

Henry Howe, "America at the World's Fair . . . 1851," published 1858

(keywords: Henry Howe, Mathew B. Brady, Martin M. Lawrence, John A. Whipple, Charles R. Meade, Henry W. M. Meade, Meade Brothers, Oliver B. Evans, history of the daguerreotype, history of photography.)

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Selected text published in:

Henry Howe, *Adventures and Achievements of Americans* (Cincinnati: Henry Howe, 1858): 608.

AMERICA
AT
THE WORLD'S FAIR,

HELD IN THE CRYSTAL PALACE, LONDON, IN 1851 . . .

DAGUERREOTYPES were extensively shown. Those from the United States were conceded to be superior in general effect, to those from any other country. BRADY & LAWRENCE, of New York, each received a Prize Medal—and one was awarded to a Mr. Whipple, of Michigan, for a daguerreotype of the moon. There were several other exhibitors whose pictures were very superior. Those of Evans, from Buffalo, were much admired, as were those of Meade & Brothers, New York. The following article, from an English literary journal, shows in what estimation our exhibition was held.

“Daguerreotypes are largely displayed by the French, as might have been expected, that country being proud of the discovery; but the examples exhibited by the Americans surpass, in general beauty of effect, any which we have examined from other countries. This has been attributed to a difference in the character of the solar light, as modified by atmospheric conditions; we are not, however, disposed to believe that to be the case. We have certain indications that an increased intensity of light is not of any advantage, but rather the contrary, for the production of daguerreotypes; the luminous rays appearing to act as balancing powers against the chemical rays. Now, this being the case, we know of no physical cause by which the superiority can be explained, and we are quite disposed to be sufficiently honest to admit that the mode of manipulation has more to do with the result than any atmospheric influences. However this may be, the character of the daguerreotype executed in America is very remarkable. There is a fullness of tone, and an artistic modulation of light and shadow which, in England, we do not obtain. The striking contrasts of white and black are shown decidedly enough in the British examples exhibited in the gallery—but here are coldness and hardness of outline. Within the shadow of the eagle and striped banner we find no lights too white and no shadows too dark; they dissolve, as in Nature, one into the other, in the most harmonious and truthful manner—and the result is more perfect Pictures.”

[End of selected text.]

EDITOR'S NOTES:

Howe plagiarized this entire text from *Report of Benj. P. Johnson, Agent of the State of New-York, Appointed to Attend the Exhibition of the Industry of All Nation, held in London, 1851* (Albany: C. Van Benthuysen, 1852): 116–17.¹

The text contains a geographical error; the daguerreotypist John A. Whipple was from Boston (not Michigan, as stated).

1. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/B8520002_JOHNSON_LONDON-1851_1852.pdf

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