

“Destruction of the French Diorama,” (8 March) reported April 1839

(keywords: Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre, Diorama, history of the daguerreotype, history of photography)

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EWER ARCHIVE N8390029

Published in:

Aldine Magazine of Biography, Bibliography, Criticism, and the Arts (London) vol. 1
(April 1839): 239.

DESTRUCTION OF THE FRENCH DIORAMA.

About half-past twelve on the morning of the 8th of March, cries of “fire” were heard on the Boulevard St. Martin. M Daguerre’s extensive establishment was discovered to be on fire, and the flames had already burst through the five windows facing the water. Half an hour afterwards, the building fell with a crash. The progress of the flames was so rapid, in consequence of the combustible nature of the materials in the building, that the edifice was entirely destroyed. The wind directed the flames towards Faubourg du Temple and la petite Rue des Marais. Two houses situated on this side, one of which six stories high, was surmounted by an elegant cornice, took fire during the early attempts to afford relief. About two o’clock, the fire, which was perceptible only in parts of the two threatened houses, burst out of the roof of one of them, and a fresh white smoke was mingled with the enormous greyish clouds which were then rising over the ruins of the Diorama alone. M. Daguerre’s chambers, in the Rue des Marais, were almost entirely destroyed. A part of his movables were, however, saved from the ruins. The paintings which were being exhibited, were the Sermon, the Temple of Solomon, and the *éboulement* of the valley of Goldau. They are now lost, as well as a new picture which was just finished, and on the point of being opened for exhibition. This disaster will, in all probability, affect the exhibition of our own Diorama in the Regents’ Park.

[End of text.]

EDITOR’S NOTES:

At the time of the fire, Daguerre was visiting with Samuel F. B. Morse and examining Morse’s telegraph. See “The Daguerreotype,” *New-York Observer* 17:16 (20 April 1839): 62.¹

1. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/N8390002_MORSE_NY_OBSERVER_1839-04-20.pdf

EWER ARCHIVE N8390098

URL: http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/N8390029_DIORAMA-FIRE_ALDINE_1839-04.pdf

Document author: Gary W. Ewer

Creation date: 2011-01-21 / Last revision (proofread): 2011-01-24

Citation information: *Aldine Magazine of Biography, Bibliography, Criticism, and the Arts* (London) vol.

1 (April 1839): 239.

Prepared from: original volume in the collection of Gary W. Ewer. Also available from *Google Books*.
(<http://books.google.com/books?id=NBwDAAAAYAAJ>)

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