

Robert Taft photography correspondence

Section 39, Pages 1141 - 1170

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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Robert Taft photography correspondence

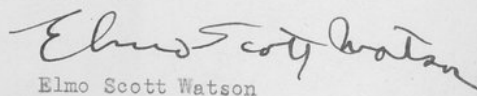
NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY
EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

THE MEDILL SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

large sheets showing reproductions of some of his paintings, biographical data on Leigh etc. Possibly you already have all the information you want on him but I thought I'd mention this on the chance that it might be of some interest to you if you didn't already know about it.

Again my thanks for your cooperation. I'll have the pictures back to you safely very soon.

Sincerely,



Elmo Scott Watson

Robert Taft photography correspondence

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART
NEW YORK 28
DEPARTMENT OF PRINTS

6 March, 1944

Dear Professor Taft:

I have looked again at the Dettaille reproductions, but I am not sure which would be useful to have photostated for you. There are so many! I don't see any convincing horse in quick action. In the cavalry pictures they are usually fudged by hiding legs behind stone walls etc. In fact, Dettaille was much interested in tailoring details of uniforms, but did not seem much concerned with anatomy, human or equine. By far the most profusely illustrated of our books on Dettaille is by Marius Vachon, Paris, 1898. I regret that our rules won't let me lend it to you, but if you cannot find a copy in your University library, maybe it could borrow the book from the Library of Congress. This would be more satisfactory than relying on my judgment to pick photostats for you.

The details on the various articles from La Nature are as follows:

E.J. Marey: Moteurs Animés (suite et fin) 5 October, 1878, pp. 289-295, 21 illustrations & graphs.

Gaston Tissandier: Les Allures du Cheval représentées par la Photographie instantanée, 14 December, 1878, pp. 26-28, 5 two-line strips of illustrations, reproduced in photo relief cuts, (Héliogravures en relief.)

E.J. Marey: open letter to Muybridge, 28 December, 1878, p. 54.

I'm flattered that you find anything worth quoting in my former letter. Please do so if you want to.

Very sincerely

A. Hyatt Mayor

Robert Taft photography correspondence

The Publishers' Auxiliary

MOST THOROUGHLY READ NEWSPAPER PUBLICATION IN THIS COUNTRY

WESTERN NEWSPAPER UNION
210 S. DESPLAINES ST.
CHICAGO 6

ELMO SCOTT WATSON
EDITOR

March 26, 1944

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

Dear Dr. Taft:

Last Friday I sent you by prepaid express the package of Pine Ridge photographs (also the copy of the manuscript notes and the report of hearings on HR2535) which you so kindly lent me. I would have returned the pictures sooner but I encountered difficulty in getting copies made of some of them which I wished particularly to have -- the university photography department wasn't able to do the work and I had to get it done by a commercial photographer. Again my thanks for your lending me this collection -- I got a great deal of valuable information from them which, combined with what I learned at the Nebraska Historical Society, gives what I think is a fairly accurate picture of the "who took what pictures" at Pine Ridge.

I found that the Historical Society has, in addition to a large number of original prints and photographic copies of prints by the various photographers, a set of 40-odd glass negatives which once belonged to one of the Tragers (of Trager and Kuhn). However, the interesting thing is this: although they belong to this Trager, the negatives were not made by Trager and Kuhn but by Morledge. Inspection of the negatives shows his initials "C.G.M." written in the margin and in some cases a notation as to the date the negative was made.

Morledge's numbers for all of these negatives are 1,000 or more (1060, 1246, 1383, 1423 etc.) usually placed in the lower righthand corner. Elsewhere on the negative is a lower number (83, 181, 204 etc) which corresponds to the number on the envelope in which they were filed by Trager.

You will notice that this double numbering occurs on some of the photographs in your collection, notably the one labeled "G" - Indians awaiting their turn at commissary issue" No. 1113 and No. 35; the one labelled "63" - Chief Standing Elk, 1st. Lieut. of Chief Little Wound and Black Horse", No. 63 and No. 1103 (with an line drawn through it); the one labelled "38" - Chief American Horse, No. 38 and No. 1038, etc.

From this evidence I think it's safe to attribute any Pine Ridge picture which has a number more than 1,000 on the face of it to Morledge regardless of the printing on the back. Judging from the number of these which I have seen, Morledge must have been about the most prolific photographer there and when Trager and Kuhn formed their Northwest Photo Co. to sell pictures they either bought his negatives or in some way acquired the right to sell them.

There's a lot more to this but I won't bore you with details now. I'm checking with Mrs. Ernest Trager of Mazomanie, Wis. (the widow of one of the Trager and Kuhn partners) and as soon as I get several points clarified I expect to write down a statement about the various photographers at Pine Ridge and their work. I'll send you a copy of it if you

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MOST THOROUGHLY READ NEWSPAPER PUBLICATION IN THIS COUNTRY

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210 S. DESPLAINES ST.
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ELMO SCOTT WATSON
EDITOR

care to have it.

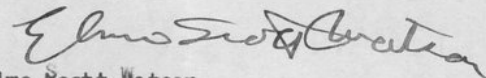
I'm writing to the Omaha Public Library, as you suggest, to see if I can get any more information about Morledge than I have now -- it's pretty sketchy and obviously inadequate for any statement about a photographer who was evidently as important as he was.

The Bureau of Ethnology people didn't give me the information I wanted about the Ghost Dance photographs and Mary Irwin Wright so I'm writing them again. I'll let you know the result.

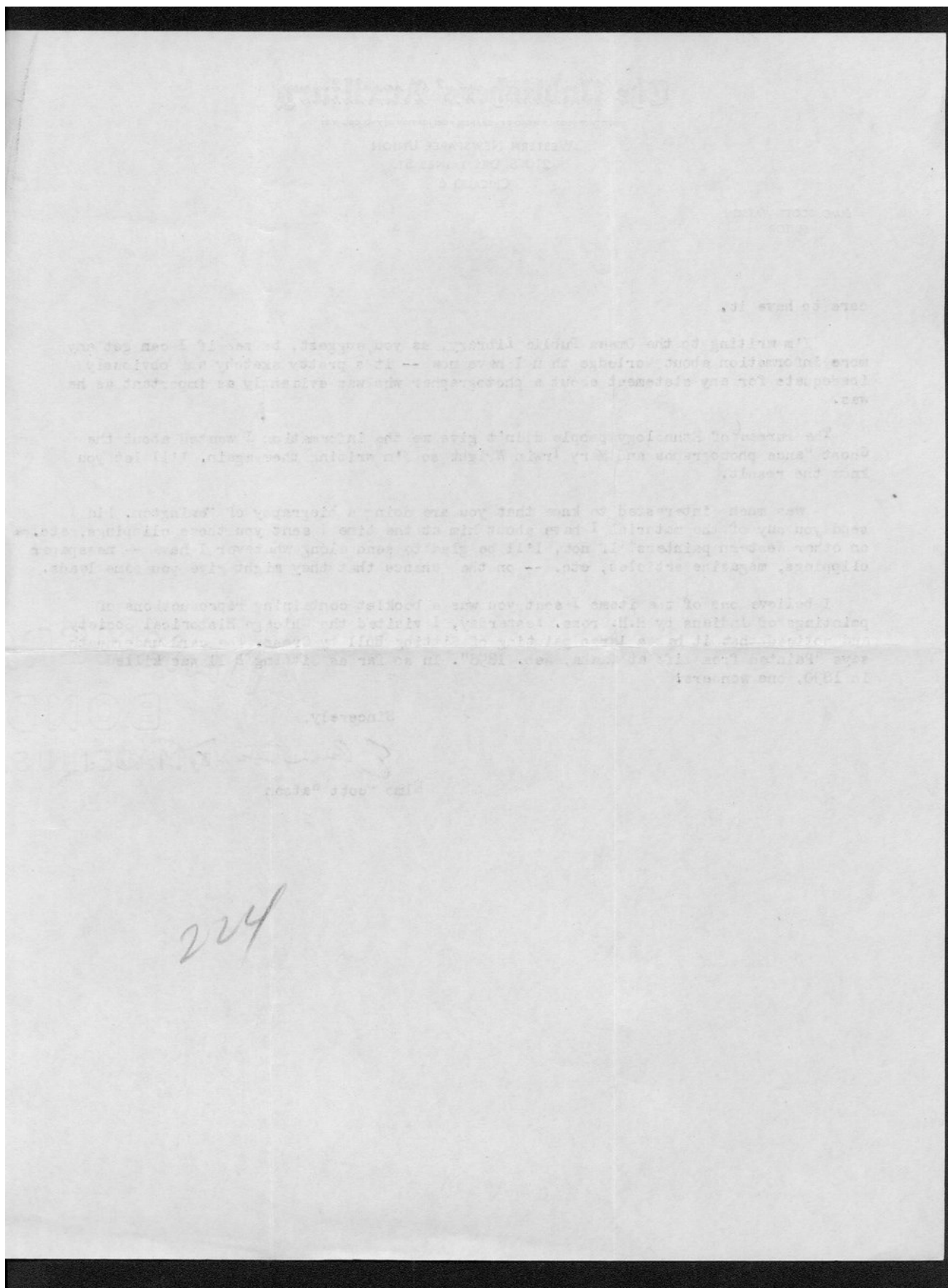
I was much interested to know that you are doing a biography of Remington. Did I send you any of the material I have about him at the time I sent you those clippings, etc. on other Western painters? If not, I'll be glad to send along whatever I have -- newspaper clippings, magazine articles, etc. -- on the chance that they might give you some leads.

I believe one of the items I sent you was a booklet containing reproductions of paintings of Indians by H.H. Cross. Yesterday, I visited the Chicago Historical Society and noticed that it has a large painting of Sitting Bull by Cross. The card underneath says "Painted from life at Omaha, Neb. 1896". In so far as Sitting Bull was killed in 1890, one wonders!

Sincerely,


Elmo Scott Watson

Robert Taft photography correspondence





Robert Taft photography correspondence

MRS. JOSEPH CARSON
636 WINSFORD ROAD
BRYN MAWR, PA.

April 4, 1944.

Prof. Robert Taft.
University of Kansas,
Lawrence, Kansas.

Dear Prof. Taft.

I wonder if you would be kind enough to tell me who might be interested in a series (of 28, I think) large ^{18x22" (?)} photographs of the Yosemite by C. E. Watkins. A friend of mine has such a series and I would like to help her dispose of them. The set, each signed and titled, were purchased by a man who lived in San Francisco in the 1850's when he opened the first U.S. Assay office there.

In your great book Photography and the American Scene you mention the State Library at Sacramento, and the Society of California Pioneers. Do you know if either of these institutions would purchase a set?

If you would be good enough to make a suggestion I would be grateful. She also owns a Robert Cornelius daguerrestype (with his name stamped in the brass mat) of her father, b. 1810, d. 1889, which might be sold if there is a

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good market for it at this time.

I enclose an envelope for your reply.

Very truly yours,

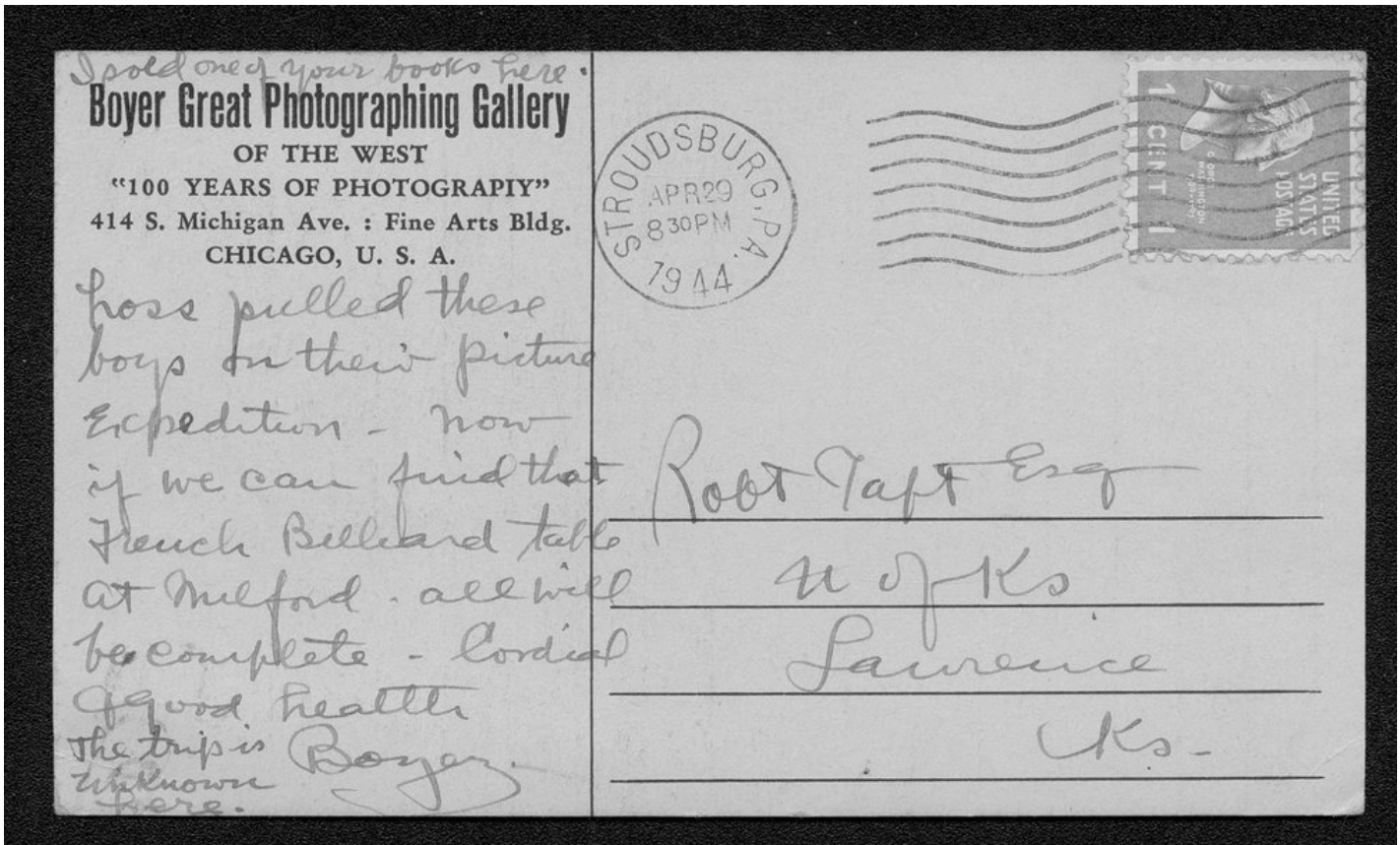
Marion J. Carson.

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Apr 29. 44 wish you were
BOYER GREAT PHOTOGRAPHING GALLERY
OF THE WEST *(here)*
414 S. Michigan Ave. — Webster 414-3
Dear Historian
Chicago, U. S. A. —

Well! at last here I
am in Stroudsburg Pa.
looking for "Stroudsburg
Joe" who piloted
Graff, Borden & Jascitt
on the famous "Real Amateur"
Photo trip in 1863 — dug
up thanks to you —
I await Mr Traprie who
arrives on the train
Sunday noon & with the
local fotog. we are all
ready to go — It is 81
years since Joe, with
his Balking Mare & another

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THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS • Washington • 25 • D.C.

REFERENCE DEPARTMENT

Prints and Photographs Division

March 11, 1947

Dear Professor Taft:

I have been intending to write to you for some years to thank you for writing Photography and the American scene, a practically unique and fascinating book which I greatly admire. On the theory that you collect additional information concerning photographs mentioned, but lost from view at the time that book was written, but at the same time with the suspicion that you know about the photographs I am about to mention, I venture this information which has just come to my attention.

On page 268, you discuss the work of J. D. Hutton for the Reynolds expedition (1859-60) to the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers, with the remark that "some of these may at some time or other show up." Has it come to your attention that the Hutton photographs, of what is left of them have shown up in the hands of the Midland Rare Book Co., P.O. Box 354 (or 30 Bowman St.), Mansfield, Ohio?

Along with the manuscripts and artist's drawings of the expedition, the Hutton photographs are described in: Midland Notes, no 32 (published by the Midland Rare Book Co.): Reynolds expedition of the Yellowstone... items 22-30. One of the photographs (no. 26) is reproduced. There are but five photographs from nature:

22. Photo believed to be of Fort Pierre.
23. Portrait of an Indian (unidentified)
24. Bad Lands scenery (unidentified)
25. Great Falls (doubtless the one referred to in the published report)
26. Group of 4 Indians.

In addition there are a number of duplicate prints of the above and 71 early photographic copies (including some duplicates) of watercolors and drawings made on the expedition, some of which are no longer in this lot as originals. In my estimate, apart from the historic facts and dates involved, the prints are of slight consequence because of their technical failings and can hardly be called more than attempts to photograph.



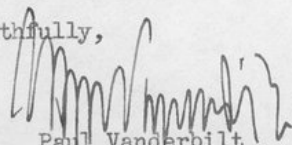
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3/11/47

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Please forgive me if I am taking your time to tell you what you have known for a long time. Some time, I hope we shall meet, as I am sure we have matters of mutual interest to discuss.

Faithfully,



Paul Vanderbilt
Acting Chief

Professor Robert Taft
Chemistry Department
University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas

Robert Taft photography correspondence

HELMUT GERNSHEIM F.R.P.S.

19 ST. EDMUNDS COURT • REGENTS PARK • LONDON NW8 • PRIMROSE 5669

7th March 1948.

Professor Robert Taft,
University of Kansas,
U.S.A.

Dear Professor Taft,

For the last three years I have been engaged on compiling material for my book on the early history of British photography (1800-1875). Among the many books I have studied in recent months is your excellent work "Photography and the American Scene".

Though American photography interests me more from the aesthetic than from the historical point of view, I could not help coming across in my research a few items which I did not find mentioned in your book and which I think might be of interest to you.

1. J.W. Draper was, I believe, the first to photograph the solar spectrum, and I have seen this daguerreotype recently in a private collection. It is in excellent condition and at the side of the photograph of the spectrum is a strip of paper with a short description in Draper's handwriting, his signature, and the date July 27th 1842. This photograph is of some importance for it led Sir John Herschel to write his memoir "On the action of the rays of the solar spectrum on the Daguerreotype plate", which he read to the Royal Society and which was published in the Philosophical Magazine, 1843, together with one plate, a line drawing. This rare historical item was formerly in the possession of the famous chemist Sir William Crookes, from whom the present owner obtained it.

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2. Page 96. Apart from the daguerreotypes of the Niagara Falls by the brothers Langenheim in 1845, daguerreotypes of the Falls taken in September 1846 by J.E. Mayall seem to have caused some sensation in London that year (see Ar Union, August 1847). John Edwin Mayall was connected with Marcus Root (an American) in the firm "Highschool and Root", of Philadelphia. Towards the end of 1846 he came to London and opened the Daguerreotype Institution in the Strand, working for some time under the name of "Professor Highschool".

3. Page 331. The "New York Daguerrean Association" founded in 1851, which appears to be the earliest formation of a photographic association in America, is no doubt known to you. It may interest you to know that their very interesting rules and regulations etc. were published in the Year Book of Photography and Photographic News Almanack for 1881, page 106-108.

4. Page 139. The introduction of the carte de visite photograph is, as you say, usually ascribed to the Duke of Parma in 1857, but I have come across the following highly interesting note in "The Practical Mechanics Journal" of 1855, page 76, which strongly implies that the idea is due to America. "The members of young America step ahead even of these examples of applied sun-painting. The Yankee man of fashion, it is said, does not descend to the prosaic plan of engraving his name on his visiting cards, but fills his card-case with photographs of himself which he hands instead. The idea is novel, but our means of recollection on this side of the Atlantic would hardly suffice to enable us to bring to mind the person and position of the visitor from a casual inspection of his picture."

I hope this information is of some use to you.

Yours sincerely,

Helmut Senfheyl

Robert Taft photography correspondence

Odd Fellows Home,
Saratoga, California.
October 29th 1948.

My dear Doctor Taft:-

It will be gratifying to you, I feel sure, to be assured that you were well within your province in your favorable comments on the work of the late Eadweard J. Muybridge in his relation ~~to~~ photography and the early history of the birth of the motion picture.

It was my father, William Wirt Pendegast who defended Mr. Muybridge at his trial for the shooting of Major Harry Larkyns. Because of the prominence of all parties concerned, it was one of the most outstanding murder trials ever tried in the courts of California, but we will not go into that.

The Ramsaye ^{book} tells us that, following the trial Muybridge disappeared and for the next FIVE years no one who knew him, knew where he had gone. A most distressing statement for an historian (?) to make.

The copy of the letter I am inclosing will tell you where Mr. Muybridge was located and could be found by any any one who cared to find him. The letter was written to my mother. The original is in the State Library at Sacramento.

Immediately after his acquittal, ^{Feb 8-1875} Mr. Muybridge left for Guatemala and Central America where he made an exhaustive photographic study of the growing, harvesting and shipping of coffee. Then he continued his work (photographic) of Central America and the Atlantic and Pacific sides of what later became the Panama Canal.

Returning from Panama in 1876 (one of the Ramsaye lost years) he presented to my mother a magnificent album of sixty-one views of Central America. Muybridge also presented one album of view to Leland Stanford in 1876. Of this album, the late Mr. Peterson, curator of art at Stanford for many years wrote .." We have now located three ^{ALBUMS} of these rarest of rare Central American photographs, historically they are priceless. "

The album given to my mother is now in the State Library at Sacramento. In acknowledgment of my gift, the former librarian, Mr. Ferguson wrote.." The Muybridge photographs grow more fascinating and beautiful each time we look at them. ~~Even~~ With all the improvement in camers they would be hard to beat even to-day.

In 1877 Muybridge was in Sacramento experimenting WITH ONE CAMERA is getting a photograph of Occident in which all four feet are off of the ground at one time. This was a year or more BEFORE Muybridge ever saw John D. Isaacs. I have a copy of the copyright issued to Muybridge in 1877. The photograph is perfect and clear and a marvelous feat for that day.

In 1876 Currier and Ives copyrighted an en-

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larged lithographed picture of "Occident" clearly showing all four of his feet off of the ground. This is now in a glass show case in the lobby of Stanford University. This was taken by Muybridge in 1876

In 1878, Stanford removed all his horses from Sacramento to Palo Alto and the track and arrangements for photographing Occident and other horses was outlined entirely by Muybridge. It was then that Mr. Isaacs was called in to devise a less noisy shutter, electrically controlled, ingenious and satisfactory, BUT Muybridge was the photographer with an international reputation.

In 1879, Muybridge completed his invention of the Zoopraxiscope and exhibited it with perfect success at the home of Leland Stanford, explaining to invited guests, the mechanism. The Zoopraxiscope showed the instantaneous photographs taken by Muybridge in perfect and life-like MOTION. This was done in the Fall of 1879.

Ramsaye gives the French artist, Meissonier, the credit of putting the Muybridge ^{photos & films} in an instrument to show motion, telling his readers that "never before had Muybridge ~~ever~~ ^{thought} of his pictures in relation to motion." The Zoopraxiscope was showing photographs in motion in California nearly two YEARS before Muybridge ever saw Meissonnier!

Writing to our American minister to France in connection with the Ramsaye statement about Meissonier, I learned from him that it could not be said that Meissonier had contributed anything whatever to the advancement of photography.

In connection with the big names whom Ramsaye tells us "Muybridge went drunk," the signature of our revered Thomas A. Edison is plainly among those Ramsaye quotes, but OMITS the name of Edison who was a contributor to the advancement of the Muybridge work.

Muybridge was doing signal work thru ALL of the five years we are told he was "steeped in gloom" and no one knew where he was.

In 1868 Muybridge took some magnificent photographs of the Yosemite Valley. These were exhibited in Vienna in 1873 and pronounced "Superb," he was also awarded a medal for their excellence. These photographs may be seen at the Stanford University library and are as faultless as the day upon which they were taken.

In 1878 (another one of the lost years) Muybridge presented to MRS Stanford a magnificent panorama sixteen feet long, of San Francisco, covering miles of territory including the Stanford and Mark Hopkins mansions. No one but a genius would or could have attempted such a feat, using one camera for each scene. Each photograph was taken with such exquisite precision that it fits into its neighbor with perfection. This work of skill and art, to say nothing of genius, may be seen in the room devoted to rare books at Stanford University.

I have photostat copies from London papers telling of the breath-taking (at that time 1882) exhibition of pictures in life-like motion. Ramsays tells us that immediately after the success of



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the photographs taken of Occident, for which he gives John D. Isaacs all the credit, "Muybridge rushed to his Native England to bask in glory." Muybridge was nearly three YEARS in the "rushing." He was in Paris conferring and collaborating with Dr. Jules Marey in 1880-1 and had gone there on the invitation of Meissonier. The exhibitions in London were made in 1882.

I have several letters from a Mr. Webster who, as a young man traveled with Muybridge thru England, Ireland and Scotland and who had seen the complete evolution of the motion picture development. He wrote me saying the Muybridge moving pictures were natural and beautiful and lifelike.

At Stanford University may also be seen the complete work done by Muybridge while with the University of Pennsylvania, and upon which was spent one hundred thousand dollars, equal to a million, now.

In 1873 Muybridge was at the Modoc War as one of the official photographers. These photographs are now in the National Archives at Washington, D.C. I have the titles of nineteen of these photographs that are still considered masterpieces.

It was while Muybridge was fulfilling his appointments with the Government in 1872-3 that the clandestine love affair was going on between his young wife and Major Harry Larkyns whom Muybridge regarded as his closest friend. A child was born to Mrs Muybridge that the defense claimed was that of Harry Larkyns'. Love letters left no doubt as to the liaison, and Mrs Muybridge, herself, had written the name of "Little Harry" on the back of the baby's picture.

Any reference to this unfortunate affair was, as you say, entirely out of place in a history of photography or motion pictures. To drag the whole sorry affair out into the limelight coupled with so many personal slurs would belie the dignity of the Ramsay history.

I have the full scientific details of the invention of the Zoopraxiscope which was in no way considered a secret by Mr. Muybridge even tho it was his own invention he gave full credit where credit was due to former inventors along that line tho not perfected or used to the extent that his Zoopraxiscope was in bringing the possibilities before the world.

The extent of this letter is written in appreciation of your sense of justice. I shall have to ask that none of it be used without my permission as a lifetime of material gathered by me has already been given to professional writers who hope before long to have the history published.

Muybridge left three thousand pounds to the Kingston-on-Thames Library, the interest on which was to be spent on books of science and art. My father, well able to measure men, regarded him as a man apart, a genius and a gentleman.

Yours sincerely,

Jared Rudolph Leigh

Thru the late Major William Hammer Edison's representative to London and Paris, I learned that Edison, himself, made the first continuous strip of the running horse after Eastman manufactured the film.

Robert Taft photography correspondence

Dear Dr. Taft:- If you would like to keep this, you may. If not, I would appreciate having it returned. The original is in the State Library at Sacramento. My family knew Muybridge, well, and regarded him as a modest, retiring gentleman and genius, not at all as Ramsays depicts him. He would never have been tolerated had he been lecturing with " tooting astuteness and large pre-fundity " etc etc. If possible, get the San Francisco Chronicle, Oct 17th, Centennial number. It shows a picture of S.F. in 1877 and presented to Mrs Stanford. The original is sixteen feet long ! A masterpiece of skill and genius. J.L.

Robert Taft photography correspondence

Odd Fellows Home,
Saratoga, California.
December 6th 1948.

My dear Doctor Taft:-

It was pleasing, indeed, to read the tribute paid you by the authors of "Fighting Indians of the West." I may have told you that I have the titles of nineteen of the photographs taken by Mr. Muybridge, and also their description, during the Modoc War.

The review of the book (by ^{Joseph} Henry Jackson,) that I am inclosing, you will find to be generous in his appreciation of the skill it demanded to obtain such pictures at such a time.

As I have only one copy, I must ask you to return the clipping, you probably have a number of reviews, but I am sending this one, anyway.

I am also sending by registered mail, a few of the photographs I have that I know will be of interest to you. I must ask that these, too, be returned as they are of much value to me. I am sending them purely because I believe you want to be fair, not only to Muybridge, but to the reading public at large, interested in the history of the motion picture.

Out of respect to the professional writers who have much of my material in view of writing it up, I must ask that none of this be used for publication, but for your own personal knowledge, and I would much appreciate your opinion. It seems to me that only one who understands photography, both as a science and an art, could grasp the meaning of the genius called for to obtain such results.

Personally, I know nothing of photography beyond appreciating the beauty it expresses. I grew up under the influence of the exquisite photographs taken by Mr. Muybridge in Central America in 1875-76. This album is now in the State Library in Sacramento.

The panoramic view of San Francisco taken from the San Francisco Chronicle, Oct. 17th 1948, Centennial number, shows only three sections of the picture. The original is sixteen feet long, and there are no dividing lines, each picture fitting exquisitely into its neighbor. I think I have told you that this picture was presented to Mrs. Stanford, by Muybridge, in 1878. It is now in the room devoted to rare books, at Stanford University.

Yours sincerely
Laurel Leigh

The tribute paid to you was in the foreword of that very fine and valuable book, "Fighting Indians of the West"

Robert Taft photography correspondence

To,
Doctor Robert Taft, for his personal collection, not to be used
for publication at present, or without consent.

From.. " Knowledge " London, April 14th 1882

A few years ago the news of the successful photographing of a galloping horse was received with incredulity. That a horse rushing along at the rate of 1 and 2/3 of a minute, more than 17 yards in a second, moving its limbs forward in part of each stride with nearly twice that velocity should be seized by photographic art as to show every limb well and clearly delineated, would have seemed wonderful, indeed, to the early professors of that art. Proctor was assured by one of the ablest English photographers that it was absolutely outside the bounds of possibility.

Still more amazing is it to find ten or twelve distinct pictures taken during a single stride, the comparison of which enable the most rapid equine movements to be analyzed as though the horse could be made to go through all the motions of the swiftest gallop at a funeral pace.....

.....

On Monday last, in the theatre of the Royal Institute, a select and representative audience assembled to witness a series of a most interesting demonstration of animal locomotion, given by Eadweard J. Muybridge who exhibited a large number of photographs illustrating consecutive phases of motion of the horse walking, ambling, galloping and leaping over hurdles...

By the aid of an astonishing apparatus called the Zoopraxiscope, which the lecturer described as an improvement on the old Zoetrop, the animals suddenly became mobile and beautiful and walked, cantered and ambled, galloped and leaped over hurdles in the field of vision in a perfectly natural and life-like manner. After horses, dogs, oxen and wild bulls and deer were shown under analogous conditions of varied movements, and finally man appeared and walked, ran, leaped and turned back somersaults to admiration.

On the following Thursday Mr. Muybridge repeated his demonstration at the Royal Academy of Arts.. (March 13th 1882.)

.....

The transparent photos used during these lectures were some of the results of an investigation commenced by Mr. Muybridge at Sacramento, California, in May 1872 and continued, with numerous periods of interruptions, at Palo Alto, California until 1879

.....

The Zoopraxiscope was devised by the author on the principles initiated in the early part of the 19th century, by the Belgian physicist, Plateau, for the purpose of demonstrating the persistency of vision, and is briefly described in an essay by the late Prof. Richard A. Proctor.

Robert Taft photography correspondence

To, Doctor Robert Taft.. for his personal collection. not to be used
for publication at present, or without consent.

Excerpt from the Daily Telegraph, August 12th 1929

WHO INVENTED THE CINEMA ?

Demonstrations of the eighties.. Some famous relics.

MAGIC LANTERN RUN MAD.

..... As early as 1882 Eadweard Muybridge, a native of Kingston, demonstrated the wonders of his zoopraxiscope in the Hall of the Royal Institution, before an audience that included many members of the Royal family, Sir Frederick Leighton, Professor Huxley and Alfred Tennyson.

In a graphic account of the memorable occasion George Augustus Sala, that prince of chroniclers, wrote:-

" By the aid of an astonishing apparatus called the Zoo-praxiscope, which the lecturer described as an improvement on the zoetrope, but which may be more briefly defined as a magic lantern run mad, with method in its madness, animals suddenly became mobile, and walked, cantered, ambled and galloped in a perfectly natural and lifelike manner. I am afraid that had Mr. Muybridge exhibited his zoopraxiscope three hundred years ago, he would have been burned as a wizard..

.....
The above is only a n excerpt ^{from} of several columns from the London, Daily Telegraph.
On April, 1930, in the London Gazette, is an article by Ernest Webster, who, as a young man traveled thru England, Ireland and Scotland with Mr. Muybridge, operating his zoopraxiscope while Mr. Muybridge lectured before the audience. Mr. Webster had lived to see the complete evolution of the development of the motion picture, and wrote to me, saying, that the account of Mr. Sala did not overdraw, that the Muybridge pictures in motion were natural, and beautiful and lifelike.

I have still other account^s in which Muybridge showed the flight of birds.

Robert Taft photography correspondence



THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

REFERENCE DEPARTMENT
PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION

August 11, 1949

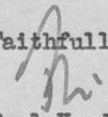
Dear Professor Taft:

I am afraid that I acted hastily on some misinformation in sending you the portrait of Stanley. It is by Henry Kirke Brown, the well-known sculptor, and not by his nephew, Henry Kirke Bush-Brown, an infant in 1858. It was this nephew who gave us the collection. I hope my correction reaches you before publication.

On page 175 of Photography and the American Scene, you say that no set of the Langenheim 1855-56 stereographs has ever turned up. I found a set of contact prints called "Part II" and dated 1856 among the things received from the Smithsonian Institution. Maybe the rest will turn up in the same sorting operation. Is this a real find, or have others appeared and been called to your attention?

The selective check list, for the distribution of which you contributed some names, is on the presses now and you will get one of the first copies. May I have your suggestions as to further recipients, particularly private researchers or academic people who use picture materials in courses. The list is free.

Faithfully,


Paul Vanderbilt
Acting Chief

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

Robert Taft photography correspondence

3236

Langenheim, Frederick, photographer.

Stereographs, separately mounted on both sides of sheets 8" x 10" in paper covers with manuscript title: ...Photographic views at home and abroad, taken and published by F. Langenheim, 188 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, 1856. 2nd series only. High views over Philadelphia, Wall st., N.Y., Genesee valley, Elmira, N.Y., Mt. Carbon, Pa., Minehill RR etc., etc.

Possibly part of the only known set of the first stereos on paper produced in America. Cf. Taft, Photogr. and Amer. scene 1938, p. 175.

24 stereos. Received with transfer of the Smithsonian library.

Robert Taft photography correspondence

1849 • MINNESOTA TERRITORIAL CENTENNIAL • 1949

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ST. PAUL 1, MINNESOTA

September 7, 1949

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

Dear Mr. Taft:

You will probably be interested to know that a recent act of the Minnesota State Legislature created a Pictorial Department here at the Minnesota Historical Society. This department will have charge of pictures, paintings and maps.

As you know, this is our Centennial year here in Minnesota and is also the one-hundredth birthday party of the Minnesota Historical Society party celebration. In conjunction with the celebration I would like to have a display of the development of photography in America. With this display I would like to exhibit to the public some of the books dealing with photography of the past. If it is possible, I would like to get an 8 by 10 glossy, autographed picture of yourself to display with your wonderful book, Photography And The American Scene.

I would like to extend my many thanks to you personally for your work in making historic photography so much easier for the newcomer. Photography owes a great debt to men like yourself who have so diligently plowed the way. If it wasn't for your work, new men to the field such as myself, would be ten years or more gathering background information, and then we would hardly have scratched the surface. Frankly, I am flabbergasted and amazed at your wonderful book, Photography And The American Scene. It is the best history that I have ever read on any one subject. I have gone through your book, sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph, using it as a text book. Your documentation has been of particular value and is as interesting as the book itself. I can

Robert Taft photography correspondence

Mr. Robert Taft

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September 7, 1949

well appreciate the years of research and hard labor that went into the making of the book. If, at any time in the near future, you should happen to be in the Twin City area, I would be very happy to meet you. If, for any reason, you are in need of help from this department, you can be assured that it will receive my personal attention. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,



W. D. Powell
Pictorial Curator

WDB:lb

Robert Taft photography correspondence

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY
CHICAGO CAMPUS
LAKE SHORE DRIVE AND CHICAGO AVENUE
CHICAGO

MEDILL SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM
WIEBOLDT HALL

4 October 1949

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

Dear Dr. Taft:

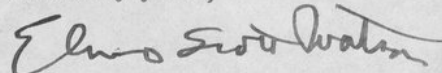
I am working on a paper to be given at a forthcoming meeting of WESTERNERS -- title: "Shadow Catchers of the Red Man". In it I would like to be able to state, if it's possible, who was the photographer who took the first picture of an Indian. The earliest reference in "Photography and the American Scene" is to J.H. Fitzgibbon who, you say, opened a studio in St. Louis in 1847 and took daguerreotypes of "visiting celebrities, Indian chiefs, river scenes etc". In your researches, have you come across any daguerreotypes of Indians taken, say, in New York or Washington that probably antedated Fitzgibbon's in St. Louis?

I assume from your mention of the Fitzgibbon pictures now in the collections of the Missouri Historical Society at St. Louis that you saw these pictures. Do you recall if there were any of Indians among them, or is your statement about his taking pictures of Indian chiefs based upon information about him cited in the Notes in your book? To whom should I write at the Missouri Historical Society to get a photographic copy of one of his Indian pictures -- if they have any?

Possibly this matter of establishing who was the first to photograph an Indian (if it can be done with any degree of certainty) isn't so important. But I've had considerable pleasure in doing that in the case of Sitting Bull (see enclosed, which you may keep if you wish) and I'm trying to do it in the case of some other Indian notables. Any help you can give me will be deeply appreciated.

I don't believe I've thanked you for the copy of the reprint of your article on Zogbaum and Graham, also of your review of the book on Catlin, which I enjoyed especially. These, and the reprints you have sent me previously, are prized additions to my collection of Americana.

Cordially yours,



Elmo Scott Watson

Robert Taft photography correspondence

THE FRANKLIN INSTITUTE
OF THE STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA
PHILADELPHIA 3 • PENNSYLVANIA

FOUNDED FEBRUARY 5, 1824

OFFICE OF THE LIBRARIAN

October 6, 1949

Prof. Robert Taft
1713 Louisiana Street
Lawrence, Kansas

My dear Prof. Taft:

May I call your attention to a confusing misstatement in your book "Photography and the American Scene", page 457. You make the following statement:

A series of letters and notices of W.R. Johnson in the Philadelphia papers should also be mentioned in this connection. Johnson wrote under date of Oct. 19, 1839 (United States Gazette, Oct. 22, 1839, p.2) that he had just brought with him from abroad a complete set of apparatus for making daguerrotypes.

When this statement was first called to my attention I questioned it, as Johnson of whom I have made a considerable study had never been in Europe at that time. I finally have had an opportunity of checking the newspaper and find that the article in question is actually signed W. Poyntell Johnston, M.D. However the rest of your references to W.R. Johnson are correct. There apparently were two men of very similar name interested in the same subject.

I have also run across a further note on the subject, which while settling nothing, does add another claimant to the honor of the first portrait. This is to be found in

Scharf, J. Thomas and Thompson Westcott.

History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884. Phila., 1884. vol. 3, p. 2326.

The earliest portrait from life taken in Philadelphia is believed to have been of Dr. Kennedy, principal of the Polytechnic Institute, made by Professor Walter R. Johnson in 1839. Robert Cornelius was the first to enter into the business of taking portraits, and the first picture made and sold in this city was that of John McAllister, the optician.

Of course following the same reasoning which you employ on Cornelius' claims, any claim to Johnson's having taken a portrait this early may also be ruled out. It does raise an interesting speculation as to just how much work Johnson may have done that first year.

Sincerely yours,

George E. Pettengill
George E. Pettengill
Assistant Librarian

1949—OUR 125th YEAR

Robert Taft photography correspondence

October 8, 1949

Prof. Elmo Scott Watson
Northwestern University
School of Journalism
Lake Shore Drive and Chicago Ave.
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Professor Watson:

Many thanks for your letter of October 4, 1949, and for the papers enclosed which I am glad to have.

You have set yourself a real problem in trying to establish information on the first photograph of Indians. I am fairly certain that efforts preceded Fitzgibbons. I have seen the Fitzgibbon daguerreotypes in St. Louis but it was well over ten years ago. The daguerreotypes were simply stored in boxes at that time and I had to get them out and dust them off. The personnel has changed almost completely since I was there, but the present director is Charles Van Ravensway, who, I am sure, will be glad to answer questions concerning the present state of the collection.

As you can see from the Plumbe advertisement (Photography and the American Scene, p. 51) there was a daguerreotype establishment in St. Louis by 1845 and my recollection is that newspaper advertisements for daguerreotypes were appearing in the St. Louis newspapers in the very early 1840's -- and there would be a very considerable probability that Indians had been among their customers. J. M. Stanley, I am fairly certain, was daguerreotyping in the early 1840's and Indians would certainly be among his subjects. Direct proof is still lacking. Jasiah Gregg was taking daguerreotypes by April, 1846, and probably much earlier; in fact, I am beginning to think that the original plates for The Commerce of the Prairies were

Robert Taft photography correspondence

re-drawn from daguerreotypes.

Plumbe had a daguerreotype establishment in Washington by 1841 and he may have daguerreotyped visiting delegations of Indians.

There seems to have been a daguerreotypist in Independence, Missouri, by 1846. As Independence at that time was on the frontier, Indians, undoubtedly, were daguerreotyped quite early there. Again, however, absolute proof is lacking. Army officers early tried their hands at daguerreotype, so with amateur and itinerant daguerreotypists to consider, there is real difficulty in pinning down the exact facts.

U. H. Jackson's catalogue of Indian photographs (1877) and the earlier ones upon which it is based, might be of some help to you, as well as the well-known account of Donaldson and Catlin and related affairs. Probably your best source of information in these matters would be an extensive examination of the St. Louis, Washington, and New York newspapers for the period 1840-1847 -- real work as I know you fully realize.

Kindest regards,

Robert Taft

RT:re

Robert Taft photography correspondence

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY
CHICAGO CAMPUS
LAKE SHORE DRIVE AND CHICAGO AVENUE
CHICAGO

MEDILL SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM
WIEBOLDT HALL

12 October 1949

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

Dear Dr. Taft:

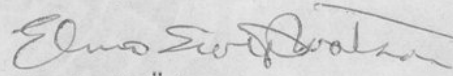
Many thanks for your prompt reply to my inquiry about the first photographer of Indians. As you say, the best way to settle the question of who took the "first" would be an examination of St. Louis, Washington and New York newspapers in the 1840s but that's "out" for me for the next few months. For one thing I have to finish up a centennial history of Illinois Wesleyan university that has to come out before next June and there are many other jobs to be done, both here and in Bloomington, Ill. before I take off in June for the new job of head of the department of journalism at the University of Denver.

However, your letter gives me information enough about the earliest photographers of Indians to incorporate in my paper and since I regard you as THE authority on frontier photography I'd like to quote from your letter in aforesaid paper.

Thanks, too, for giving me Mr. Ravenswaay's name -- I'll write to him to see if I can get a copy of a Fitzgibbon daguerreotype of an Indian as an example of one of the earliest even if it can't be proved to be the "first".

With kindest regards,

As ever,


Elmo Scott Watson

Robert Taft photography correspondence

Photographic Engineering

JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ENGINEERS

BOX 6077, MID-CITY STATION - WASHINGTON 25, D. C.



"The advancement of the application of
Science to Photography and Photography to Science"

21 Butler Place
Brooklyn 17, New York
October 8, 1952

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

Dear Sir:

I have read your book "Photography and The American Scene" many times with great interest and have been much impressed with it, particularly that part concerning the first photographic manual published in America.

Several months ago while conducting a literature research in the Library of The U. S. Patent Office, Washington, D. C., I came across Chilton's manual and forthwith had a photostat made of it. So far, I have been unable to find any reference to this particular manual in the literature and believing that it may be of interest from an historical standpoint, I have prepared a short paper for possible publication.

I am taking the liberty of enclosing a copy of this paper and a photostat of the manual for your information and retention. In return, I would appreciate any comments you may care to make.

Thanking you for a reply, I am

Cordially yours,



FRANK SMITH
Associate Editor
"Photographic Engineering"

Encls.