

PRE-CONFEDERATION PHOTOGRAPHY IN HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

In 1965, Ralph Greenhill's *Early Photography in Canada* was published, and since then scholarly interest in the topic has widened to include many people and institutions and a number of books and articles have been published. However there are still many areas which remain to be explored and one of these is that of the development of photography in the Maritimes. More specifically, an investigation could be made of the history of early photography in Halifax, Nova Scotia in order to provide a starting-point for a wider study into this region's development.

Photography's role in present-day life is pervasive, and most people take it for granted. Yet less than one hundred and fifty years ago photography had not even been invented. Only in 1839 was the announcement made that a mechanical process had been invented to capture images permanently on paper or metal surfaces by means of the action of the sun. In the *Halifax Colonial Pearl*, a literary and scientific magazine published by John S. Thompson, news of the new invention appeared in the May 10, 1839, issue.¹ From this article, entitled "The New Art of Sun-Painting" (which had first appeared in Canada in the April 15, *Quebec Gazette*), Haligonians learned of the simultaneous development of two processes: Jacques-Louis Mandé Daguerre's process of capturing images on metal, dubbed "daguerreotyping," which had been announced in Paris on January 7th, but whose methods were not yet revealed; and William Henry Fox Talbot's process of photography on paper, developed independently and announced before the Royal Society in London on February 1st. Further news of the revolutionary inventions appeared in the May 31 issue of the *Pearl*, with the reprinting of a story from a London paper describing the preparation of Talbot's photogenic paper and its application for botanical purposes. One week later the following was published:

PHOTOGENIC DRAWINGS — We are glad to find that our notice of the last, has excited considerable interest among our readers. One of our friends who read the article has since formed several photogenic pictures with ease and success. And by following the directions in the article alluded to, any person may make natural objects delineate themselves, without the aid of the artist's pencil. By varying the proportions of the materials employed by Dr. Bird, the ground upon which the images display themselves,

is variously and pleasingly coloured . . . The paper to be prepared for photogenic paper, (and which is now on sale in London) should be good. Mr. Talbot prefers the Bank Blue Wove letter paper. The subjoined remarks we copy from a late London periodical.²

Further articles were to appear later in the year: for example, the visit of an American correspondent to the studio of Daguerre in Paris was reported in the June 21 issue. The secret of daguerreotyping was not to be revealed to Nova Scotians until the October 18 issue of the *Pearl* when the August 19 meeting of the French Academy of Sciences was described in a story entitled "France — Explanation of the Process of Sun-Painting — On Copper." The eminent French scientist Arago had delivered a complete explanation of the process to a jammed audience; within hours, there were thousands of would-be daguerreans in the streets of Paris. While it is doubtful if the same effect occurred in Halifax, the news nevertheless must have evoked much interest.

There were still many problems to be overcome before the new invention could be seen and offered to the general public. In the meantime, however, light-hearted stories about daguerreotypes were circulated in the local newspapers.³ A more serious account in the *Pearl* of December 27, described a demonstration of the new process in England. The author of the review concluded on a skeptical note: ". . . No one who has seen these plates can wonder at the enthusiasm of the French savans. A French, Spanish or Italian sky must be brought to England before these fairy landscapes can be perfected here." Despite the skeptical tone this review struck at the truth: long exposures were necessary in strong sunlight for up to half a hour during which no movement could be tolerated, for making early daguerreotypes.

The miniaturists who offered their services to the public, such as John Clow, or Mr. Seager, late of New York, both of whom advertised in Halifax papers in 1840, still had no immediate fear of competition from the new invention. But the development of better lenses and new devices enabled two American photographers to open the world's first photographic studio in New York City in March, 1840. Canadians in Montreal and Quebec City were visited in the fall of the same year by the itinerant Americans, Halsey & Sadd.⁴ A story about the activities of these portrait-takers appeared in the Halifax *Novascotian* on the 24th of September. Other travelling daguerreans visited in the Canadas in the summer of 1841,

but there were no parallel developments in any of the Maritime colonies until late in that year.

The first evidence of a photographer in the Maritimes had been the reference made in the June 7, 1839 *Pearl*. While no conclusive statement can be made, it is possible that the "friend" to whom the writer referred was the well-known Halifax portraitist William Valentine.⁵ Valentine probably embarked on the weekly mail packet for Boston sometime in the fall of 1841 in order to learn more about the new process of daguerreotyping. The result was seen in the Saint John, New Brunswick *Morning News* of November 15, 1841, where an advertisement appeared entitled "Daguerreotype — Miniature Portraits" under Valentine's name. The packet from Boston touched at Saint John on the 11th of November and Valentine was likely to have been one of the passengers. In his advertisement, Valentine proposed taking "Photographic Miniature Portraits," with only a few seconds being necessary to complete the daguerreotype. He also invited an inspection of specimens already taken and promised that his portraits would be clear and legible. The price was five dollars per miniature, with hours of business being from eleven o'clock to three o'clock daily at the Saint John's Hotel. To show that he had not given up his other talents in favour of the new art, Valentine also offered to paint portraits in oil, upon commission. He remained in Saint John until shortly after Christmas, returning to Halifax by the New Year. On January 4, 1842, in the *Times* and on January 13 in the *Novascotian*, Valentine announced his new ability to the people of Halifax in advertisements entitled "Photographic Likenesses." Valentine stated that he had "made himself thoroughly acquainted with this celebrated art, and procured a first-rate apparatus, during a recent visit to the United States" and that "he is prepared to take daguerreotype likenesses, in a beautiful style." In this manner Haligonians were introduced to the new process of daguerreotyping.

Valentine can be claimed as the first permanent daguerreotypist to appear in the British North American colonies. He operated in Halifax until his death in 1849, and his influence in the Maritimes proved to be widespread. His innovation seemed to meet with a favourable response. The *Novascotian* of April 28, 1842, carrying one of his advertisements, also contained a favourable editorial comment upon his work, stating that ". . . the elegant art with the inelegant name, Daguerreotype (sic), has been practised for some months past, with great success, in Halifax, by Mr. Valentine, — whose great respectability as a Portrait Painter, need not be mentioned where he is so well-known . . ." Further praise and

favourable comments appeared, along with his advertisements, in the *Novascotian* later in 1842 and 1843. In the October 20 issue, for instance, there was the note that ". . . Mr. Valentine has exhibited some good specimens recently. In his advertisements he offers to produce as good pictures as any produced on this continent, he may now include, or anywhere else, if we may judge by the miniatures from London or Paris we have seen." The *Novascotian* of October 27 contained similar remarks.

While Valentine was winning praise for his daguerrean productions, he had no wish to keep the secret of the process from others. An advertisement in the June 9, 1842 *Novascotian* stated that he had overcome many difficulties with regard to unfavourable daguerreotype productions and offered to give instructions in the art, to furnish apparatus, and to send written instructions to persons residing at a distance from Halifax. At least one who might have taken advantage of Valentine's offer was John Clow. Clow worked in Saint John, New Brunswick at the time of Valentine's arrival in November, 1841 and may have learned the process from him there or in Halifax: equally plausible is the supposition that Clow also went to Boston in the winter of 1841 - 42. In any case, Clow was in Saint John the next summer, according to advertisements which appeared in the *Morning News* and the *Courrier* from May 7, 1842 until late August, taking daguerreotype portraits. Clow then returned to Halifax and in an October 6 advertisement in the *Novascotian*, Valentine informed the people of the city that he had fitted up an apartment exclusively for portraiture by daguerreotype, and further stated that he would be assisted in the department of portrait-taking by "Mr. Clow, Miniature Painter."

Thus, by the end of 1842, Halifax could boast of two daguerreans who were to be in business for several years thereafter. Valentine continued, however, to teach his new art, as well as carrying it further afield. In the *Halifax Royal Gazette* of April 27, 1843, there was a note that Mr. Valentine was in Newfoundland with the daguerreotype. Newfoundland papers show that Valentine & Doane, daguerreotype artists, had set up business at the Golden Lion Inn in St. John's, and were taking portraits "at a small expense." Their advertisement ran from the 10th of March to the end of April in the *Public Ledger* and then disappeared (presumably the pair moved on, either to Prince Edward Island or back to Halifax). Valentine's partner in this venture was Thomas Coffin Doane, born in 1814 in Barrington, Nova Scotia. Doane had been an artist since 1832 and is supposed to have gone to Halifax in 1842 to learn the art of daguerreotyping from Valentine. After their partnership ended, Doane went to the West Indies

for a year, and then moved on to establish a business in Montreal. There Doane achieved an international reputation, taking portraits of such people as the Governor-General, Lord Elgin; Joseph Howe (Figs. 1-3); and members of the Papineau family. He moved to Boston in 1866, married, and resumed his former occupation as a portrait-painter. He died in New York in 1896, where he is buried.⁶

Little development in photography seems to have occurred in Halifax in the next few years, and references to it were rarely reported in the local newspapers with the exception of one story which did appear in the January 30, 1843 *Novascotian* concerning the Talbototype or Calotype process.⁷ In 1846, however, the daguerreotype was unrivalled in Halifax. Valentine and Clow had their own businesses, but while Valentine did not advertise, Clow's notices appeared in the *Halifax Sun* of June 2, 1846, and the *Acadian Recorder* of January 2, 1847. In the latter, Clow told patrons that he could take large-scale daguerreotypes. In the next year, he advertised in the June 10, 1848 *Recorder* that he was at the Exchange Coffee House, promising to take good-quality portraits, including those of families and groups. This was the last advertisement that Clow placed in the papers; nothing more about his career is known.⁸

Valentine's studio suffered considerable damage in a fire which ravaged Marchington's Lane in February, 1848, and stories concerning the event stated that the major damage had occurred in that portion of the studio which contained his unfinished oil paintings. He continued to paint throughout 1849, until his death from a sudden illness in December at the age of fifty-one. Valentine had been Halifax's premier portrait-painter for twenty-five years and a pioneer photographer since 1841. He apparently left only a small estate with the result that his widow was forced to sell some of his effects. On July 9, 1850 the *British Colonist* carried a notice stating that Wm. Ackhurst would auction the "Books, Paintings, Pencil &c. belonging to the estate of the late Wm. Valentine . . ." including "1 Camera, and several small parcels of valuable colours." The purchaser of Valentine's camera unfortunately is unknown.

Other daguerreotypists also made their appearance in Halifax in this decade. In the *Novascotian* of October 19, 1846 there was a short news story concerning a "new move":

Gentlemen advertising for wives in London, hang out their daguerreotype miniatures in a window of some fashionable shop, with this label: — 'Wanted, a female companion to the above.



Fig. 1. Thomas Coffin DOANE, *James Bruce, The Earl of Elgin and Kincradine*, 1848, whole-plate daguerreotype, Coll. Public Archives of Canada. (Photo: P.A.C.)



Fig. 3. Thomas Coffin DOANE, *The Honourable Joseph Howe*, daguerreotype, metal mat impressed lower left "T.C. Doane," Coll. Nova Scotia Museum 76-141-11. (Photo: N.S.M.)



Fig. 2. Thomas Coffin DOANE, *The Earl and Countess of Elgin, Lady Alice Lambton (left), and Lord Mark Kerr (standing)*, 1848, whole-plate daguerreotype, Coll. Public Archives of Canada. (Photo: P.A.C.)



Fig. 4. Daniel J. SMITH, *St. Paul's Church, Halifax, viewed from Barrington Street*, 1853, daguerreotype, Coll. Nova Scotia Museum 75-70-2. (Photo: N.S.M.)



Fig. 5. Daniel J. SMITH, *St. Paul's Church seen from Argyle Street, Halifax, c. 1853*, daguerreotype, Coll. Nova Scotia Museum 75-70-3. (Photo: N.S.M.)

Apply personally.' This may afford a hint on behalf of the young sparks hung up at Kimball's.

The shop of the daguerrean A.S. Kimball, who had been advertising since July, was located at the corner of Sackville and Hollis Streets. Kimball stayed in Halifax only a few months and in the December 13, 1846 *Novascotian* appeared the story that "... the artist Kimball advertises that he is going ... (to leave Halifax). This is unlike his pictures, for they are unfadingly beautiful." Kimball was probably the same man whom J. Russell Harper has noted as having been active in Fredericton, New Brunswick in February, 1846.⁹

In 1847, C.E. Johnson arrived in Halifax and the editor of the *Novascotian* stated in the issue of August 2nd:

FINE ARTS. — If you desire to see beautifully executed and correct views of the Province Building, Government House, and some of the principal streets of Halifax, make a call upon Johnson, at Somerset House, in Granville Street. He has also specimens of some of the best executed likenesses of many of our citizens, in Daguerreotype, that have ever been exhibited in this city. To be immortalized — now is the opportunity, by having your portrait taken in first-rate style.

This is the first mention made of exterior views taken by daguerreotype in the city of Halifax.¹⁰ Johnson's stay in 1847 was also quite short. An advertisement in the August 9 issue of the *Novascotian* stated that he intended to leave for New York on September 1, and offered to furnish interested persons with instructions and apparatus. Although he may have remained as late as November, Johnson had left Halifax by the end of the year.

In the next year, another daguerrean, H. Johnson, set up shop at 194 Hollis Street. His advertisement with the well-known exhortation, "Secure the shadow ere the substance fades / Of children whom we love and parents we revere" first appeared in the *Novascotian* of June 19, and ran only three weeks. He probably left the city shortly afterwards. Johnson, probably no relation to the previous year's visitor, promised to take true likenesses, to copy paintings, and to take views of buildings, and of persons after death: he also offered to give instructions in the art.

The death of Valentine and the disappearance of Clow and the two

Johnsons in the late 1840's left only one resident practitioner in Halifax. This was Thomas A. Cleverdon, whose origins are unknown, who first opened a studio in early December, 1848, at No. 11 Granville Street. Readers were informed that Cleverdon had "recently arrived in this city . . . (and was) now prepared to take portraits by Skylight, on the most improved principle . . . From the experience Mr. C. has had in the art, he will undertake to surpass anything that has been offered to the public." His "unprecedentedly low price of one Dollar . . ." for daguerreotypes seemed reasonable, the generous offer probably being made to attract business.¹¹

By 1850, Halifax's commercial enterprises suffered due to a slump in the economy that affected all of the Eastern Seaboard. It was a tribute to Cleverdon's resolve that he did not abandon the city for the gold fields of California, as certain other Maritime photographers had already done.¹² In the local market for portraiture he had to compete with such travelling artists as Mr. Barron, commissioned to do a portrait of Alexander Keith by the Masonic Lodge, and Mr. Holt, who was in Halifax advertising his skills during September, 1849. Cleverdon continued to do business into 1851 but his perseverance had probably worn thin by the middle of that year. In the June 2, 1851 issue of the *Sun*, his final advertisement, Cleverdon advised his patrons that ". . . An early call is requested as Mr. Cleverdon's stay in this city is limited." Another Halifax photographer was to advertise in 1853 that she had purchased several of Cleverdon's daguerreotype likenesses, including a 'fine one of the late American consul,' so it may be that Cleverdon stayed in business until that year. One final note: in the *Official Report of the Committee of the Nova Scotia Industrial Exhibition of 1854*,¹³ it is stated that a Thomas Cleverdon was a judge in the section for Fine Arts, Daguerreotype Specimens. Unfortunately, nothing else is known about this man, the only photographer in Halifax at mid-century.

By the 1850's daguerreotyping was no longer a wondrous phenomenon, but it did remain a novelty, one with which most of the population had had little contact. It was, however, the best known and most popular type of photographic process in Halifax, if only because other processes had not yet become available on a large scale. Without the services of Cleverdon, Haligonians had to turn to a new daguerrean to preserve their visages by the light of the sun. This was Mrs. Jane Carroll, who advertised in the *British Colonist* of September, 1852 that she had opened a studio at Prince and Barrington Streets and added that her "experience in the Art gives her confidence in soliciting . . . patronage . . . pictures are put up in a neat

Morocco Case to suit the times." Mrs. Carroll also operated a Seminary for young ladies at the same address, and had apparently just returned from the West Indies. She was in business less than a year for in the *Colonist* of late June, 1853, this notice appeared:

A RARE CHANCE — A DAGUERREOTYPE Apparatus for Sale, and instructions in the Art if required. Enquire of Mrs. Carroll, corner of Prince & Barrington Streets, opposite St. Paul's Church.

In early July Mrs. Carroll purchased some of Cleverdon's daguerreotypes and offered them for sale. By the end of the month her daguerreotype business card had disappeared from the local newspapers, although she continued to run her Seminary. By the end of 1854, it too had ceased operations and nothing more is known of her.

Mrs. Carroll's departure from daguerreotyping may have been spurred by the arrival of two new firms: A.H. Lincoln & Co., who advertised the opening of new "Rooms over the Newspaper Reading Room" opposite the *British Colonist* offices in January, 1853; and Daniel J. Smith (Figs. 4, 5) who took over Cleverdon's business, advertising that ". . . The Subscriber still offers his services to the public, having operated in some of the first Establishments in the United States, he would invite all those who wish a true likeness to call at Cleverdon's old stand, No 11 Granville Street, his top light being superior to any in the city . . .". Smith's notice first appeared in the *British Colonist* of August 6, 1853.

Smith and Lincoln carried on a two-year rivalry in the city which ended only with Lincoln's withdrawal from business. The intense political rivalries of provincial politics at the time were sometimes expressed in the language of photography. For example a notice appeared in the editorial columns of the *Colonist* of August 27, 1853, about Richard Nugent, editor of the rival *Sun*:

Dagger O'Type — It is generally admitted that those 'Sun' pictures of men and things between Halifax and Amherst are some of the best specimens of the dagger and type character. Nugent says that if he cannot take Daugerotype (sic) Pictures by the natural Sun, that being himself a natural son his 'Sun' can do much the same thing — look daggers in type.

While the local editors carried on in such inspired fashion, Smith and Lincoln were advertising their respective businesses in terms of "splendid

operating rooms", "arrangements of light" and "assortments of cases" as well as of course, low prices. On one occasion, however, Lincoln had to offer a reward: the flag belonging to his rooms had been stolen, perhaps by street-urchins who habitually roamed the streets of nineteenth-century Halifax. The reward was substantial, a sum of twenty-five pounds, which made this flag very valuable indeed! It is not known if he ever recovered it. The advertisements of Smith and Lincoln often appeared side by side in the newspapers, and each new notice was answered by one from the rival firm. Lincoln took a large step ahead of his rival in the battle for clients; in his April 4, 1854 advertisement of the *Colonist*, he informed readers that "... At his rooms can be seen, — the result of improved instruments and new discoveries, — some astonishing productions of the photographic art . . ." These were undoubtedly ambrotypes, or collodion negatives on glass, which were placed against a black background to produce a positive image. The collodion process had been perfected in England in 1851 by Frederick Scott Archer, and patented in the United States by Ambrose Cutting of Boston in 1854, with the name ambrotype soon after being applied by Marcus Root of Philadelphia.¹⁴

Lincoln was still unable to offer to take ambrotypes; it is certain he imported his specimens from elsewhere. The rivalry continued throughout 1854, until the settlement of the question of superiority in the art could be made at the Nova Scotia Industrial Exhibition, which was held in Halifax in the first two weeks of October, 1854. Two firms were entered in the contest for the best daguerreotype specimens — Daniel J. Smith and A.H. Lincoln, with Lincoln carrying off the prize and the prestige. In the meantime James M. Margeson, another photographer, arrived in Halifax. Margeson's travelling daguerrean saloon stood on the Grand Parade during the Exhibition. Evidently, he found business to be good, for in the *Morning Journal* of October 27, he began advertising "superior Likenesses at his Saloon, on the Grand Parade . . . Terms very reasonable." Margeson remained in Halifax for many years, though he suffered some bad fortune, including the destruction of his studio by fire in 1861. His name appeared in the city directories as late as 1906.

By the end of 1854, Halifax had regained its prosperity. The economic slump of mid-century had disappeared with the commencement of the Crimean War, the growing commercial demand for Nova Scotian-built ships and crews and the increasing trade with New England, the West Indies and Great Britain. All of this improved the prospects for every commercial venture in the city, including the three photographic studios.

All continued to advertise until 1855, with notices ringing with declarations about the superiority of their productions and of the inability of others to supply the same quality of photograph. Daniel Smith, however, on May 19, 1855, ran an advertisement in the *Colonist* stating that "... he is prepared to take likenesses in a New Style, which is superior to any ever taken in the City or Country." He had obviously mastered the technique of ambrotyping, thereby gaining a great advantage on his rivals (Fig. 6). Ambrotypes were far superior in terms of clarity and speed of production, and were much preferable to daguerreotypes. Smith's mastery of the technique guaranteed him a steady market: Lincoln and Margeson had to obtain the technique for themselves before they could return to a fair rivalry.

Margeson also suffered other problems. In the February 10, 1855 *Acadian Recorder* a news story told of the robbery of Margeson's studio by a young man who sacked the place while Margeson was occupied in taking an accomplice's photograph. Unfortunately for the not overly-bright thieves, Margeson quickly developed the picture, took it to the local constabulary and had the two young men arrested. Margeson recovered his valuables, while the thieves were sent to Bridewell prison.

Photography was achieving a wider audience and interest by the middle of the 1850's as daguerreotype imperfections were eliminated and the development and dissemination of newer and more efficient processes occurred. A. H. Lincoln & Co. had begun advertising supplies for amateur daguerreans at the beginning of 1855. Another advertisement appeared in the *Colonist* of August 11, 1855, indicating the means by which at least one person was becoming involved in the art:

WANTED. — A PHOTOGRAPHIC APPARATUS, in working order. Apply (stating price, &c) to A.B., Office of this paper.

There were also notes about new developments in the field of photography: the *Colonist* of August 21st, carried a story concerning attempts at developing colour photography by M. Testude de Beauregard of France. Further stories about foreign developments in the art continued to appear in various Halifax newspapers over the next few years.

Lincoln ran an advertisement in the September 27 *Colonist*, declaring: "... The likenesses taken with the splendid instruments now in use are perhaps equal to any other photographic paintings executed in North America." This appears to have been Lincoln's last attempt to attract

customers. Shortly afterwards the advertisement was discontinued and nothing more was heard about Lincoln's business until 1857, by which time his premises had been taken over by the firm of W.A. Chase & Co.

William Valentine's old studio, left unused since his death in 1849, was occupied by the firm of Mr. T. A. Salteri & Co. in 1855. Salteri stated in his advertisements that " . . . The light on the premises is of a superior nature, and calculated to give that tone to a picture which so universally distinguished those taken by Mr. Valentine and Mr. Cleverdon during their location in Bell's Lane."¹⁵ Salteri & Co. also advertised, in the *Colonist*, until July of 1856 when they reorganized under the name of Grant & Salteri. Salteri's new partner was Martin H. Grant, who had been in business with another photographer in Saint John, New Brunswick in the years 1854-55. That partnership had been dissolved by mutual consent;¹⁶ the one with Salteri would be dissolved in 1857.¹⁷ Later, Grant went to St. Andrew's, New Brunswick, being found there in 1865; in 1871, he had settled in St. Stephen's, New Brunswick.¹⁸

Grant & Salteri's efforts to attract business failed, in spite of the low prices which they offered: 2s.6d. for a likeness, done up in the best style case, according to advertisements. In the April 4, 1857 *Colonist*, their last notice appeared.

Thomas A. Salteri remained in Halifax until at least 1871, when his name disappeared from the city directories. In the interval, Salteri's business had undergone many changes; he had been burned out, forced to change business partners, and to assist others in their businesses when his fortunes had taken a turn for the worse. Salteri was typical of the nineteenth-century photographer; unlike the few who became famous and successful, he was one of the many who suffered through both good and bad times, and like many others his fate is unknown.

More successful as a photographer was Dan Smith, mentioned in a *Novascotian* article of February 11, 1856 about the Halifax Firemens' Sleight Ride: " . . . This annual affair came off on Thursday last. At 9 o'clock, A.M., the Firemen and their guests assembled at Engine Hall . . . The cavalcade closed up towards the SW angle of Dalhousie College, where a daugerrottype (sic) of the tout ensemble was taken by Mr. D. Smith, of this city . . .". Smith continued to advertise throughout 1856, as he had during the previous year.

The disappearance of A. H. Lincoln's firm in late 1855 was counter-balanced by the opening of a new firm, W. A. Chase & Co., which took over the studios at 64 Prince Street. Among the earliest surviving group



Fig. 6. Daniel J. SMITH, *Looking at SW corner Duke & Granville Streets, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1854*, ambrotype, Coll. Nova Scotia Museum 75-70-4. (Photo: N.S.M.)



Fig. 7. Wellington CHASE, *Yarmouth Merchants*, Top Row: Ww. Brown, Herman Crowell, Chas. White, Dave Burton; Bottom Row: S.M. Ryerson, James Williamson, L.E. Baker, Writing Master Williams, O.S. Davison, 1855, Coll. Public Archives of Canada. (Photo: P.C.A.)



Fig. 8. Wellington CHASE, *Prince of Wales' visit* — 1860, *Government House, Charlottetown, P.E.I.*, carte-de-visite, Coll. Public Archives of Canada. (Photo: P.A.C.)

portraits from Nova Scotia is one taken of a group of Yarmouth merchants in 1855, now in the Public Archives of Canada, taken by Wellington Chase, the head of this company (Fig. 7).¹⁹ Chase presumably operated through 1856, though no advertisements appeared. The first public mention of Chase's firm occurred in the newspapers of early January, 1857, with the report that the company's premises had been damaged by a New Year's Day fire. Chase, however, soon had his studio back in operation; in the January 10 *British Colonist*, he advertised that "Photographs, Ambrotypes and Daguerreotypes" could be taken with all the recent improvements. The company continued to run notices throughout the year.

In the *Colonist* of the week following the April 4, 1857 notice placed by Grant & Salteri, an advertisement appeared under the name of William D. O'Donnell, stating that "he has commenced business at the Rooms formerly occupied by Messrs. Grant & Salteri . . ." O'Donnell is the first of the Halifax photographers about whom anything is known. According to information derived from census returns,²⁰ he was born in 1831 in Nova Scotia, and had probably learned the business from one of the local pioneers. He remained one of the most enduring of Halifax photographers; as late as 1902, his business operated in Halifax and was listed in the city directories with his name and that of a Mr. Macdonald as proprietors.²¹

O'Donnell and Chase vied for public favour in 1857 while the name of Daniel J. Smith disappeared from the public prints. In 1858, Smith surfaced once again, as a partner in Chase's firm, operating a branch in Hollis Street. For the moment, however, Chase and O'Donnell ran notices side by side in the local press, offering comparative prices and similar merchandise in the form of ambrotypes on coloured glass, photographs in English lockets and in morocco-bound cases. Chase, in a June 23 notice in the *Colonist* went one step further in offering to take stereoscopic ambrotypes. In announcing the new service that he could offer, Chase stated that his firm " . . . had acquired the art of making raised or STEREOSCOPIC AMBROTYPES on backgrounds, variegated with Colours of every tint . . . (they) have secured the right to practice this new improvement, which enables them to furnish visitors with pictures superior to any taken elsewhere in the city." O'Donnell was unable to make a similar claim for several months.

Popular interest in photography was reflected in the Halifax papers in the late 1850's. The *British Colonist* carried a large number of foreign news items about photography. The December 13, 1856 issue carried an

amusing article about Bayard's discovery of photography; the January 12, 1858 issue contained a story about Wedgwood's eighteenth-century experiments in photography; the September 11, 1858 issue documented an item concerning the Englishman Kalfe's attempts to freeze the image of an exploding shell while the November 4 issue of the same year told of the use of photographic evidence in a celebrated property case in Boston. The December 2, 1858 paper carried a story about Nadar's curious attempts to photograph Paris from a balloon, while items in the January 11 and October 29, 1859 papers told about the colour photography experiments of M. Niepce de St. Victor and the forgery of bank notes by the French photographer Aguado respectively.

Foreign items, however interesting, affected the local scene very little; here the photographers were only trying to improve their business. Chase and O'Donnell both continued to advertise extensively. In August 1858, Chase & Co. opened a new Gallery in the Victoria Block, 164 Hollis Street, to be managed by Dan J. Smith. In its advertisement, another element of early photography was introduced: a footnote stated that "Mr. Chase has the assistance of Mr. John O'Brien in the colouring of photographs, some fine specimens of which may be seen at the Rooms." This was not a new idea, but it was a novel practice in Halifax. John O'Brien was a talented young Halifax painter who had been sent to Europe through the generosity of several local merchants.²² In a letter sent to his father, and published in the *Halifax Colonist* of January 12, 1858, O'Brien wrote from London that he was employed with the English photographers Cotton & Wall in colouring photos. He had evidently just returned before the appearance of Chase's advertisement. In November of the same year, he opened his own art studio in Jacob Street.²³

In 1859, the professional photographic field in Halifax was one of confusion and change. Mr. A. Oxley, who had taken over O'Donnell's studio in July 1858,²⁴ offered to take ambrotypes for the price of 2s.6d. and began advertising that " . . . after this date (he would) keep for sale every description of AMBROTYPE MATERIALS . . . Artists will find it to their advantage to send their orders for stock to A. Oxley, Bell's Lane, Halifax."²⁵ Meanwhile, other photographers were facing problems: a "Dissolution of Partnership" notice appeared in the *Colonist* of April 7 from the firm of W. Chase & Co., ending the relationship between Dan Smith and Wellington Chase. In another column, Smith advertised that he intended to continue operating the studio at 64 Prince Street. Chase, while taking over all the debts incurred during the partnership, also announced the continuation of the business at Hollis Street. Smith subsequently left

the operation of his business to William O'Donnell, who took over the studio in July, offering to make both ambrotypes and melaineotypes for 3s.6d. upwards and photographs, both plain and coloured, very cheap.²⁶ One other change occurred among the photographers operating in the city in 1859: the studio of George Vieth, which had opened the previous year,²⁷ was taken over by Charles Mitchell, a nineteen year-old native-born photographer.²⁸ Unfortunately Mitchell's studio was destroyed in the great Halifax fire of September 10, 1859, that consumed a two-square block area bounded by Water, Buckingham, Barrington, and Duke Streets. In the *Colonist* of September 13, no mention was made of Mitchell's losses being covered by insurance; however he re-established himself and continued in business until the 1870's.

The year 1859 also saw the introduction into Halifax of the two great phenomena of early photography: the stereoscopic view and the carte-de-visite. The stereoscopic view, taken with a double-lensed camera, brought three-dimensional views of many of the world's great sights into the mid-Victorian home at little cost. Such firms as E. G. Fuller's American Book-Store advertised in the local papers: "Stereoscopic Boxes, from \$5 to \$30, including 500 stereoscopic views;" while Woodill's City Drug Store offered views of Montreal, new York, and the Hudson river valley. Cartes-de-visite were still being offered only by professional photographers; they were to achieve greater popularity in the early 1860's when every store in Halifax it seemed, had them for sale.²⁹ The carte-de-visite was a small 2-1/2"x 4" cardboard card upon which a mass-produced photograph of some famous personality was pasted. They had been patented by the Frenchman Eugène Disdéri in 1854; at the height of the craze in Halifax, in 1862, the most popular were photographs of Queen Victoria, the late Prince Consort, the Prince of Wales and the Emperor of France, Napoleon III. Locals who wanted cartes of themselves could obtain a dozen for eight dollars,³⁰ from Parish & Co. the prestigious new firm, or a dozen for \$2.50 from the less prestigious but more experienced photographer J.M. Margeson.³¹

The decade of the 1860's has been called the golden age of early photography. The carte and the stereoscopic view enjoyed immense popularity; the introduction of cheaper and faster processes for portrait-taking, such as the tintype, enlarged the market for photographers. More photographers than ever before offered a greater variety of choice in price and services and the camera was being increasingly used in a novel and exciting fashion. Almost since the beginning of photography in 1839, it had

been used in a documentary fashion by travellers and antiquarians alike. Roger Fenton began the trend of war-coverage in the Crimean theatre of operations in 1854-55. The 1860's and the American Civil War, saw the expansion of photographic documentary reportage on an unheard-of scale. The camera documented almost every incident worth recording, while many hundreds of thousands of fighting men had their photos taken for their loved ones before marching off to war. Names such as Brady, Gardner, and O'Sullivan were to be found on practically every Northern battlefield, and are now remembered in the annals of American photographic history because of their exploits. Many others, less well known, also profited and prospered because of the Civil War experience. No comparative opportunity was available in Nova Scotia for the domestic photographers.

The use of the camera, however, to cover historical events was one of the hallmarks of the decade in the Maritimes. Wellington Chase took many photographs of historical significance. One of these taken early in 1860 of the Honourable William Young, Nova Scotia's new premier, was lithographed and advertised for sale by the printer William Stenczel of Halifax, providing an example of the use of photography to disseminate information about men and affairs to the public.³² In the same year, Chase also won the praise of two of the local news editors. In the *British Colonist* of July 10 there was a note on the editorial page: "CHASE took a photograph of Messrs. Doull & Miller's beautiful stone building this morning. It will make a fine picture, which we expect to see figuring as a vignette on the bill-heads." Similarly, on the 16th of July, the *Novascotian* carried a long article upon his work:

A very fine photograph was taken by Chase on Tuesday, of the scene at the inauguration of the Parker and Welsford Monument. The picture comprises a fine representation of the monument in the foreground, a view at the rear and east end of the new Court House in the distance, with a glimpse at the thousands of spectators assembled in the cemetery, and around the Monument. We also observe in Mr. Chase's gallery, photographic view of various places in the city, among them a portion of Hollis Street, with the east front of the Province Building and Doull & Miller's new warehouse, and the Asylum of the Deaf and Dumb in Gottingen Street. We have no doubt that Mr. Chase will find sale for a number of these views, particularly when the city is crowded

with strangers during the Prince's visit. Speaking of the visit of the Prince reminds us that arrangements ought to be made for procuring a good photographic view of the landing of His Royal Highness at the Dockyard; and we hope the committee of arrangements will secure the services of Mr. Chase, or at least give him the opportunity to take a perfect sketch of the scene at the moment when our future sovereign first sets foot upon the soil of this continent; and thus not only give to the public a lasting memorial of the great event, but give to those who may not be privileged to witness it for themselves, a faithful or life-like representation of the scene. We have no doubt Mr. Chase will undertake the task if an opportunity is offered him.

Thousands of people flocked to the city to witness the royal visit of 1860. When the Prince of Wales stepped ashore on July 30, Wellington Chase and J.R.P. Fraser, another recently-arrived local photographer, were there to record the historic moment.³³ The *Colonist* of September 11, 1860 copied from the London *Times* the story of the Prince's arrival ashore:

Halifax, July 30 . . .

. . . The Prince disembarked at a triumphal arch, which, to show the nautical character of the decorations, was moored by two small anchors on either side . . . Here he stood for some seconds motionless, for he had kindly complied with the request of the city that a photograph might be taken of him as he first landed on Nova Scotia soil . . .

Chase took advantage of public interest in the Royal Visit to offer for sale a carte-de-visite of the Prince of Wales and his entourage in front of Government House, Charlottetown (Fig. 8).³⁴ He continued to photograph prominent personalities and groups in Halifax for a number of years and enjoyed the particular patronage of the Army and Navy garrisons in the city. A news story appeared in the *Novascotian* of April 28, 1862, entitled "Photography" which described Chase's work and praised his skill in the quality of production of photographs:

. . . Among the pictures recently on exhibition, we have observed several groups of military and naval gentlemen; the officers of the NILE in one group, and those of the ST. GEORGE and of the

ORLANDO in the same style, each forming a picture of about 22 by 30 inches. Within the last few days, two other groups have been added to the collection, viz., the officers of the 17th Regiment, thirty-nine in number, and the twenty-nine members forming the Government side of the House of Assembly. These photographs are all taken in the finest style of albumen photograph We learn that Mr. Chase can supply any number of copies at the small price of 10s . . .

Chase exhibited photographs at the London International Exhibition of 1862 and showed coloured photographs in the Nova Scotia pavilion of the International Exhibition at Paris in 1867.³⁵ He also won a prize for coloured photographs at the Nova Scotia Provincial Exhibition in 1868.³⁶ Chase remained in Halifax until 1877; thereafter his name disappeared from the city directories and his fate, and that of his collection of negatives, is unknown.

Chase was the pre-eminent photographer of the 1860's in Halifax, but there were many others: William O'Donnell, Smith, Margeson, Salteri, and Mitchell would also continue to do business throughout the decade. Others appeared and disappeared very quickly, either because they were bad businessmen or because they lacked the talent to succeed. Two other photographers established themselves successfully in Halifax during the first half of the decade: one was Joseph S. Rogers, an American who in 1871 published a "Photographic Advertising Album" which included numerous views of the city and its business establishments;³⁷ the second was Isaac Parish, proprietor of the International Photograph Studio founded in 1862, who quickly rose to be Chase's major competition in the field. In 1863 Parish obtained the patronage of the Lieutenant-Governor, The Marquis of Normanby and the commander of the Army in Nova Scotia, General Hastings Doyle.³⁸ Parish was probably the photographer responsible for the photographs of Halifax which are now preserved in the Hastings Doyle Album in the Public Archives of Canada (Fig. 9). Parish also published many cartes-de-visite, was awarded an honourable mention for his entries in the Dublin International Exhibition of 1865 and in 1867 advertised for sale photographs of H.M.S. *Duncan*. Parish was listed in the Nova Scotia Directory for 1868-69, but by the following year he was gone, having sold his studio to Abner Brennan.³⁹

O'Donnell also obtained some degree of fame in the 1860's and his longevity in business alone gave reason for his being one of the best known



Fig. 9. Isaac PARISH, *Sir Charles Hastings Doyle*, 1863, photograph, Coll. Public Archives of Canada.
(Photo: P.A.C.)

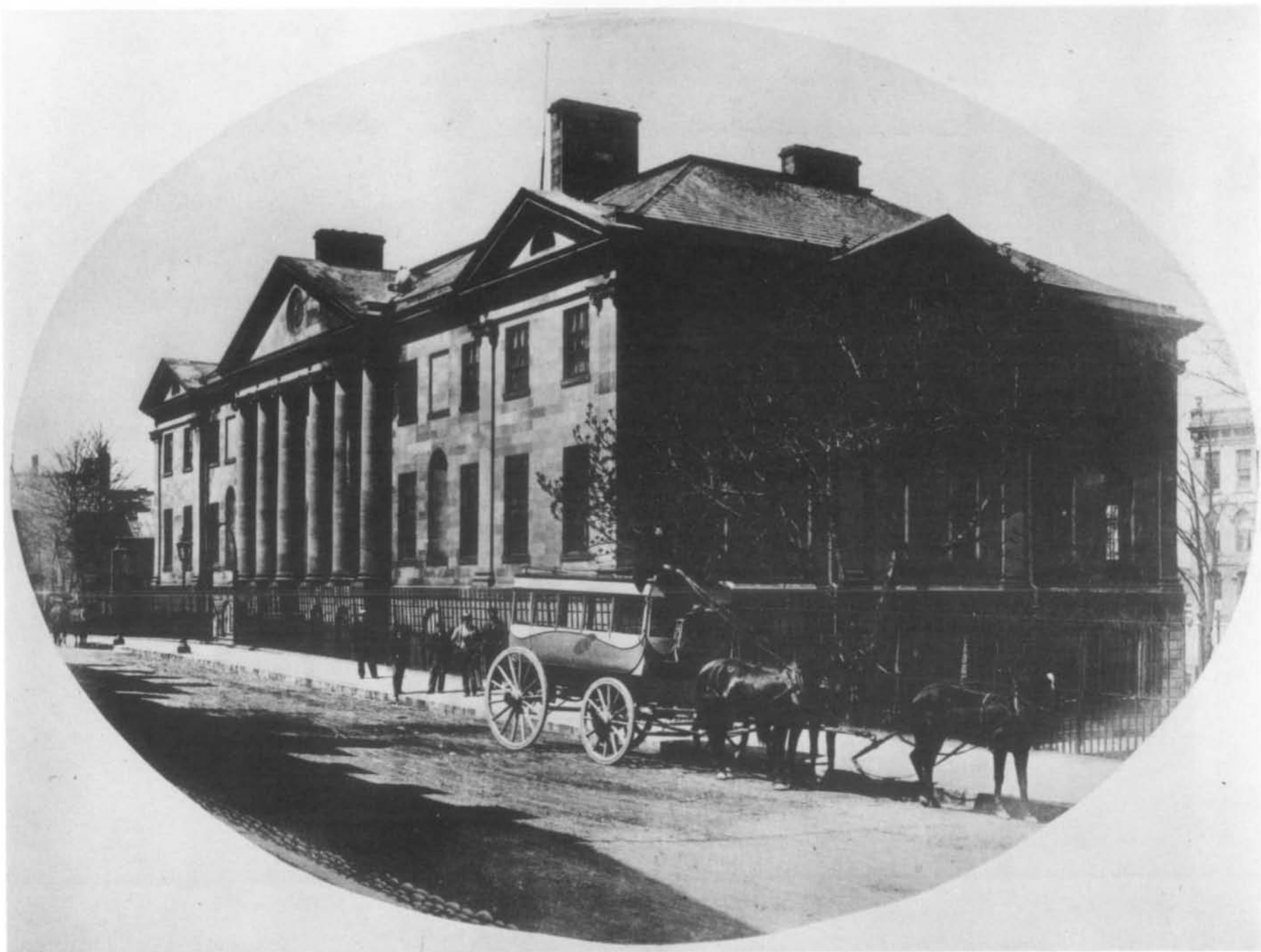


Fig. 10. *Provincial Buildings, Halifax, N.S. c.1861-66*, photograph, Coll. Public Archives of Canada. (Photo: P.A.C.)

of Halifax photographers. He also was awarded an honourable mention at the Dublin Exhibition in 1865 and took photographs of prominent groups in Halifax such as " . . . Splendid photographed groups of the 'Day Spring', the Missionaries, and crew . . ." ⁴⁰ O'Donnell as well as Chase, won a prize for coloured photographs at the Nova Scotia Provincial Exhibition in 1868. O'Donnell's career continued into the twentieth century.

Chase, Parish and O'Donnell represented the best among the many practitioners of photography in the Halifax of the 1860's. By the time of Confederation in 1867, photography in Halifax had come a long way from its beginnings in 1842 (Fig. 10). Several studios thrived, some run by men who had to survive failures, fire and the threat of rival firms in order to carry on. Because of the perseverance of these early photographers the public of pre-Confederation Halifax was able to enjoy the profit from the benefits of an art which brought portraiture into the hands of practically everyone. Where thirty years before, only the rich could obtain a portrait for the benefit of their family or posterity, there was now access to portraiture for all but the poorest. Photography had also moved into the field of history, landscape and art in this short time, wielding a social impact which even today is difficult to appreciate. Photography changed society, as well as changing our means of looking at the past.

The year of Confederation marks an arbitrary break in the history of early photography in Halifax and Nova Scotia, if only because of the political events which occurred. 1868 marked the opening in Halifax of a branch of Notman's Studios, the famous Montreal firm, under the direction of Mr. A.B. Almon, a transplanted Nova Scotian.⁴¹ Notman's studio would eventually gain clientele from the Army and Navy garrisons⁴² and was no doubt a factor in driving some of the Halifax studios out of business. This in itself perhaps best reflects the fate of Nova Scotia in Confederation. Photography may have been at its best in the mid-1860's; thereafter, in the light of wider competition, the quantity and quality of the local photographers in Halifax declined. In the years before Confederation, however, they had proved themselves to be abreast of the rest of the world in terms of technique, ability, and achievements.

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Notes:

- ¹ *Colonial Pearl* (Halifax), May 10, 1839, p. 150.
- ² *Ibid*, June 7, 1839, p. 182.
- ³ *Novascotian* (Halifax), Nov. 26, 1839. In this paper appears an amusing story about the use of daguerreotyping in wooing and winning ladies.
- ⁴ R. GREENHILL, *Early Photography in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 37 and 47.
- ⁵ J. Russell HARPER, *Early Painters and Engravers in Canada* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1970), pp. 314-15.
- ⁶ This information was supplied to the author through the kindness of Doctor D. Mackay of Halifax, who has perused the notes of the late Harry Piers, which are still in the possession of the Nova Scotia Provincial Museum. Doctor Mackay has also been helpful on a number of other points, and his assistance is gratefully acknowledged. Other information on Doane was obtained from the files of the Public Archives of Canada, and from Greenhill's book.
- ⁷ Beaumont NEWHALL, *The History of Photography* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1964), pp. 37 and 47. 'The implication of Fox Talbot's experiments were not yet realized: the weakness of daguerreotyping, its uniqueness, would eventually lead to its supersession by variation of the Talbototype process. Talbot's paper negatives could produce a number of positive copies of every photograph; when albumen paper and the wet-collodion processes were developed in 1850 and 1851 respectively, it spelled the beginning of the end of the era of the daguerreotype.'
- ⁸ HARPER, p. 68. Donald Mackay has work by Clow dated 1851 done in Halifax, N.S.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 186.
- ¹⁰ The earliest surviving exterior views of Halifax are two taken on the Parade in 1853 by Dan J. Smith. These daguerreotypes were seen by the author through the kindness of Scott Robson, of the History Section of the Nova Scotia Provincial Museum, in which they form part of the collection.
- ¹¹ *British Colonist* (Halifax), Sept. 22, 1849.
- ¹² HARPER, "Daguerreotypists and Portrait Takers in Saint John, " *Dalhousie Review*, 36, no. 3 (Autumn, 1955), pp. 259-70. References to photographers leaving for California are found on pages 263 and 264.
- ¹³ Nova Scotia Provincial Archives, MG 6, no. 1, "Vertical File: Exhibition."
- ¹⁴ NEWHALL, pp. 48-49.
- ¹⁵ *British Colonist*, Nov. 15, 1855, p. 3.
- ¹⁶ *Temperance Telegraph* (Saint John), June 7, 1855, p. 3.
- ¹⁷ *British Colonist*, Apr. 4, 1857, p. 3.
- ¹⁸ *New Brunswick Provincial Directory for 1865 - 66* (Saint John: Hutchinson & Co.), p. 530; *New Brunswick Directory for 1871* (Montreal: Lovell and Co.), p. 370.
- ¹⁹ This daguerreotype was acquired by the Public Archives of Canada in 1973.
- ²⁰ Public Archives of Canada, Manuscript Division, Dominion Census of 1871, C-709, G-1, Ward 6, p. 22.
- ²¹ *Halifax City Directory for 1902* (Halifax: McAlpine & Sons, 1902), p. 408.
- ²² HARPER, *Early Painters*, p. 239. Also, Harry Piers, "Artists in Nova Scotia, " *Nova Scotia Historical Society Collections*, 18 (1914) p. 51.
- ²³ *British Colonist*, Nov. 16, 1858, p. 2.
- ²⁴ *Halifax Business Directory for 1858-59* (Halifax: Richard Nugent and Son, 1858). This directory is extremely rare and the research for this reference was kindly done for me by Mr. Alan Dunlop of the Nova Scotia Provincial Archives, where there is one existing copy.
- ²⁵ *British Colonist*, Mar. 19, 1858, p. 3.
- ²⁶ *Novascotian*, July 25, 1859.
- ²⁷ George Vieth is also mentioned in the *Nugent Directory*. See note 24.
- ²⁸ Public Archives of Canada, Manuscript Division, Dominion Census of 1871, C-708, A-1, Ward 1, p. 97.
- ²⁹ Among the firms selling cartes-de-visite were: The London Book Store; Della Torre & Co.; W.H. Newman, 92 Granville Street; G.E. Morton's News Agency; Hall & Beamish's; M.S. Brown, Importers; and S. Howard and Son. Both the cartes and the albums in which they were stored were very cheap; Z.S. Hall of 155 Hollis Street offered photo albums for sale at 40 cents each in the *Halifax Evening Express* of November 6, 1863.
- ³⁰ *Evening Express* (Halifax), Sept. 10, 1862, p. 3.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, Dec. 8, 1862, p. 3.

- ³² *British Colonist*, Aug. 9, 1860, p. 3.
- ³³ *Novascotian*, Aug. 6, 1860.
- ³⁴ One of these cartes survives, in poor condition, in the National Photography Collection of the Public Archives of Canada.
- ³⁵ *Novascotian*, Jan. 14, 1867.
- ³⁶ HARPER, *Early Painters*, p. 63.
- ³⁷ This advertising Album was reproduced, in facsimile, by the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia in 1971.
- ³⁸ *Morning Chronicle* (Halifax), Oct. 1, 1863 and *Novascotian*, Nov. 2, 1863 contain advertisements from Parish & Co. which include commendations from these two high-ranking officials about Parish's ability as a photographer.
- ³⁹ Brennan's advertisement appears in the *Halifax City Directory for 1869-70* (Halifax: McAlpine & Co.), p. 370.
- ⁴⁰ *Morning Chronicle*, May 26, 1864.
- ⁴¹ Public Archives of Canada, Manuscript Division, Dominion Census of 1871, C-708, A-1, Ward 1, p. 112. For Almon's advertisement see the *Halifax City Directory for 1869 - 70*.
- ⁴² Notman's *Nova Scotia Studio Collection* is now largely in the possession of the Public Archives of Canada, National Photography Collection. It contains large numbers of naval and military groups.