

Robert Taft photography correspondence

Section 32, Pages 931 - 960

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.

Creator: Taft, Robert, 1894-1955

Date: 1926-1955

Callnumber: Robert Taft Coll. #172, Box 11-12, Photography-Correspondence

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KANSAS
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

Robert Taft photography correspondence

August 31, 1938

Miss Grace Van Wormer
Director, The Library
University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

Dear Miss Van Wormer:

I have recently acquired a series of photographs of early Iowa City views. Among them is a photograph of the "academical" faculty of the University of Iowa. They are listed as follows: George Thacher, N.R. Leonard, C.A. Eggert, A.N. Currier, S.N. Fellows, L.F. Parker, P.H. Philbrick, S. Calvin, A.D. Schenck. Can you by looking through your file of university catalogs give me the year in which these nine men appear as the academical faculty? Judging from the style of photograph and the dress I would expect it to be between 1865 and 1870.

I would much appreciate your courtesy in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

RT/o

Robert Taft,
Professor of Chemistry

Robert Taft photography correspondence

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA
Iowa City, Iowa
The University Libraries

September 1, 1938

Professor Robert Taft
Department of Chemistry
The University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas

Dear Professor:

In reply to your letter of August 31st, addressed to Miss Van Wormer, the nine men in your picture are listed as members of the faculty of the University in the Catalogues for the academic years 1874-1875 and 1875-1876.

Their positions were as follows: George Thacher, President; Nathan R. Leonard, A.M., Prof. of Mathematics and Astronomy and Dean of the Academical Faculty; Charles A. Eggert, A.M., Prof. of Modern Languages and Literature; Amos N. Currier, A.M., Prof. of the Latin Language and Literature, and University Librarian; Stephen N. Fellows, D.D., Prof. of Didactics, and Instructor in Political and Moral Science; Leonard F. Parker, A.M., Prof. of the Greek Language and Literature, and Instructor in History; Samuel Calvin, A.M., Professor of Natural Science, and Curator of the University Cabinet; Alexander D. Schenck, (First Lieut. 2d U. S. Artillery.) Professor of Military Science and Tactics.

Sincerely yours,

T.S.Bland, Supt.
Serials and Exchange.

Robert Taft photography correspondence

Sept. 12, 1938

Mr. Wm. E. Shea,
1624 H Street, N. W.,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Shea:

I have the following information concerning William Bell in my notes:

William Bell was born in Liverpool, England in 1830 and died in Philadelphia, Jan. 28, 1910. He came to this country when very young. Served in the Mexican and Civil Wars in the infantry. From 1848 to 1862 engaged in photographic work in Philadelphia. At the close of the Civil War became chief photographer of the Army Medical Museum and photographed many battle fields and officers of the War after peace was declared. The negatives are said to be still on file with the Army Medical Corps. In 1869 he reestablished himself as portrait photographer in Philadelphia. In 1872 accompanied Lieut. Wheeler's Survey to Arizona and Utah. 1878 photographer for Penn. R. R. 1882 expedition to Patagonia. 1885 became associated with George Barrie and Son, publishers, of Philadelphia, and traveled for them over U. S. for illustrations used in Roman Catholic Hierarchy books. 1892 went to Europe and photographed many works of art for Barries, who published book during Columbia's World's Fair containing them.

References on which sketch is based may be found Geo. M. Wheeler, United States Geographic Surveys West of the 100th Meridian, 1889, vol. 1, p. 666; Philadelphia Photographer, vol. 10, pp. 10, and 116 (1873); obituaries in Philadelphia papers for Jan. 29, 1910.

In return for this information, I would appreciate receiving a list of prints or negatives available in the Bell collection which were made on the Wheeler Survey of 1872 and copies of several representative prints, especially any of towns of the southwest and of Indian villages.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Taft
Professor

RT:NSR

Robert Taft photography correspondence

RESEARCH HOUSE

1624 H Street N. W.
Washington, D. C.

September 14 1938

Tel. National 8046

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

Dear Professor Taft:

I have studied your letter of the twelfth of September together with an abstract I made a week ago from the files of the Washington directory in the Library of Congress, and I have about concluded that the William Bell whose life you sketch is not the William Bell whom we believe to have been the founder of the Bell dynasty of Washington.

The story came to us at second hand that the Bell founder was a William Bell, presumably the William Hamilton Bell listed in the 1862 directory. (He disappeared from the directory following publication of the 1868 edition.) The business he started, according to this story, was carried on by his son, Charles M. Bell, who is still well remembered by oldsters of Washington. Just last night I visited an old lady who showed me half a dozen prints of herself and her family which had the imprint of C. M. Bell, taken in the 1880's.

Among the plates I have examined are quite a number--about 150, I should judge--of Indians, but they seem all to have been made in the studio at Washington. I do not recall any which might have been taken in Arizona and Utah, by the Wheeler Survey. If you would like to have some prints of these I should be glad to send them to you. Up to the present we have not had time to catalogue these.

Through a friend who talked with the people at the Smithsonian I have learned that photographs of General Sheridan are quite rare. That report must have been garbled in transit, I think, because already we have uncovered about eight of the General and there may be more. We have come across one unlabeled plate showing an officer of the Army laid out in his coffin, which we think might be Sheridan. The negative was taken by flashlight and is not good. We made a number of prints of it, but none turned out well so last night we had an Eastman expert work on it. He did much better than we were able to do and his prints bring out the face clearly enough so that we believe we can now make positive identification.

We are grateful to you for your kindness and hope that you will call on us if there is anything we can do for you.

Very sincerely,

William E. Shea

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THE BELL FAMILY, PHOTOGRAPHERS

Listings in the Washington Directories

1862:

Bell, William Hamilton, ambrotypist, h 305 Va av
 Bell, Francis H, ambrotypist, 408 Penn av h 307 Va av
 Bell, James, ambrotypist, bds 568 N north
 Bell, Lophi (Bell & Bro), photographers, 480 Penn Av h 307 Va av
 Bell, Thomas H (Bell & Bro) photographers, 480 Penn av h 307 Va av

1866:

Bell, William, photographer, h 371 NY av
 Bell, William H (Bell & Hall) h 307 Va av
 Bell & Hall (William H Bell and A. F. Hall), photographers, 480 Penn av

1868:

Only two Bell listings: William, and Bell & Bro. (Francis H. Bell)

1872:

Bell & Bro (Francis H. and Charles M. Bell), 319 Pa av nw. (This is the first time Charles M. Bell is listed.)

1876:

Bell, C. M., 459-461 Penn av h 225 D (a 1-inch ad)
 Bell, Francis H, photographer, 319 Pa av h 225 B

1882:

For the first time C. M. Bell has a ~~first~~ full-page ad. The address of his studio is given as 459, 461, 463, and 465 Penn av

1890:

Bell, Charles M., photographer, 463 Pa nw and 701 15 st

1893:

Apparently Charles M. Bell died following the publication of the 1893 directory (Jan 1, 1893-?), for in the directory of that year he is listed as living at the Hotel Windsor. In the 1894 Directory, although a page ad appears in the name of C. M. Bell, only Mrs. C. M. Bell's home address is given. The 1894 Directory gives 463 xx Penn Av as the address of the studio.

1908:

Bell, B. M., photographic studio, 1321 G (Mrs. C. M. Bell's name does not appear in the home address listings.

1909:

Bell, C. M., 1321 G (This is the last appearance of the name.)



Robert Taft photography correspondence

Sept. 28, 1938

Mr. Louis Walton Sipley, Editor
Pennsylvania Arts and Sciences
338 South Fifteenth Street
Philadelphia, Pa.

Dear Mr. Sipley:

Thank you for your kind letter of September 19th and for the compliment on my book. I was sorry to hear of Mr. Langen-heim's death but glad to learn that his photographic material had passed into hands that know and appreciate its worth.

I am sorry that no direct mention of Briggs or of Ran was made. I did refer to Briggs indirectly, however, by citing your article of 1935 (see p. 409 of my book). After receiving your letter of June 22, 1936 and your article, I contemplated adding a chapter to my book on "The Illustrated Lecture." Such a chapter is greatly needed and is one of the defects of my book. My manuscript was already long and practically finished when your material was received. For these reasons, I decided not to follow up my first thought, especially as I had, at that time, no publisher. With its considerable length and many illustrations, I felt some doubt on my ability to secure a publisher in any case. As it was, the manuscript was turned down by one publisher on these grounds, and Macmillan accepted it only after a very careful consideration. (They have had the manuscript about a year and a half).

As you can see then, I am glad to learn that you are at work on a manuscript, which I infer, deals with the development of the illustrated lecture in this country. I find among my notes several items that may be of interest and help to you, especially with regard to the origin of these efforts. You are familiar, of course, from my book, with Wolcott's early attempts to use photographs in the magic lantern (p. 114 of my book). From my preliminary studies, I would give the Langenheims credit for the successful introduction of photographic magic lantern slides. They had by early 1851 achieved an international reputation for their slides. This date, as you can see, clearly antedates the photographic work of Briggs, which you state in your article was begun in 1853 or after. Evidence on this point you will find in an article by Robert Hunt in the April, 1851, issue of the London Art Journal. Hunt describes at some length the Langenheim magic lantern slides,



Robert Taft photography correspondence

Mr. Louis Walton Sipley

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Sept. 28, 1938

comments on the uniqueness of the method, and then details a number of slides prepared by the Langenheims quoting from a prior publication of the Langenheims. As transatlantic communication in those days was slow, Hunt's article in my judgment, is very clear evidence that the Langenheims were using photographic magic lantern slides by 1850 and possibly earlier. I have found several references which strongly suggest that Frederick Langenheim had described and used magic lantern slides before 1850 and I had in mind, if I studied the matter in more detail, to examine the files of the Public Ledger rather carefully for 1848 and 1849 as a reference in the Scientific American for May 5, 1849 states that Langenheim described his work at some length in the Ledger. Also quite interesting in this connection is Langenheim's own account of 1874 which you will find in Anthony's Photographic Bulletin, vol. 5, p. 194 (1874). I am glad to pass this information along in the event that you are not already familiar with it and that it will be of some value.

I am hoping that my book will at least get credit for opening up a new field in American history. As you can see, I have stressed rather frequently the social and historical importance of the photograph. To my mind, the family album or the stereoscope, for instance, played just as important part--and a far more intimate one--in American family life, as did many of the economic and political factors of the times and for this reason they are just as entitled to a historian as are the more familiar branches of history. I mustn't bore you further, however, with my own notions. Many thanks again for your interest and your help.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Taft

RT:NSR

Robert Taft photography correspondence

THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS
LAWRENCE

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

October 4, 1938

Mr. John A. Tennant, Editor
Photo-Miniature
70 Fifth Avenue
New York City, New York

Dear Mr. Tennant:

Are you the author of "Aerial Photography" which appeared in Photo-Miniature, vol. 5, p. 145, 1903-4? I am writing a review on the history of American aerial photography for the Dictionary of American History and as the above article is the most important one up to its time, I wanted to cite it and give due credit to the author.

Thank you for the information

Sincerely yours

Robert Taft

Robert Taft

RT/o

Dear Mr. Taft-

Pardon informality of reply unavoidable at the moment. The monograph on Aerial Photography PM Series No 52 was edited by me - the text and pictures made up from information furnished by W.N. Jennings, of Philadelphia (his personal experience in balloon photography); from an account by W.A. Eddy (his experience in kite photog.) and from the literature of the field as quoted. If you will glance through the first few pages you will readily see where I am writing and where I get my facts as related - and where I am quoting another writer. *Respectfully*

not use his stuff - methods, formulas or descriptions.

Quite half of the 205 numbers in the PM Series have been handled this way. Generally I get someone who is supposed to know the subject from experience. I cut it up, change, add and cut out until the little I write satisfies me - always giving the author full credit. Sometimes (as in PM 167) there is not a line of the author in the book (where the stuff was so bad that I had to rewrite, and could

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KTH

IN REPLY ADDRESS THE DIRECTOR
U. S. COAST AND GEODETIC SURVEY
AND NOT THE SIGNER OF THIS LETTER

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

AND REFER TO NO. 80-LEF

U. S. COAST AND GEODETIC SURVEY

WASHINGTON

October 8, 1938.

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

My dear Sir:

In reply to your letter of October 4, 1938, regarding the air photographic surveys of the Coast and Geodetic Survey, you are informed that the first such survey by this Bureau was made in 1919 and covered Atlantic City, New Jersey, and vicinity. This work was continued in 1920 to include the coast line from Sandy Hook to Cape May, New Jersey. In 1921 and 1922 an air photographic survey was made of the Mississippi Delta region and included an area of 515 square miles, the topographic maps being compiled on scales of 1:20,000 and 1:40,000.

The air photographic surveys of the Bureau have been continued with numerous improvements in equipment and methods. The most recent development in equipment is the nine lens camera designed by the Coast and Geodetic Survey. This camera was completed about two years ago and has been in use by this Bureau since that time. A detailed description of the camera is contained in the July - August - September, 1938, issue of "Photogrammetric Engineering", published quarterly by the American Society of Photogrammetry, P. O. Box 18, Benjamin Franklin Station, Washington, D. C. The July-August-September issue of Photogrammetric Engineering is devoted largely to a report on the equipment and methods for air photography in the United States and other countries and contains a map showing the areas photographed in the United States to April 1938.

Up to the present time this Bureau has completed air photographic surveys of approximately 22,000 square miles of the coastal areas of the continental United States. This includes about 700 topographic maps on scales of 1:5,000, 1:10,000 or 1:20,000.

This office does not have exact information regarding large scale air photographic surveys which may have been

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made prior to 1919. It is suggested that you forward inquiries to the Chief of the Air Corps, War Department, Washington, D. C., and to the Map Information Office of the Federal Board of Surveys and Maps, Department of the Interior, Washington, D. C.

Very truly yours,



Director.

Robert Taft photography correspondence

October 12, 1938

Mr. Alexander King, Life
Time and Life Bldg.
Rockefeller Center
New York City, New York

Dear Mr. King:

I am sending you by express a copy of the daguerreotype portrait of Miss Draper which you will find described on pages 22 and 29 of my book. I thought it might be of interest as you inquired the other day for a portrait of Professor Draper. The daguerreotype is widely known but I have published in my book for the first time the only authentic information concerning it. The daguerreotype is one of the earliest American made ones and it is unfortunate that the image has been destroyed.

The owner, after having the negative copy made for me, took it to an "expert" to be restored as it was becoming discolored. The expert expertly removed the image!

My print has just come in from an exhibition in Paris which accounts for its absence from the Macmillan material if you looked for it.

If you do not use it will you return it to me as soon as convenient.

Sincerely yours,

RT/cdo

Robert Taft

Robert Taft photography correspondence

October 14, 1938

Mr. Elmo Scott Watson, Editor
The Publishers Auxiliary
210 S. Desplains Street
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Mr. Watson:

It was good of you to write me about my book and I appreciate your kind words most deeply. I shall look forward with interest to seeing your article - be sure and send me a copy!

I wish that I had my copies of the portraits you mention but Macmillan still has them - if they have not lent them out. Life asked to review my book and has taken some of the prints - which ones I do not know. I will go over my material this evening and see if I happen to have any extra copies here. If I do have any, I will send them on immediately. The National Museum copies may be secured through their photographer, Dr. A. J. Olmsted, at the Smithsonian Institute. He has been obliging but is pretty slow in answering letters.

As far as I know now, you are safe in calling Heller and Muybridge "The First Photographers of an Indian War." Glover (see page 274 of my book) attempted to photograph Indian "troubles" in 1866, but

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whether it could be called a "war" or not is open to question. Although Glover was not very successful, he did succeed in losing his life.

I'll be glad to have what information you have on Heller and will include it in a second edition of my book, if that remote possibility ever comes around. Whether there will be a second volume is problematical - it will depend on how the first one goes and also on my interest and energy.

Thank you again for your thoughtfulness in writing to me.

Sincerely yours,

RT/cdo

Robert Taft

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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
WASHINGTON

Prof. Robert Taft,
Department of Chemistry,
The University of Kansas,
Lawrence, Kansas.

OCT 19 1938

My dear Professor Taft:

In reply to your letter of October 5 requesting information on aerial photographic surveys by the Geological Survey:

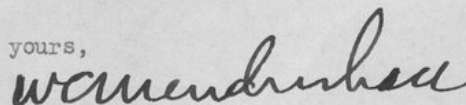
In 1916 Mr. James W. Bagley, one of the topographic engineers of the Survey's staff, developed the first multiple-lens aerial camera used in the United States and the first photographs with his camera were taken at Langley field in cooperation with the Air Service, during the winter of 1917-1918. The results of these tests served as a basis for a program to air map several strips of country between aviation fields.

In the spring of 1920 the West Indies Survey Division of the Geological Survey inaugurated a systematic aerial photographic survey of parts of Santo Domingo and Haiti with a tri-lens camera in cooperation with the Marine Corps. In the same year the Survey made its first successful attempt with photographs to map a standard quadrangle in conjunction with ground surveys by utilizing single-lens aerial photographs for preparation of field sheets, on which contours were added from surveys in the field. This work covered the Schoolcraft, Michigan, quadrangle. In 1921 the Reelfoot Lake, Tennessee-Missouri-Kentucky, quadrangle was surveyed and part of the culture and drainage was taken from aerial photographs.

There is no record of any extensive topographic mapping in the United States on which aerial photographs were used prior to the mapping of the Schoolcraft quadrangle by the Survey. Experiments were carried on during the years 1916, 1917, and 1918 by the Army, the Navy, the Geological Survey, and the Coast and Geodetic Survey to determine as clearly as possible how successfully aerial photographs could be used in topographic mapping and in charting coasts and what promise lay in future development.

Approximately 220,000 square miles have been photographed from the air for the Geological Survey in the United States and approximately 27,000 square miles in Alaska.

Very truly yours,



Director.

Robert Taft photography correspondence

October 25, 1938

Mr. Stephen H. Horgan
411 Highland Terrace
Orange, New Jersey

Dear Mr. Horgan:

Thank you for your kind letter of October 21st and for your congratulations. Coming from you, I appreciate it more than I can tell. I would be very glad to have you review my book for the Inland Printer and hope that a review copy will be furnished you by Macmillan. Of course, I have nothing to say about such copies but I have written to Miss Rosa E. Hutchinson of their publicity department suggesting that it would be very advisable to see that you got one.

Your comment about the London paper may be so, but I believe, and I think you will agree with me when you have had time to study my book, that I have treated the English quite fairly. In my chapter six I have described the work of Talbot and of Herschel at some length and distinctly pointed out that modern photography is based on their work, rather than that of Daguerre. You will find, too, in the notes (Note No. 115a, page 472 of my book) that I have defended Talbot's and Herschel's claims over that of Bayard as advocated by Georges Potonniée.

The introduction of daguerreotypy into England as described in my book on pages 35 and 36 is an entirely new story and I believe that I have so well authenticated it in my notes that the reputed English love of fair play will give me due credit for its discovery. Anyhow, I have been the first to point out (in book form, anyway) the importance of the photograph as a factor of historic and social importance - even the English have done nothing

Robert Taft photography correspondence

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remotely approaching it.

Thank you again for writing. Please
let me have a copy of your review when it
appears.

Sincerely yours

RT

Robert Taft

Robert Taft photography correspondence

November 10, 1938

Mr. S. H. Horgan,
411 Highland Terrace,
Orange, New Jersey.

Dear Mr. Horgan:

Thank you for your kind letter of November 2nd. I am glad that Macmillan furnished you a copy of my book and I am looking forward with interest in seeing your review especially since you were familiar with so many of the characters I was able to sketch but briefly in the pages of my book.

I had hoped to establish here a photographic museum and probably would have made some progress in this direction, but the depression hit us about the time I was beginning the collection and there have been no funds available since that time. As it was, I had to pay myself for the books, manuscripts, library searches, pictures, etc. upon which my volume is based. It is very doubtful if I will get enough return on the sale of my book to even repay me for the material I bought.

I would suggest that you try to dispose of your collections to some museum. Have you tried the Rosenwald Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago?

I would very much like to meet you and if I ever get to New York I will certainly let you hear from me.

Sincerely yours,

RT/cdo

Robert Taft.

Robert Taft photography correspondence

November 15, 1938

Mr. Raborn Phillips, Jr.
843 South Citrus Avenue
Los Angeles, California

Dear Mr. Phillips:

Thank you for your kind letter of November 10th. I am glad, of course, that my article on Brady was of interest. I have recently published a book which, I believe, would be of considerable interest and value to you. Its title is Photography and the American Scene and it was released by the Macmillan Publishing Company. It is essentially a history of American photography and in it you will find information and bibliography on the subjects in which you are interested.

It is an expensive book (\$10.00) so if you do not care to buy a copy yourself you might ask for it at the public library or the library at U.C.L.A. You will find a short review of it in the Los Angeles Times for October 9, 1938 (in the book review section).

As for contemporary manuals that would be of aid to you, I would try to secure a copy of the Silver Sunbeam by J. Towler. It went through a good many editions, but the first four were all published before 1865 and it describes in considerable detail, all the processes practiced at that time. You might be able to secure a copy through a second hand book dealer there in Los Angeles as it had a fairly wide circulation. If you can't find one there, I would suggest that you write Richard S. Wormser, 22 W. 48th Street, New York City, a dealer in out-of-print books, and ask him to quote you a price on one.

Write me again if I can be of further service.

Sincerely yours,

RT/cdo

Robert Taft,
Professor of Chemistry

Robert Taft photography correspondence

[11-20-38]

MRS. HORACE WELLS SELLERS
1832 SPRUCE STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

My dear Mr. Taft.

I was very
glad to find your note
on Photographs, among those
which Mr. Aschitt and I all
at our Casmopolitan Club
at this season of the year.
I was particularly pleased
with what you said of
the photographic cards of
my father-in-law.

Robert Taft photography correspondence

Cushman Sellers - and
especially so, as I feel you
told just what would have
pleased my husband, who
was very devoted to his father.
You speak of Cushman Sellers'
grand father Charles William
Peale & his uncle Rembrandt.
So I think perhaps you will
be interested to learn that
my son expects to publish
the life of the former, in the
spring. He inherited all
the letters and diaries of C.W.P.
from his father, who was

Robert Taft photography correspondence

MRS. HORACE WELLS SELLERS
1832 SPRUCE STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

quite a collector of Peak
pictures and data.

Your book represents
a tremendous amount of
research, and is interesting
throughout. ^{As} please
pardon the fact that I
was very much intrigued
by family history.

Most sincerely yours
Cora M. Sellers

Nov 20 - 1938

Robert Taft photography correspondence

November 21, 1938

Mr. R. W. G. Vail, Librarian
American Antiquarian Society
Worcester, Massachusetts

Dear Mr. Vail:

It was kind of you to write me about my book and I appreciate your kind words most sincerely.

I am very much interested in what you have to say about the Fremont daguerreotypes. I made an effort to get in touch with all the known Fremont heirs but apparently you have heard from one unknown to me. Of course, it may be that the daguerreotypes in question are not those made by Carvalho in 1854, but were some made in California during the Fremonts residence there. In any case, they would be of considerable interest to me, and I hope you get them. If you do, could I secure photographs of them? We have done quite a little work on copying daguerreotypes in our photographic laboratory here.

Many thanks again for writing.

Sincerely yours

RT/edo

Robert Taft

Robert Taft photography correspondence

December 5, 1938

Mr. Paul North Rice, Chief
Reference Division
New York Puclib Library
42nd and Fifth Avenue
New York City, New York

Dear Mr. Rice:

I would like to secure transcripts or photogtats, whichever is the cheaper, of the following material which I believe your newspaper department can furnish me:

1. An announcement of the exhibit at the Apollo Gallery of paintings by Alfred J. Miller in the New York Journal and Enquirer for May 7, 1839.
2. Mention of the same paintings as above in the New York Commercial Advertiser for May 14, 1839.
3. Advertisements of the same exhibit which are said to have appeared in the New York papers for May 15-23, 1839 (but one copy, of course).
4. Do you have a copy of the Oregonian and Indians Advocate for December, 1838. If so, I would like to secure a transcript of a letter written by Cornelius Rogers and dated July 3, 1838, which appeared in the above publication.

Thank you for any aid that you can give me in these requests.

Sincerely yours,

RT/cdo

Robert Taft.

Robert Taft photography correspondence

December 7, 1938

Mr. S. Martin
2207 Divisadero Street
San Francisco, California

Dear Mr. Martin:

Thank you for your very kind comment on my book. I am glad that you found it of interest and of value.

I am very much interested in your description of the San Francisco daguerreotype. You have undoubtedly a pictorial record of real historic value and I hope you will be able to dispose of it to some well-known museum. The discussion in my book should be of value to you in this connection. Of course, one of the objects I had in writing my book was to call attention to the historic value of such records in the hope that more would be brought to light.

I have recently run across some additional data on an early California daguerreotypist who escaped my notice before my book went to press. His name is coombs and he is said to have been in California as early as 1849. Have you every run across any mention of his name that would serve to corroborate his claim?

Thank you again for writing.

Sincerely yours,

RT/cdo

Robert Taft.

Robert Taft photography correspondence

KANSAS STATE COLLEGE
OF AGRICULTURE AND APPLIED SCIENCE
OFFICE OF THE COLLEGE HISTORIAN
MANHATTAN, KANSAS

December 12, 1938

Dr. Robert Taft
University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas

Dear Doctor Taft:

In respect to the first X-ray photograph made in Kansas, I am sorry to say that the negative was lost. It was retained in the department of physics; and some years ago when I tried to borrow it to have some prints made, Professor Hamilton was unable to find it. I do not know whether some misguided individual threw it away or whether it was merely misplaced. If the latter, it is gone now as the entire physics department was destroyed when Denison Hall burned in August, 1934.

I have a print made from the negative, and the only one of which I know, although it is possible that Professor Failyer has one. I am having our college photographer copy this and will then be in a position to furnish prints. I may hold this letter until I have a print to send with it.

That you may have as full information as I can give at this date concerning the production of that negative, I am having a copy made of an article which appeared in the Industrialist, February 22, 1896. My memory is that I wrote the description of our experiments as published in the article.

For many years Prof. G. H. Failyer was professor of chemistry and physics, and in that capacity he purchased several Crookes' tubes about the time that they were first made. I think that these must have been bought about 1880 or '81. When the newspaper announcements concerning Professor Roentgen's discovery were first published, Professor Failyer said to me, "I'd like to try some of our Crookes' tubes and see what we can get." By that time the department had been divided, and Ernest R. Nichols was professor of physics. Professor Failyer and I went over and arranged with Professor Nichols to work with us in the experiments with the tubes. Professor Failyer and I had dabbled with amateur photography and thus were in a position to develop any plates after exposure. We spent every evening for some time -- I should judge at least a week, perhaps nearly two weeks -- before we obtained the result shown by this picture. The objects used were an ordinary photographic dry plate securely wrapped in black paper over which a silver dollar was placed inside the iron ring of an ordinary ring stand. I think that this was used in holding the plate, etc. in position. The print shows a small part of the straight shaft between the ring and the standard.

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We probably had the date with the negative when it was made, but I cannot furnish that exactly now. I know that we had worked successfully for a week or two preceding February 21, when we gave an exhibition of three or four of the Crookes' tubes in process of action making negatives. I have prints from one or more of the negatives made that evening. My judgment is that our first one was made between February 1 and February 10, 1896.

Some eastern men had repeated Roentgen's experiments, and we saw reports of this in the Scientific American or Scientific American Supplement at that time. They published no details in respect to procedure but did mention that the X-rays were produced in connection with ~~the~~ electric discharge of high potential. That led to our use of the Toepler-Holtz machine in the way described. Professor Blake, head of the department of physics at the University at that time, made some successful experiments shortly after ours. I do not remember how long afterwards.

If I can give you any further information, I shall be glad to do it. With kind personal regards, I am

Very truly yours,



J. T. Willard
College Historian

lj

Enc.

Robert Taft photography correspondence

PHOTOGRAPHY AT THE COLLEGE BY ROENTGEN'S X-RAYS

(From the Industrialist, February 22, 1896)

Professors Failyer, Nichols, and Willard have been conducting some experiments in the so-called photography, by means of the form of energy recently brought into prominence by Professor Roentgen of Wurzburg, Germany, and have prepared the following for publication in the Industrialist:-

"Immediately upon the announcement in the daily press that the new photography was accomplished by rays proceeding from a Crookes vacuum-tube, we made a few attempts to obtain effects on photographic plates protected from light and covered in part by platinum. Only negative results were obtained, due, as it now appears, to insufficient exposure. The induction coil at our command is far less powerful than those described as used by others, and although by its means we can excite bright phosphorescence in the Crookes tubes, the intensity of the Roentgen rays seems to be small.

"An unsuccessful attempt was also made by actuating the Crookes tube by means of a Toepler-Holtz machine, the Crookes tube being connected with the discharging knobs of the machine.

"Becoming convinced that electricity of higher potential was essential, it occurred to us to accomplish the result by setting the Crookes tube at such a distance from the knobs of the Toepler-Holtz machine that the sparks would be obliged to jump a distance of an inch or more at each

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end of the tube. In this way, by an exposure of three-fourths of an hour to an hour, we obtained distinct impressions from keys, coins, and an iron ring.

"We very soon found, however, that the shock of the discharges was too severe a strain upon the Crookes tubes. An arrangement was therefore made in which the Crookes tube is wired by its electrodes to a pair of brass knobs, one of which is wired to one knob of the Holtz machine, while the other is placed at sparking distance from the other knob of the machine. In this way the discharge is made to pass through the Crookes tube without sparking it directly.

"To avoid the inconvenience of turning the Holtz machine, we have attached it to a Griscom motor, which does the work very satisfactorily.

"With this arrangement, several negatives have been made, one of which possesses more than ordinary interest. In it the impressions of the metals are all darker than the remainder of the plate, a condition which we can account for only by supposing that the plate was over exposed, thus making the deposit thin, while the darkening under the metals is due to their partial permeability to the Roentgen rays. The plate had been exposed about four hours. Other plates, exposed to exactly the same influence for two and three hours respectively, developed in the ordinary way; that is, lighter under the metals than elsewhere.

"Another feature which we wish to note, which seems to us as of possible significance, is the fact that in the development of the plate, the image is seen at the back at about the same time as on the face of the

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negative. It is recognized that the immediate cause of the action of the Roentgen rays on a photographic plate is not yet known. It may be from their specific action or from a fluorescence produced by them. The fact noted above may have a bearing on this point, and other experiments will be made in an attempt to throw light upon the subject.

"After succeeding in making negatives by the method described, we again tried the induction coil actuated by four cells of a bichromate battery. It gives sparks of a little over an inch in length. A plate exposed three hours to this gave us the best impressions we have of metal letters and objects. This is with a different Crookes tube, however, which may also have something to do with the result."

J. F. Nicolson
K.H.S.

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REFERENCE DEPARTMENT

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF

FIFTH AVENUE & 42ND STREET

New York, December 13, 1938

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

Dear Sir:

In reply to your letter of December 5:

1. There is no New York Journal and Enquirer. There is a Morning Courier and New York Enquirer, which we assume is what you mean. There is a notice of the exhibition under the title "Apollo Gallery" on May 7, 1839, p.2, c.2. We can furnish a negative photostat of this article for 30 cents.

2. The New York Commercial Advertiser mentions this exhibit on May 14, 1839, p. 2, c. 1. The cost of a negative photostat of this article would be 30 cents.

3. A copy of an advertisement for this exhibit is to be found in the New York Commercial Advertiser for May 15, 1839, p.3, c.3. A negative photostat of this advertisement would also be 30 cents.

4. The Cornelius Rogers letter appears in the Oregonian and Indians Advocate, December, 1838, p.75-78. We have a photostat of this magazine but we are not permitted to make reproductions from it. We suggest that you order photostats from the Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

An additional charge of 20 cents is added to cover the mailing of the above three photostats should you wish to order them.

Very truly yours,

Paul North Rice

Paul North Rice
Chief of the Reference Department

84-LF
303-McD
LC