

**“Mattakeesett”, “The skill of the artist, Mr. Vance. . .,” 26 April 1851
(letter dated 12 March 1851)**

(keywords: Robert H. Vance, California, 1851 Great Exhibition, London Crystal Palace, history of the daguerreotype, history of photography)

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LATE FROM CALIFORNIA.

SAN FRANCISCO, March 12th 1851

California is about to send specimens of native production and art to the great exhibition in London. The first will be a huge lump of quartz rock, richly studded with gold. I wish, in addition, some person would send a sample of the beets, onions, and potatoes, that grow about these diggings. The most monstrous “monster vegetable” that was ever exhibited at an Agricultural Fair in the Eastern States is not equal to the ordinary productions of the soil of this State.

The other specimen is a series of daguerreotype plates, representing the whole of this city. They are eight in number, and taken in sections from nature; of the truthfulness of their representation there can be no doubt, of course, and the skill of the artist, Mr. Vance, formerly of Boston, Mass., is apparent from his work. From these impressions a person can form a correct idea of this place, and those who think we live in shanties among sand hills will discover their mistake.

Truly yours,

MATTAKEESETT.

[End of selected text. All content related to photography herein provided.]

EDITOR'S NOTES:

This notice is perhaps the earliest mention of Vance's intent to exhibit daguerreotypes of California at the 1851 Great Exhibition in London.

Vance's intent to exhibit daguerreotypes in London is confirmed in a review of Vance's exhibition of California daguerreotypes which opened early October 1851 in New York :

A collection of Daguerreotypes on exhibition at 349 Broadway, taken by R. H. Vance in various parts of California, is well worth a visit. The views are some three hundred in number, and were intended to be taken to the World's Fair; but from an interruption to the Artist's work, from one of the San Francisco conflagrations, they could not be got together in time. This is to be regretted, for they would have proved of decided attractiveness, not merely in the gratification of curiosity, but from their artistic value.¹

This set of eight daguerreotypes likely were destroyed in the major San Francisco fire of 4 May 1851.

1. *Literary World* (New York) 9:246 (18 October 1851): 311. See http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8510003_VANCE_LIT_WORLD_1851-10-18.pdf

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