

"Fitzgibbon's Gallery," April 1856

(keywords: John H. Fitzgibbon, James Sidney Brown, Mr. Hill, Mr. Hayes, Frederick A. Wenderoth, Robert H. Vance
California daguerreotypes, history of the daguerreotype, history of photography)

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FITZGIBBON'S GALLERY.—An hour more fertile in entertainment and instruction could scarcely be passed in any public resort in our city than in rambling through the extensive collection of daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, portographs, &c., to be found at the establishment of Mr. Fitzgibbon, at the corner of Fourth and Market streets. It is in fact a perfect museum, embracing life-like portraits of many of our distinguished citizens, and celebrities who have visited our city during some years past, likenesses of Indian warriors of the various western tribes, and a series of views in California, not only of great interest, but also of great historical value, as illustrating a phase of life now rapidly passing away. The whole establishment is probably the most complete this side of New York, and we doubt whether even the great metropolis itself can produce anything superior to it.

On is most forcibly impressed with the quiet rapidity with which the happy invention of Daguerre, and the improvements upon it, are thrusting aside a branch of one of the fine arts once so important as portrait painting. Ten years will not pass away before it surrenders itself unconditionally to an art which produces, not the shadow and faint reflections, but the almost speaking and breathing image of the party to be represented. We might devote columns to the descriptions of the various pictures on exhibition at this gallery, but as it is at all times open to visitors free of charge, we can better accomplish our purpose by recommending those of our readers who have not seen it to visit it for themselves.

The life-size colored Photographs at this establishment are really beautiful. We recognized many faces of ladies and gentlemen that we were acquainted with. The miniature size colored Photographs are finished by Mr. J. Brown, of New York, who has lately become attached to this famed gallery, and it give us pleasure to speak of his skill as an artist. We consider his coloring much more brilliant and softer in tone than any Wenderoth ever did when he was engaged at this establishment. The plain photograph and Ambrotype department we found under the care of Mr. Hill, a very superior artist in his line; he showed us some very fine and superior new style Ambrotypes that are not patented, but excels any patented we ever saw.—

The Daguerreotype department we found, as usual, under the charge of Mr. Hayes whom we have spoken of before. Fitzgibbon himself was busy as a bee waiting on the ladies, sitting Daguerreotypes, Photographs, teaching pupils, up stairs and down stairs almost at the same time, having a pleasant word for every body in and out of the different departments of his large establishment, which consist of thirteen rooms, giving orders and

seeing that all was in order. This gallery is a study for a philosopher. Ten years ago Fitzgibbon came to St. Louis, and opened a little gallery on Fifth Street. Behold the change! Go see what perseverance and industry will do, and have your picture taken.

[End of text.]

EDITOR'S NOTES:

Fitzgibbon's gallery at No. 1 Fourth Street (Fourth and Market streets) was above David Nicholson's grocery. A wood engraving of the structure is provided in J. N. Taylor and M. O. Crooks, *Sketch Book of Saint Louis: Containing a Series of Sketches of the Early Settlements . . . Mercantile Houses . . . &c.* (St. Louis: George Knapp & Co., 1858): 321. (The title is available in Google Books: <http://books.google.com/books?id=rUUVAAAAYAAJ>)

For additional information regarding Fitzgibbon (including a wood engraving portrait), see "J. H. Fitzgibbon," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (New York) 4:92 (5 September 1857): 213.¹

The "series of views in California" reference the three hundred daguerreotypes by Robert H. Vance which Fitzgibbon purchased at auction in 1853. See Robert H. Vance, *Catalogue of Daguerreotype Panoramic Views in California* (New York: Baker, Godwin & Company, 1851).²

1. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8570002_FITZGIBBON_BIO_LESLIES_1857-09-05.pdf

2. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/F8510001_VANCE_CATALOGUE_DAG_VIEWS_1851.pdf

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