the stubborn refusal of the Science Museum to let me have word of their material. Have you seen Peter Quennell's "Victorian Panorama?" It contains some Fox Talbot prints that are bound to lead to a completely new appreciation of his work, for they are full of people---dated, too (1842).

Had lunch with Edward Epstein the other day. He wished to be remembered to you.

Yours,

Beaumont Newhall

P.S. Miss Talbot has graciously offered to put at my disposal all her material.

Robert Taft photography correspondence

Dec. 3, 1937

Mr. H. Armour Smith, Director
Yonkers Museum of Science and Arts
Trevor Park, Yonkers, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Smith:

Thank you very much for writing me at length concerning the Mexican war daguerreotypes. They are undoubtedly interesting and important historic documents. Can you tell me more about their history? How long has the Yonkers Museum had the collection and from whom were they acquired? Has any extended study been made of the daguerreotypes and if so, has the study been published?

Thank you, also, for writing the Museum of Modern Art. I have had considerable correspondence with Beaumont Newhall and I have also written him to see if copies of the daguerreotypes are obtainable. I am particularly interested in Nos. 2, 5, 6, 8 and 11. If I can secure prints, I take it that I have your permission to reproduce them (probably not more than two) in my book, do I not?

Thank you again for your aid. It is most greatly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Taft

RT:NSR

Robert Taft photography correspondence

Dec. 4, 1937

Mr. E. L. Morse or heirs
c/o Houghton Mifflin Co.
2 Park Street
Boston, Mass.

Dear Sir:

The Houghton Mifflin Company informs me that you are the owner of the copyright on Life and Letters of Samuel F. B. Morse. I would very much like your permission to quote a sentence from volume two, page 129 of this book in my manuscript, Photography and the American Scene which Macmillan is publishing next year. Your courtesy in granting this permission would be highly appreciated.

Might I also ask if you, or any other descendants of S. F. B. Morse, have any daguerreotypes which he actually made? If you do not know, can you suggest any one to whom I might write for such information?

Thank you for any help that you can give me.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Taft

RT:NSR



Robert Taft photography correspondence

Dec. 7, 1937

Mr. Beaumont Newhall
Museum of Modern Art
14 West 49th Street
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Newhall:

Thanks for your letter of December second and for the prints of the Yonkers daguerreotypes. Yes, I would like to have copies made of the remainder of the set and will be glad to pay for them. I have written Smith for his permission to reproduce.

Yesterday I sent you the Talbotypes by Talbot and the negatives by one of his students. As soon as I get time I will look up what information I have on the negatives and send it on. Both prints and negatives may be kept as long as you desire.

I am interested to know that you are contemplating a biography of Talbot and hope the Science Museum will give you access to their material, which I believe they will do. I have felt from what little study I have made that Talbot hadn't been fairly treated. Potonniee was particularly negligent, or partisan, with respect to Talbot's claims and, I think unduly enthusiastic with respect to Bayard, yet Potonniee isn't able to establish by what process Bayard made his prints. In Bayard's first description of his process (Nov. 8, 1839), Bayard prepared his paper by soaking in salt solution, drying and coating with silver nitrate (following Talbot); it was then fumed with iodine, exposed and developed with mercury vapor (following Daguerre); the print was fixed with hypo (following Herschel). No wonder Bayard had little influence on the subsequent development of photography. Bayard described his process a second time (Feb. 24, 1840), the process being different than his first one but you will note he starts out, "Ordinary letter paper having been prepared according to M. Talbot's method....." (my italics). Potonniee then goes on to say that Bayard described his process a third time (1860), the third description being still different! I wonder if Bayard actually got positive prints in the camera?

The description of his processes should be actually checked experimentally to see if positive prints similar to the known Bayard relics can be produced. But I suppose this is all old to you.

Thank you for mentioning Edward Epstein's remembrance. I hope I will be able to get to New York some day and meet you both.

Sincerely,

Robert Taft

RT:R



Robert Taft photography correspondence

Museum of Modern Art, New York
12 December 1937

Dear Taft:

I have received in perfect condition the Talbot material, and the paper negatives made by a follower. Thank you very much indeed for your generosity in allowing me to keep these for study purposes; I shall return them to you in the near future. Many of the photographs are already known to me, but there are four of the Talbot prints which I hadn't seen, and one new engraving. The Stanton calotypes are entirely new to me.

Your queries about the priority of Bayard's work are very well taken indeed. Obviously Potoniée is ridiculously chauvinistic, and won't permit himself to look at the Talbot evidence with an open mind. I mean to study the whole problem with great care. Your suggestion about making actual laboratory tests is a practical solution which I had never thought of, but which is an excellent idea.

I am sorry to have held your MS so long. Obviously it is a matter which I have wanted to give my most careful consideration, and it has so happened that during the past fortnight I have been very busy indeed. But the paper could not have arrived at a better time, for I have had to work on the very subject of photographic esthetics for a lecture presented at Harvard last Thursday, a syllabus of which is enclosed.

You ask for a frank opinion of the section. You have already expressed your lack of interest in the subject. You open the section with a strongly worded apologium, for touching on the esthetics of photography. You make me father of the esthetics in a note which certainly gives me full credit for whatever aid I have been to you.

Therefore I feel justified in speaking out in an utterly candid way, knowing that you will not feel hurt, and that you will not feel that I am unfairly criticizing you.

After considerable study and thought I very much regret to write that I consider it confused and unsatisfactory. I very much recommend that you drop all esthetic consideration from your excellent text. As you yourself say, "It [photo-esthetics] is not one of primary interest to the social historian." For the benefit of those who wish to pursue the subject, you might refer to my book, which I think outlines in a sketchy way the lines on which an esthetic of photography might be built.

Now I want to show you why I have come to this conclusion---a conclusion which, if I am not mistaken, you will really welcome. Incidentally, I shall be very glad indeed to drop a line to Macmillan, if you chose, explaining that my attack on your esthetic section was necessitated because you had brought up the ~~same~~ question.

You say that there is nothing wrong in judging photographs in terms of painting. There is everything wrong with it, and it is just this sort of criticism that I am trying to combat. It is a perfectly natural thing to do, and, from the production side it necessarily effected early photography. For example, the first successful photograph I know of, Daguerre's 1837 still-life, is compositionally a mess. It was not created as a picture, but as an experiment. Later photographers naturally wanted to give their work a certain organization, and compositional unity; the only things they knew were paintings, so they unconsciously followed their precepts. Thus daguerreotype portraits resemble Ingres' portraits; the pose, lighting and whole con-

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ception of D. O. Hill's work is borrowed from his Scottish colleague Raeburn. But, as photography developed, we find various purely photographic qualities gradually appreciated, and used in an entirely functional manner. The movement began earlier, but Brady and Gardner are the first really great exponents. Their work has no such relationship to painting. Indeed, it was never considered to be even remotely connected with art until the last few years! At the same time that this functional photography was developing, "pictorial" photography was growing in another direction; it was trying to do what the painter did so much better; painting and etching was directly imitated; demands were made that their work be admitted in art exhibitions on the same level as painting. This was a blind, harmful, dishonest approach. Alas, it still continues!

There has never been any discussion whether etching, engraving, or drawing was an art equalling painting. Rembrandt's etchings are considered just as great, if not greater, than his paintings. Daumier's reputation is founded, not on his paintings, but on his black-and-white lithographs. Therefore I cannot agree with you that the photographer is handicapped in any serious way. As to size, that is purely a relative term. In the B. & O. ticket office in our office building is an immense photo-mural, as big as the average mural painting; conversely, there are manuscript miniatures only a few inches square that everyone feels deserve the most serious consideration as works of art, while Vermeer and Van Eyck often limited themselves to a canvas not exceeding 8 x 10 inches.

Passing now to the characteristics of photography. I am greatly puzzled to define the term "correctly rendered." In your studies you must have run across discussions of 10 to 20 years ago about panchromatic photography. A dark sky was "incorrect." So accustomed had people become to ortho rendition, that they felt that normally exposed (thru a K2 filter) plates were distorted. Mr. Wratten of London Kodak expanded to me very fully on this subject last year, and spoke with feeling, as he and Wainwright had invested all they had in the first mass production of pan material. It is not an essential characteristic of the camera that it faithfully records the multiplicity of detail present in the original subject. It may do this, which is another story. Thus I do not feel that one should throw out a candid photograph taken at F/1.5, with a depth of focus of only a few inches, because it doesn't record the background detail. And is grain the conditioning factor of clarity of detail? Is grain of any consideration in a contact print?

I know that Dr. Mees, with whom I cannot argue, says that the average range of intensities is seldom in excess of 30 to 1. This may be true in a subject with one source of illumination. It cannot be true of several sources of illumination. And furthermore, do not forget that Mees is writing for the amateur, and takes a typical amateur subject. Out of my window, I see, against the light, Rockefeller Center. I want to photograph both the building and a piece of the wall beside the window. Weston readings are 2 and 250 respectively! Yet I can see detail on the wall and in the skyscraper with ease.

When you say that professional recognition of this came relatively late, aren't you condemning in a sense some of the "incorrect" earlier work? Now about perspective. We very complacently think that the image cast by a lens has some objective truth in it. But what is all this talk of spherical and chromatic aberration? We "correct" our lenses to give the type of image we think is correct. Franz Roh, in a short essay on Moholy-Nagy remarks that if the camera had been invented in the Gothic period, they would have constructed lenses to give pictures akin to the drawings of the period---we should call them longitudinally distorted, probably. It is interesting that it was not the photographers, but the painters, who first made use of vertical perspective.

That the photograph extends human vision is absolutely correct, and its greatest esthetic function. In spite of all the above, when it comes to a psychological consideration of the subject, the remarks I have made in my book and which you



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use, seems to me entirely justified. The problem is not one of absolute values, but of our acceptance of the photograph.

I cannot understand, I regret to say, the paragraph on p. 4-5 beginning "Talbot, writing..." It seems to me that every photographer has ~~uttered~~ ^{fixed} fixed forever ^[objectively] in the position which it seems only destined for a single instant to occupy." The only difference is the length of the "instant." So far as Brady and Atget are concerned, how is their work unique in this respect? If only as series, why exclude Gardner (both Civil War and U.P.R.R.), O'Sullivan (Alaska), Muybridge (Coffee cultivation), etc., etc.?

Whether a photograph is a work of art or not does not in the least affect its value as a document. I hardly think your querying of this is necessary. What I feel is that if a photograph is 1) a document and 2) an independent work of art its value is tremendously increased; the documentary photos reproduced in my book are, I feel, such a combination. I would point out in your analysis of the very interesting N. Y. Times editorial that there must have been some powerful motivating force that caused the makers of the picture-book to shift to photography. Otherwise, as you well know, they could have made romantic sentimental photographs. It is easy to imagine a change in paintings and drawings to a more realistic presentation.

Your criteria of the value of a photograph as a document are excellent. By all means include this important section unchanged. In these three criteria you have, indeed, implied all the criticism I have outlined above in a fashion which I hope is not rude. You admit that study must be made to determine if the photograph truthfully records the past. Isn't this a strong criticism of p.2?

In your paragraph on p. 8 you really get down to the thing which is most important of all. I'd leave it as you typed it, "...records of the vision of an artist." This is incontestable, well worded, well thought out; it is enough on the esthetic side for your purpose.

In regard to your question if you have given me sufficient credit. Indeed you have! I appreciate very much indeed your thoughtfulness in this matter. As you know, it is not common to find such courtesy. My modest attempts hardly deserve all the kind words you have bestowed on them, so I have indicated certain modifications which I should be obliged to have made. My section on photo-esthetics is, alas, not penetrating.

The inclusion of the views of Weston, Stieglitz and Steichen is a swell idea. What did Steichen say? When you write ~~"The essential features of the photograph and its exploitation as an artistic medium is gradually taking place"~~ I believe that the essential features of the photograph and its exploitation as an artistic medium is gradually taking place" (absolutely correct!) don't you think that you are contradicting the statement on p. 1 "There is nothing wrong in such an attitude"?

Well, this is what, after a good deal of thought and discussion ~~not~~ with various friends, I have to say about the esthetic section. I hope that you will not be discouraged by my rather heavy criticism; in no sense does it apply to any other part of your MS which, as you well know, I am enthusiastic about. Please let me know what you think of this over-long letter. If you still feel that you ought to go into the esthetic problem, I'll help you out. It might even be feasible to do a short appendix, if it could be worked out satisfactorially with you and Macmillan. But honestly I don't think your book needs to go into the question "Is Photography Art?" which, as you so truly say, has led many others far afield.

Cordially, Beaumont Newhall

P.S. I'll have prints of the daguerreotypes for you in a few days. They are 5 x 7 so the cost will be a little higher than I quoted: 15 c. each, \$1.80 total.

Robert Taft photography correspondence

PAINTING AND PHOTOGRAPHY

A lecture by Beaumont Newhall

Painting and photography both methods of pictorial representation. Minor artists greeted photography's publication in 1839 with fear (1); major artists have realized its value as an aid to vision: Delaroche (2), Delacroix (3), Degas (4), Eakins (5), Manet (6), Meryon (7), Meissonier (8), Millet (9). Cannot measure influence by comparing similar subjects in the two media (10). Photography is not objective.

Stylistic variations in photographs (11). Most photographers trained as artists. The photographer's controls (12). "Artistic" photography (13). Scorned by artists: too easy, product of the machine (14). Now realized that this is a particular advantage of photography; pictorial literacy (15). United praise by artists of documentary aspect (2-9, 16, 17). Growth of documentary: stereoscopy (18), arresting of motion, cinema (19), television. Layout, photomontage. Experimental use by artists of the medium itself (20).

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- 19 Rotha, Paul: *Documentary film*. London 1936.
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Additional references and a convenient summary of the history of photography will be found in "Photography 1839-1937" (New York, The Museum of Modern Art, 1937).

The lecturer is indebted to Mr. R. H. Wilenski, Mr. James Thrall Soby and Miss Nancy Wynne for their unpublished observations on this subject.

The Museum of Modern Art, New York
6 December 1937

Robert Taft photography correspondence

pg. 1

(Is Photography art?)

This question at least deserves mention as it has been raised so many times both at home and abroad. It is not one of primary interest to the social historian, ~~however~~ ^{for} the historian is satisfied to obtain authentic photographic records, especially in the period before the advent of the dry plate, even though the technical and artistic merits of the scene portrayed fall far short of perfection.

It seems worthwhile pointing out, however, that attempts to answer the question "Is photography art?" have invariably judged the photograph from the standards of the graphic arts. This ^{judgment} of necessity, was so as there were no other criteria. At almost any photographic exhibit one hears comments "That resembles a painting by Turner --- or an etching by ~~Conalette~~ --- or by Lepers." ^{/Lepere} "After this manner of Degas" is, for instance, the title of a color photograph in United States Camera 1937.

There is nothing wrong in such an attitude--it is inevitable as has been pointed out. The photographer has an equal right with every artist to learn from the masters and profit by the great masterpieces of art. The photographer cannot ~~yet hope to~~ compete with the painter--for ^{one thing, he} as yet ~~he~~ lacks a completely satisfactory color process and he is also limited by size. One wonders if the painter had been forced to work only in black and grey and white in a space not greatly exceeding eight by ten inches, or thereabouts, if any time tested and world renowned masterpieces would have resulted.

Canaletto /
Goya /
Rembrandt's etchings!
Goya's "Disasters of War"!
Dauvergne's lithographs!
Charles Merjon was color blind

Robert Taft photography correspondence

pg. 2

In all of which we are implying that the photograph is distinct^{ve} from the results of ^{raphie} ~~geoph~~ art. The distinctive features, however, are those which make it of particular value to the historian. The characteristics which are ^{the} distinguishing ^{properties} ~~features~~ of the photograph may be enumerated as follows: (1) the photograph (contains) ^{may include} a faithful record of the multiplicity of detail present in the original subject. In the final analysis the exactness and ~~largely~~ clarity of detail is limited largely by the size of the silver ⁱⁿ ~~grams~~ constituting the image; (2) the photograph can portray correctly the gradation of light intensities in the original subject from the ⁺ ~~brightest~~ ^{light} ~~light~~ to the darkest ~~end~~ through all the intermediate tones with their infinite variations, even though color be lacking. In fact it is possible to define a technically perfect print as one in which the gradations of ~~the~~ tone are in exactly the same ratio as they existed in the original subject. Thus, if in a given subject, say a landscape, the sky has a light intensity thirty times as great as that from the darkest shadow cast by a tree,⁺ ^{+Surprisingly enough, the} average range of intensities is seldom in excess of thirty to one in any subject photographed. the technically perfect print will reflect light to the eye in the ratio of thirty to one from the corresponding areas portraying the original scene, whatever the absolute value of these light intensities may be. Not only will the brightest and darkest areas be correctly represented in tonal values but all intermediate values are correctly and continuously

optics
gradation ?

I very much
doubt this,
yr reference not-
withstanding.
Try actual
measurement
with a Weston
meter.



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pg. 3

1858,
Delacroix

reproduced in their proper ratios. The recognition of this possibility of correct rendition of tone came relatively late in the history of photography and the experimental conditions necessary to secure it were largely unknown to the professionals of the period in which we are here interested, but even so, continuous and infinite ^{gradation} ~~rendition~~ of tone are readily perceived even if correct rendition be lacking; (3) ^{and exact} ~~rendition~~ The photograph records a correct ~~rendition~~ ^{and exact} perspective of the original subject, provided a lens has been used in making the photograph which can pass the simple test of rendering any straight line as a straight line image, a condition which prevailed almost from the infancy of photography. It should be noted that even though the camera be tilted at any angle, the perspective recorded is correct. We have become so habituated, by age-old convention from the graphic arts, to the portrayal of natural scenes as they appear when projected upon a vertical plane, that ~~we~~ ^{we} fail to realize the correctness of the perspective when photographs, for instance, of buildings with converging vertical lines, or a portrait with a tremendous nose and a rapidly receding chin are examined. These photographs, however, when viewed from ^{the} ~~a~~ correct distance and held at the same angle at which the negative was made, appear perfectly natural, thus showing that the perspective was not wrong but simply unconventional.*

*The modern photograph may possess still a fourth distinguishing feature -- it extends human vision. This extension is secured by the ability to arrest motion or

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(5-a)

I + is my personal conviction
that our sustaining appreciation
of the photograph must rest largely
on its value as a historical document
and - in more recent times - on its
scientific worth. Professional
photographers and their critics
are just now beginning to
develop a satisfactory and
logical system of aesthetics
based on the distinguishing
features of the photograph. (342)

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pg. 4

X-
to portray the invisible by utilizing [^]radiation, ultra-violet radiation, or infra-red radiation. Only the first of these factors, the ability to arrest motion, concerns us at all here, however, for they are collectively modern innovations. f

Beaumont Newhall has ~~aptly~~ ^{with keen acumen} pointed out [^]that there exists a marked psychological difference between the ~~p~~ photograph and ~~graphic~~ art. (341) This difference is undoubtedly due to these three distinguishing characteristics, i.e., ability to render detail so minutely, to record infinite variation of tone, ~~and to supply exact variation of tone~~ and to supply exact perspective and proportion. We believe -- no matter how well founded our belief may be -- that the photograph recreates the original scene with absolute fidelity of fact. We can again glimpse the past for the photograph arrests time. studio!

Talbot, writing at the birth of photography in 1839 had noted this ability with clarity and feeling: "The most transitory of things, a shadow, the proverbial emblem of all that is fleeting and momentary may be fettered by the spells of our natural magic, and may be fixed forever in the position which it seemed ~~only~~ destined for a single instant to occupy". Despite the early recognition of this quality, it has been seldom intentionally and systematically used. Probably the two most outstanding exceptions in the whole field of photographic history are Brady, the American, and Atget, a Parisian photographer, who began working about 1890, and made what has been credited as "the most remarkable photographic record of Paris ever created." It is surprising that there have been so few.

I do not see why you limit this to Brady + Atget.

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pg. 494 A

wish it was!

*Museum of
Modern Art*

(341) Newhall's ~~penetrating~~ analysis of the field of photographic aesthetics will be found in Photography 1839 - 1937, New York, 1937. It deserves the most careful consideration of photographers and photograph~~ic~~ critics. I am ~~greatly~~ indebted, (as the careful student will perceive upon comparing Newhall's text with my brief discussion), not only to Mr. Newhall's published material, but also to extended correspondence with ~~Mr. Newhall~~ ^{him} upon this same subject.

when?

For information dealing with the points raised in the discussion ~~this~~ ~~for~~ the student is referred in addition to the following list of sources. The list by no means exhausts the range of topics treated but are selected as they were of particular value to me. For the interested student, ^{a consultation of} Camera Work in its issues from 1903 to 1917, and of ~~consultation~~ ^{of} Poole's Index and Reader's Guide, in addition to the bibliography given by Newhall, will give him a formidable array of citations.

(a) Moran's discussion which brought out the question raised in the text, will be found in Phila. Photog., Vol. 2, p. 33, 1865. A fair and sane discussion of the question typical of the time; ~~(b)~~ ^(c) an able modern discussion of the same question is given by H. I. Brock, New York Times, December 27, 1931, section 5, pp. 8 and 9.

(c) For information upon the resolving power (ability to render detail) of the photograph see S.E. Sheppard, Photography as a Scientific Implement, New York, 1923, p. 190.

(d) For information on ability to render tone see V. C. Driffield "The Hurter and Driffield System," Photo-Miniature ^{ure}

Robert Taft photography correspondence

p. 494 B

vol. 5, p. 337 (1903), ^a rewritten account of the original
and classic work first published in the Jour. Soc. Chem.
Ind., Vol. 9, p. 455 (1890). See also C. E. K. Mees,
Photography, New York, 1937, Chapter 4.

(e) For information on rendition of perspective see A. E.
Conrady, Photography as a Scientific Implement, p. 48,
342, I believe that this ~~confusion of aims is gradually~~
~~subsiding and~~ recognition of the essential features of the
photograph and its exploitation as an artistic medium is

Robert Taft photography correspondence

Dec. 13
1937

Editor
The American Mercury
Ridgefield, Connecticut

Dear Sir:

May I have your permission to quote Walt McDougall from The American Mercury, January, 1925, p. 21, as follows:

"The idea of offering a cartoon to a daily newspaper seemed so utterly absurd that I thrust the cardboard roll into the hand of the elevator boy-- who afterward became a star reporter, by the way-- and stammered, 'Give that to the editor and tell him he can have it if he wants it.'"

"Then I went to the ball game and forgot the cares, the hunger and the thirst of a poor artist who tried to sell a picture once a month to a funny paper."

I hope to use the quotation in my book, Photography and the American Scene which Macmillan is publishing next year.

Your courtesy in granting this request will be highly appreciated. Due credit will, of course, be extended The American Mercury.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Taft

RT:NSR

Robert Taft photography correspondence

Dec. 13
1937

The Editor
Editor and Publisher
Suite 1700, Times Bldg.
New York, N. Y.

Dear Sir:

W. G. Eger, in his history of American journalism (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1927) quotes the following paragraph (p. 329) from the August 22, 1885 Journalist, the predecessor of Editor and Publisher:

"It is the woodcuts that give the world its unparalleled circulation. When Joseph Pulitzer went to Europe he was a little undecided about the woodcuts. He left orders to gradually get rid of them, as he thought it tended to lower the dignity of his paper, and he was not satisfied that the cuts helped his circulation. After Pulitzer was on the Atlantic, Col. Cockerill began to carry out the expressed wishes of its editor and proprietor. He found, however, that the circulation of the paper went with the cuts, and like the good newspaper general that he is, he instantly changed his tastes. He put in more cuts than ever, and the circulation rose like a thermometer on a hot day, until it reached over 230,000 on the day of Grant's funeral."

Do you have a complete file of the Journalist and if so would you be kind enough to verify the accuracy of the citation and its date of origin? If the citation is verified I would also like to obtain the page of the Journalist on which it appeared.

If the quotation is correct, may I have permission to reproduce it in my book, Photography and the American Scene which Macmillan is publishing next year? I hope to include it in a chapter, "Photography and the Pictorial Press."

Your aid in this matter will be most highly appreciated, and due credit extended you for your courtesy.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Taft

RT:R

Robert Taft photography correspondence

Dec. 13
1937

Mr. Paul North Rice, Chief
Reference Division
New York Public Library
Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Rice:

Walt McDougall, an old time artist of the New York World states (in The American Mercury, January, 1925) that his first political cartoon appeared in the World in June, 1884. It was a cartoon of James G. Blaine. If this claim can be verified, it would make fairly certain that McDougall was the first successful illustrator of the modern American daily press, a fact which I would like to use in my book, Photography and the American Scene which Macmillan is publishing next year.

Would it be possible for some one in your newspaper room to examine the files of the World for June, 1884 to see if this cartoon (5 columns on front page) can be found and to furnish me with the date of its appearance?

I would also like to ask if your library possesses a complete file of the Journalist for 1884.

Thank you most kindly for any aid that you can give me.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Taft

RT:NSR

Robert Taft photography correspondence

The Publishers' Auxiliary

Most Thoroughly Read Newspaper Publication in This Country

WESTERN NEWSPAPER UNION
210 S. DESPLAINES ST.
CHICAGO

ELMO SCOTT WATSON
EDITOR

December 15, 1937

Dr. Robert Taft,
Department of Chemistry,
University of Kansas,
Lawrence, Kan.

Dear Dr. Taft:

Yes, I would like to have a print of the S.J. Morrow portrait since I have been unable thus far to obtain one from his son in California. So please send it along and let me know what I owe you for it.

Incidentally, I have received a letter from Dr. W.H. Over of the University of South Dakota saying that they have about 400 of Morrow's photographs, taken from 1869 to 1883, (although you probably know this already), and that he is willing to have copies made of those in which I am particularly interested. These include two scenes from the Slim Buttes battle, about a dozen ~~xxx~~ of the army camp life during the Crook expedition, mostly in the Black Hills, and six or eight of Custer battlefield scenes. He says the latter were taken "in the fall of 1876", which may be correct, but my guess is that they were taken the following year when Gen. Sheridan sent his brother, Col. Mike Sheridan, to bring away the bodies of Custer and some of his officers and erect the first monument on the battlefield.

I am expecting to have some of this copying work done for a magazine article which I have in mind. If you would like to have prints from any of these, let me know and I will be glad to provide them.

As for the clippings and newspaper sections which I sent you, they need not be returned. I hope they gave you the information you wanted. I'm much obliged to you for writing me about the Morrow portrait.

Cordially yours,

Elmo Scott Watson

Robert Taft photography correspondence



YONKERS MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND ARTS
TREVOR PARK, YONKERS, N. Y.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

December 17th, 1937

Dr. Robert Taft
University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas

Dear Dr. Taft,

I have been so much occupied of late that this is the first opportunity to reply to your letter of December 3rd, regarding the Mexican War daguerreotypes. These are a part of my personal collection of photographic material and do not belong to the Museum.

I purchased these Mexican War daguerreotypes about ten years ago from a Fifth Avenue book seller who had no idea of their importance as they had come in with a library of books he had purchased.

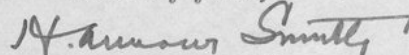
There has not been any extensive study made of the daguerreotypes. This is something I have had in mind for many years but never have been able to get at it, as photography is only one of the many branches of Americana in which I am interested.

It occurred to me that you might be interested in a collection of untouched photographs of some famous people of the mid-nineteenth century. They are mounted in an old handmade book which I was informed, was the personal copy book of the photographer W. H. Williams, who it is said was working in Washington in the early "sixties".

The photographs are in oval, untouched, and measure five by seven inches. They include an interesting Lincoln that I have not seen before, Kit Carson, Vice-Presidents, Justices of the Supreme Court, including Justice Taney, the first Japanese Ambassador to the United States and several of his Staff and many other interesting people, I think about fifty in all. Possibly some of these will be of interest to you for your book.

I am putting on an exhibition of part of my photographic collection in this Museum in January.

Sincerely yours,



H. Armour Smith
Director.

HAS:jka

Robert Taft photography correspondence

Columbia University
in the City of New York

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

December 17, 1937.

Dr. Robert Taft,
Department of Chemistry,
University of Kansas,
Lawrence, Kansas.

Dear Dr. Taft:

Your letter to EDITOR AND PUBLISHER asking them to check the paragraph on woodcuts in THE JOURNALIST of August 22, 1885 has been referred to this Library for reply, as we now have the complete file of this paper.

The paragraph you refer to appears on page five of that issue of the JOURNALIST, and is headed THE WORLD'S CUTS. The complete paragraph exactly as it appears in THE JOURNALIST follows:

(452)
"It is the woodcuts that give the World its unparalleled circulation. When Joseph Pulitzer went to Europe he was a little undecided about the woodcuts. He left orders to gradually get rid of them, as he thought it tended to lower the dignity of his paper, and he was not satisfied that the cuts helped it in its circulation. After Pulitzer was on the Atlantic Col. Cockerill began to carry out the expressed wishes of its editor and proprietor. He found, however, that the circulation of the paper went with the cuts, and, like the good newspaper general that he is, he instantly changed his tactics. He put in more cuts than ever, and the circulation rose like a thermometer on a hot day, until it reached over 230,000 on the day of Grant's funeral. This ought to be conclusive as to the influence of woodcuts on the circulation of a newspaper. The only question is how soon the people will be surfeited. When that time comes there will, probably, be a change and John will, undoubtedly, be the first to see it."

I believe other questions in your letter have been answered by the editors of EDITOR AND PUBLISHER.

Very truly yours,

H. Roth Newpher,

H. Roth Newpher,
Librarian,
School of Journalism.

Robert Taft photography correspondence

Dec. 18
1937

Mr. Beaumont Newhall
The Museum of Modern Art
14 West 49th Street
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Newhall:

Your letter of December 12th--which I note falls on Sunday--has been received. I feel guilty in having used up so much of your time but I rather imagine you had some enjoyment and profit in the task.

I haven't as yet had time to thoroughly digest all of your criticisms. I have been engrossed ever since sending you the rough draft, on remodeling and rewriting the last chapter of my book. I believe it is very considerably improved. Following your suggestion, I have renamed it and called it "Photography and the Pictorial Press."

Christmas vacation has just started and, theoretically, my time should be my own. I hope to get back on the final write-up of the section on pseudo-aesthetics next week and will write you further then.

I am enclosing a money order for the prints of the Smith daguerreotypes.

Please accept my sincere thanks for your time, trouble, thought and courtesy in looking over the recently returned manuscript section. I feel deeply indebted to you.

Wishing you the season's best greetings, I remain

Yours,

RT:NSR
enc.

Robert Taft

Robert Taft photography correspondence

Dec. 20
1937

Mr. Edward Steichen
139 E. 69th Street
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Steichen:

The New York Times of March 6, 1923 (p.15)
quotes you indirectly and directly as follows:

"No progress has been made in photography since the daguerreotype. -----a photograph is supposed to take things as they are, without injecting his personality into the picture. In the days of the daguerreotypes so many difficulties surrounded camera artists----that they were satisfied to get any kind of an exact reproduction.

"Mr. Steichen urged a return of sharp pictures and praised 'the meticulous accuracy of the camera'."

Were you correctly quoted and, if so, are your opinions still the same as those indicated by the Times statement? If your views have changed, could you outline them for me in a sentence or so?

May I have your permission to quote either the above or your new statement in my book, Photography and the American Scene which Macmillan is publishing next year?

Your courtesy and time in answering my questions will be most sincerely appreciated.

Yours truly,

Robert Taft

RT:NSR

Robert Taft photography correspondence

BEAUMONT NEWHALL
61 West 53 St
New York City

22 December 1937

Dear Taft:

I enclose your notes on the date of the Fredrick's Temple of Art photo, as requested. Thanks very much for your careful documentation of this photo. You can imagine how amazed I was to discover it in the hands of a Frenchman! It was popped on me as a special treat at the end of a long day of going thru several hundred daguerreotypes (and you know how tiring that can be) together with a glass of quetsch.

I am indeed glad that you find my comments a help. Of course they take time, but so does any worthwhile thing. And as for holidays, my photographic enthusiasm cannot be put away on Sundays!

The ~~new~~ daguerreotype photos will be on their way very soon.

Season's greetings.

Cordially,

Beaumont Newhall

P.S. If you don't mind, I'll wait until I send the daguerreotype copies to return the photo from Leslie's.

Robert Taft photography correspondence

D. APPLETON-CENTURY COMPANY
(INCORPORATED)
35 WEST 32ND STREET
NEW YORK

LONDON OFFICE 34 BEDFORD STREET, STRAND
CABLE ADDRESS HILANDERO

December 28, 1937

Dr. Robert Taft
Department of Chemistry
University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas

Dear Dr. Taft:

In reply to your letter of December 22nd, it will be quite all right for you to use the 100 words from the Century Magazine for June, 1890, page 312, with credit to the Magazine and to this Company as owners of the copyright. ✓

Regarding the illustrations, "Mamaluke" and "A Freshener on the Downs", in the old Scribner's Monthly for November, 1877, our records show that we had no rights in these pictures as they were reproduced from "Punch". However, they are out of copyright in this country, but if you wish to play safe, you might apply to "Punch" for the necessary permission - if your book is to be issued abroad.

Very truly yours,

D. APPLETON-CENTURY COMPANY

N. L. Somers
Treasurer

Robert Taft photography correspondence

Dec. 29,
1937

Mr. Henry R. Luce, President
Time, Incorporated
135 East 42nd Street
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Luce:

May I have permission to quote as follows from your speech, "What must the Press Do to Meet Its Public Responsibility?" delivered before the Institute of Human Relations last September:

"The photograph is not the newest but it is the most important instrument of journalism which has been developed since the printing press."

And in addition, the following sentences:

"The article had nothing to do with the horrors of drought and dying cattle. And it was the lead article and ran for nine pages. Now can you imagine any non-photographic magazine, intended to interest millions of readers, daring to devote its first nine pages to a descriptive contemplation of the fruitful and normal and quiet labors of farms and horses and harvesters and the wheat itself ripening beneath the sun?"

I hope to use these quotations, with credit, in my book, Photography and the American Scene which Macmillan is publishing next year. Your courtesy in granting the requested permission will be highly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Taft

RT:NSR

Robert Taft photography correspondence

Dec. 29
1937

Mr. Beaumont Newhall
The Museum of Modern Art
14 West 49th Street
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Newhall:

Can you locate for me the source of the following quotation of G. B. Shaw:

"True the camera will not build up the human figure into a monumental fiction as Michael Angelo did, or curl it cunningly into a decorative one, as Burne-Jones did. But it will draw as it is, in clearest purity or the softest mystery, as no draughtsman can or ever could. And by the seriousness of its veracity it will make the slightest lubricity intolerable..... Photography is so truthful—its subjects are so obviously realities and not idle fancies—that dignity is imposed on it as effectively as it is on a church congregation."

It may be that it is from Camera Work, No. 29, 1910, p. 17, the same citation you referred to me a week or so ago.

If you can't locate it readily, let it go and I can write Sandburg who quotes it in Steichen the Photographer. Many thanks.

Sincerely,

Robert Taft

RT:NSR

Robert Taft photography correspondence

31 December 1937

Dear Taft:

The quotation of Shaw's first appeared in his review entitled "The Exhibitions---II" in Amateur Photographer, 18 October 1901. It was ~~2x~~ reprinted in entirety in Camera Work, no. 14, 1906; the quotation occurs on p. 61. The quotation itself was again quoted in Camera Work, no. 37, 1912, p.39.

Both of these differ somewhat from your transcription, as follows:

line 1	Between "True" and "the camera", a comma. ¹
line 3	"coil" instead of your "curl" ²
line 4	"draw it as it is" for your "draw as it is" ³
	"in the clearest xxx " for your "in clearest" ³

Happy new year!

Beaumont Newhall

p 308 b
Note 342
Camera Work 3 No. 29 (1910), p. 17;
No. 37 (1912), p. 39.