



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
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(California - 19th-Century Photographs) [Album of 33 photographs of California, Oregon, and Washington, including Yosemite Valley, Stanford University, Sutro Heights in San Francisco; Mt. Hood; Mt. St. Helens; Portland, Oregon]

Stock#: 94083
Map Maker: Watkins / Taber
Date: 1875 circa
Place: California
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 13.25 x 11.25 inches
Price: \$ 9,500.00



Description:

"Americanizing" the West

19th-century Album of Taber Yosemite Photographs and Other Views of California, Oregon and Washington

A wonderful group of original albumen photographs of California, including Yosemite views likely by Carleton Watkins. The present one-of-a-kind album contains 33 photographs of California, Oregon, and Washington, including iconic images of the Yosemite Valley. Other views herein show Multnomah Falls, Mount Hood, Mount St. Helens, and Portland, Oregon. While many of the photographs herein are of cabinet card-format size several, the Yosemite scenes and a few others are in a larger format (individual dimensions noted in the listing below). The album encapsulates sites of natural beauty in the West at time when such attractions were only beginning to motivate the throngs of visitors who would make their way West in the latter 19th- and early 20th-centuries.

The last third of the 19th century was a transformative period in the exploration and imaging of the American West. The completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 marked a significant milestone, facilitating access to California. The dramatic photographs so avidly marketed by Taber, showcasing the pristine beauty of Yosemite Valley as well as images of the awe-inspiring natural scenery of Oregon and Washington, became emblematic of the unspoiled beauty of the West. These evocative images thus played an instrumental role in promoting tourism, inciting settlement, fostering a consciousness for preserving these natural treasures for future generations.

Isaiah West Taber



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The photographs presented in this album are mostly prints issued by Isaiah West Taber, owner of one of the most prolific photographic establishments in California during this period. Following the bankruptcy of Carleton E. Watkins in 1875-76, Taber acquired a significant collection of Watkins' negatives. He subsequently printed from many Watkins negatives, including renowned views of Yosemite Valley, under his own imprimatur. Most of Taber's collection of negatives was lost in the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906.

In addition to a suite of 15 fine views of Yosemite Valley (perhaps including some originally by Watkins), the album includes photographs of Portland, Oregon; Mt. St. Helens; Mount Hood; and other locations in Oregon. Other images show Stanford University and San Francisco (Sutro Heights and Cliff House), and two others show the Lick Observatory.

Watkins is known to have ventured into Washington Territory, having been commissioned by the Northern Pacific Railroad to document an expansive infrastructure project completed in 1883, a line connecting Duluth, Minnesota to the West. He used the opportunity to open a window onto the untouched beauty and grandeur of the region, just as he did in Yosemite. Tyler Green, in his recent biography of Watkins, writes:

...Watkins made thirteen pictures and several dozen stereographs in and around The Dalles... While other photographers flocked to Yosemite and Mendocino after Watkins made those landscapes famous, The Dalles' remoteness meant that Watkins would have the place to himself. Detractors who, in recent decades, have argued that Watkins was a mere photographer in an era of painters, or that he merely made the pictures that were in front of him and thus gets credit for being there but not for doing anything special, must reckon with The Dalles pictures. They are conceptual masterworks that required a knowledge of landscape, geology, and history, as well as a physical nimbleness more typically found in mountain goats - Tyler Green, Carleton Watkins, Making the West American, page 218.

Green singles out Watkins's views of Mount Hood and The Dalles as part of an overall history of the Americanizing of the West, and mentions other subjects shown in the present album as part of this continuing theme.

While we have not been able to confirm whether any of the photographs in the present album are actually by Watkins, it stands to reason that some of them might have been printed from negatives made by that renowned photographer. Indeed, as pointed out by Tyler Green, "Taber was the kind of photographic studio that had made its bones in part by trying to make pictures identical to Watkins's... Taber's deal with



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[Jay] Cooke gave him co-ownership of the genuine article, Watkins's negatives. Taber would henceforth make prints from them and offer them for sale" - page 308.

Here follows a complete list of the photographs, many of the titles transcribed here from an early handwritten listing which accompanies the album:

1. Multnomah Falls 824 Ft. 8 x 6 1/4 inches. A famous waterfall of the Columbia River Gorge, admired by Meriwether Lewis nearly seven decades earlier, who singled it out in an April 1806 diary entry: "The most remarkable of these cascades falls about 300 feet perpendicularly over a solid rock into a narrow bottom of the river on the south side... Several small streams fall from a much greater height, and in their descent become a perfect mist which collecting on the rocks below again become visible and descend a second time in the same manner before they reach the base of the rocks."
2. St. Helens from Portland. 4 1/2 x 7 3/4 inches.
3. Portland, Oregon, with Mt. Hood. 4 1/4 x 7 inches.
4. Mt. Hood. 6 x 8 1/4 inches.
5. Echo Bay, Rooster Rock. 6 1/4 x 8 inches. "Rooster Rock, a phallic two-hundred-foot basalt monolith that rises from the south shore of the Columbia" - Tyler Green.
6. Mount Hood and the Dalles. 4 1/4 x 7 1/4 inches.
7. Cape Horn, Columbia River. 4 1/4 x 7 1/4 inches.
8. Castle Rock. Lower Soda Spring. Signed in the negative: Taber, Photo, San Francisco. 4 1/4 x 7 1/2 inches.
9. Golden Gate and Black Point. Signed in the negative: Taber, Photo, San Francisco, Cal. 4 3/4 x 7 3/4 inches.
10. Sutro Heights, San Francisco. 4 3/4 x 7 1/2 inches.
11. Cliff House, San Francisco. 4 3/4 x 7 1/2 inches.
12. Parapet, Sutro Heights, with bearded man in top hat. 7 1/4 x 4 1/4 inches.
13. Golden Gate Park. By Taber (lower margin trimmed, with loss to caption). 4 1/2 x 7 1/2 inches.
14. Bird's Eye View of Stanford University. 4 1/2 x 7 3/4.
15. Arcade, Stanford University, east side looking north. 7 x 9 1/4 inches.
16. View of Observatory Peak. Lick Observatory. 7 1/4 x 9 1/4 inches.
17. Great Telescope. Inside Lick Observatory. 9 x 7 1/2 inches.
18. Hotel Del Monte, Monterey. 7 1/4 x 9 1/4 inches.
19. Merced River, from Pohono Bridge. 7 1/4 x 9 inches.
20. Half Dome, North Dome and Stoneman Hotel. 6 x 8 inches.



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21. El Capitan in Clouds, 9 1/4 x 7 1/4 inches.
22. Three Brothers, 9 1/4 x 7 1/2 inches. Taber-style black caption block in lower margin trimmed.
23. Domes and Royal Arches from Merced River. 7 1/4 x 9 1/2 inches.
24. North Dome, Royal Arches, and Washington Column or Tower. 9 1/4 x 7 1/2 inches.
25. Half Dome from Merced River. 9 1/4 x 7 1/2 inches.
26. Cathedral Spires. 9 1/4 x 7 1/2 inches.
27. Sentinel Rock. 9 1/4 x 7 1/2 inches.
28. Yosemite Falls. 9 1/4 x 7 1/2 inches.
29. El Capitan. 9 x 7 1/2 inches.
30. Mirror Lake. 7 1/4 x 9 1/2 inches.
31. Bridal Veil Falls. 7 1/2 x 4 3/4 inches.
32. Vernal Falls. 9 1/4 x 7 1/2 inches.
33. Nevada Falls. 9 1/4 x 7 1/2 inches.

Detailed Condition:

Oblong quarto. Contemporary half morocco and pebbled cloth album. Spine backtrip perished, leather on corners dried and worn. 33 original albumen photograph prints mounted on card album leaves. Except for minor (repaired) tears to the photographs of Mullnomah Falls and Yosemite Falls (no losses on either), the photographs are in very nice condition. With an early manuscript listing of the album contents on separate sheet, laid in.