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and community imagination through collective
photographic practices: toward a critical historiography,
1890-1915**
Carolin Görgen

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Thèse de doctorat
de l'Université Sorbonne Paris Cité
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**“Out here it is different” – The California Camera Club and
community imagination through collective photographic practices.
Toward a critical historiography, 1890-1915.**



Carolin Görgen

Thèse de doctorat en langues et cultures des sociétés anglophones

Dirigée par François Brunet et Dominique de Font-Réaulx

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**“Out here it is different” – The California Camera Club and
community imagination through collective photographic practices.
Toward a critical historiography, 1890-1915.**

Carolin Görden

Titre : « Out here it is different » – Le California Camera Club et l’imagination d’une communauté à travers les pratiques collectives de la photographie. Vers une historiographie critique, 1890-1915.

Résumé :

Le California Camera Club, un collectif de photographes amateurs et professionnels actif à San Francisco notamment entre 1890 et 1915, est une organisation constamment marginalisée dans l’histoire de la photographie et de l’Ouest américain. En adoptant une double approche d’histoire culturelle et matérielle, cette thèse éclaire une gamme d’activités et de productions de ce club largement inconnu, qui ont contribué à forger l’identité d’une communauté éloignée de l’Ouest. Par son approche inclusive, réunissant plus de 400 membres en 1900, le club doit être considéré comme une organisation localement ancrée, qui se sert de la photographie pour produire un récit esthétiquement attirant et historiquement cohérent de la ville et de l’État. Malgré son chevauchement chronologique avec le pictorialisme et son ambition de faire reconnaître le médium parmi les beaux-arts, le corpus du club ne peut être inséré dans un canon d’histoire de l’art de la photographie. En se basant sur diverses stratégies de diffusion et d’exposition, les membres adoptent plutôt une approche collective qui transforme l’aspiration à la reconnaissance en un désir de légitimation régionale. À travers une analyse de pratiques photographiques, d’usages et d’itinéraires des objets, cette thèse retrace la construction d’une représentation idiosyncratique de la culture et de l’histoire californiennes par un club qui participe à la conquête d’une place légitime pour l’État sur la scène nationale. En mettant l’accent sur la dimension collective de la photographie, cette analyse montre comment sa pratique dans un territoire isolé mène à la construction imaginaire d’une communauté dotée d’une compréhension commune de ses valeurs esthétiques et de son histoire. L’enjeu de cette thèse est ainsi de réviser un schéma linéaire et étroit de l’histoire de la photographie en élargissant les perspectives géographiques, socioculturelles et archivistiques.

Mots clefs : Photographie en Californie / Histoire de la Californie et de l’Ouest américain / communauté imaginée / archives photographiques

Title: “Out here it is different” – The California Camera Club and community imagination through collective photographic practices. Toward a critical historiography, 1890-1915.

Abstract: The California Camera Club, a collective of amateur and professional photographers, most active in San Francisco between 1890 and 1915, represents a constantly marginalized organization in the history of photography and of the American West. By adopting a two-fold cultural-historical and material approach, this thesis sheds light on a largely unknown variety of Club activities and productions that served as meaningful elements to forge the identity of a remote Western community. Through its inclusive outlook, unifying more than 400 members in 1900, the Club must be considered a locally embedded organization that mobilized photography to produce an aesthetically pleasing and historically coherent narrative of the city and the state. Despite its chronological position in the period of Pictorialism and the striving for institutional recognition, the Club corpus cannot be inserted into an art-historical canon of photography. Rather, by drawing on diverse strategies of dissemination and exhibition, the members adopted a collective approach to the medium that turned the striving for institutional recognition into a desire for regional legitimation. Through an examination of photographic practices, uses, and object trajectories, this thesis traces the construction of an idiosyncratic representation of Californian culture and history by the Club, which actively assisted the state’s search for a legitimate national place. By focusing on the collective dimension of photography, the analysis demonstrates how the practice in an isolated territory led to the imagination of a community with shared aesthetic and historical understandings. The object of this thesis is to revise both linear and narrow tropes in the history of photography by broadening its geographic, sociocultural, and archival perspectives.

Keywords: Photography in California / History of California and the American West / community imagination / photographic archives

Quote in title taken from “The Professional and the Magazine,” *Camera Craft* 14, no. 6 (1907): 207.

Cover image: [unknown], [California Camera Club at Jeffrey Pine, Sentinel Dome, Yosemite National Park], photographic print, ca. 1914. (BANC PIC 2005.045), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Despite the solitary task of capturing flowing ideas and transforming them into printed words, the journey of this thesis has never been a lonely undertaking. Over the past four years and beyond, I was accompanied by people without whom this thesis would not have taken shape as such, and to whom I would like to express my deep gratitude.

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Introduction

Over the course of the second half of the nineteenth century, photographs came to exert a strong influence on the public perception of the American West at large. As a medium that would be practiced in the nation's most remote regions from the 1840s onward, it furnished not only visual information about hitherto unexplored territories, but also operated as a tool for newly established communities to open shutters on immediate surroundings and thus, forge their own imprint. The oscillation of the medium between the public and the individual, between the national and the local, has led to the assertion that “no part of the American historical imagination is so shaped by visual imagery as its image of the nineteenth-century West” – a process to which photography was “central.”¹ Photography's intertwined position in the newly developing societies on the continent's edge became especially striking in California's most rapidly growing community, San Francisco. A city whose Gold Rush history had sparked the imagination of publics across the country and beyond the oceans to Europe and Australia, it came to embody a state that promised its settlers prosperity in the soil and abundance in the surrounding landscape. In a region where the medium and the community developed in tandem, it is estimated that by the 1880s, more than 1,500 Californians worked in the photographic industry, many of whom were located in the Northern parts of the state, and notably in San Francisco.² Given these numbers, it has been rightly suggested that photographers assisted in “the creation of culture in nascent western communities [through] claiming, constructing, reconstructing, and appropriating the landscape they held in common.” Accordingly, photography's strong presence in Western American, and especially San Franciscan, society indicates how it catered to a “strong sense and need for community,” and how it operated as a vehicle for outreach to the rest of the nation.³

If the visualization of national expansion and the development of local culture in geographic isolation to this nation had become hallmarks of Western American society, these two aspects would reinforce by the turn of the century, when the U.S. sought to expand beyond the Pacific and photography became accessible to larger parts of society. This thesis argues that it is within Californian society that the two-fold dimension of photography – implying local

¹ Martha A. Sandweiss, *Print the Legend: Photography and the American West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 13.

² Peter E. Palmquist, “The Pioneers: Landscape and Studio,” in *Capturing Light: Masterpieces of California Photography, 1850 to the Present*, ed. Drew Heath Johnson (Oakland and New York: Oakland Museum of California and W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 3-20.

³ Rachel McLean Sailor, *Meaningful Places: Landscape Photographers in the Nineteenth-century American West* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2014), xxvii.

demarcation and national circulation – came to find its most conscious expression. It proposes that the most striking manifestation of community imagination sparked by the practice of photography occurred in San Francisco in 1890 with the establishment of a collective of photographers who took the state as their very own designation: the California Camera Club. As editors of the West Coast’s most prominent photography magazine *Camera Craft*, the Club members declared in 1900 that “[i]t is *only through photography* that the beauties of this State can be displayed for the admiration of the East and the rest of the world.”⁴ To support this assertion, the members demonstrated a remarkable awareness of the medium’s local historical uses and its relevance to the projection of a national future. In line with recent research on turn-of-the-century camera clubs that has explicitly drawn on Benedict Anderson’s concept of “imagined communities” to illuminate the function of photography as a local practice and a national product,⁵ this thesis mobilizes the notion of communal imagination in both the San Franciscan and the broader Californian context. Such a conceptualization of photography gains a new dimension in this region, where “a new medium and a new place [...] came of age together”⁶ – and where its first large-scale camera club embodied an extension of this maturation process. Rather than struggling with the commonly assigned label of a “new state” and the ensuing assumption of “thinness of California’s soil for nurturing historical consciousness,”⁷ Club members embraced this very landscape for their photographic practice to forge a coherent historical understanding at local level and envision a future that proved just as intelligible for the rest of the country. Which processes, then, enabled the collective of photographers to develop a purposeful local practice and a nationally meaningful representation of California that could be efficient exclusively through the medium? And conversely, how did the self-assigned geographic label of “California” generate a localized understanding of photography within the Club and infuse its works, once they crossed state borders, with this representation?

Much more than the history of a photo-club in the period of the turn of the century generally understood as “Pictorialism,” this thesis attempts to critically reconstruct the activities

⁴ Editorial, *Camera Craft* 2, no. 1 (1900): 47 (emphasis added).

⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso), 1996; for recent discussions, see Elizabeth Edwards, *The Camera as Historian: Amateur Photographers and Historical Imagination, 1885-1918* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 217; Tiziana Serena, “Catastrophe and Photography as a ‘Double Reversal:’ The 1908 Messina and Reggio Earthquake and the Album of the Italian Photographic Society,” trans. Rebecca Milner, in *Wounded Cities: The Representation of Urban Disasters in European Art (14th-20th Centuries)*, eds. Marco Folin and Monica Petri (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2015), 138-140.

⁶ Sandweiss, *Print the Legend*, 2.

⁷ David Glassberg, *Sense of History. The Place of the Past in American Life* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 171.

and output of a collective of professional and amateur photographers and their self-understanding as practitioners in a remote setting between 1890 and 1915. In this twenty-five-year chronology, the organization consisted of more than four hundred active members, held three salons, issued two journals, celebrated two universal expositions, and suffered one earthquake. By mobilizing rarely used and completely untapped primary source material, this thesis invites new understandings of how photography assisted the self-definition of a young urban culture. It asks how photography functioned as a collectively articulated practice in a region whose geography, history, and society aroused rapidly growing national expectations. Ultimately, it interrogates how the period discourse of an “elevation” of the medium to the fine arts would be inserted into a broader quest for cultural recognition through regional features that could be appreciated “*only through photography.*”

*

Lingering between the canonic period of Californian landscape photography delineated respectively by Carleton Watkins and Ansel Adams, and coinciding with the rise to fame of the most influential photographer in turn-of-the-century America, Alfred Stieglitz, the chronology and the specific practices discussed in this thesis constitute an almost completely uncharted terrain in the history of American photography at large, and in two specific ‘branches’ of this relatively recent discipline in particular. Produced by an organization whose members were mostly based in Northern California and who, despite their geographical distance to the East Coast, showed an eagerness to insert themselves into a national network of camera clubs, the corpus examined in this thesis belongs both to the fields of photography in the American West and of Pictorialism. In the former, scant attention has been paid to the transitional period of the 1900s, in which the emergence of a collectively articulated practice modified the common portrayal of the lone photographer-explorer. In the latter, American camera clubs other than the Photo-Secession appear, if at all, as backdrops to a New York-centered history of photography-as-art, in which there is little room for the diversified communal negotiations the medium underwent in other regions at the same period. A closer look at the state of the art in both fields is useful at this point, as it allows us to grasp several, already deeply entrenched conceptualizations in the historiography of this young discipline. These shortcomings – generating consistent and salient gaps – stand in sharp contrast to the copious amount of material to be encountered in collecting institutions when searching for members of the California Camera Club.

While the history of photography in the American West has brought to the fore a broad range of practitioners, most active up to the 1880s and then again during the 1920s, its narrative

has been dominated for several decades by a monographic character that would likewise be applied to the period of Pictorialism. By developing a canon of individuals, historians of the medium and curators have come to formulate “master narratives,” which proved essential to institutional appreciation, and yet stopped short of disclosing omissions.⁸ Survey histories of photography in the American West, regardless of whether they relied on material residing in East or West Coast institutions, have persistently used this individualized model of narration, and generated a veritable leitmotif in tracing “masterpieces” dated from “Watkins to Weston.”⁹ Only recently, on entering the twenty-first century, has scholarship developed a more versatile approach to the complexity of the photographic material produced in this geographic region, most notably thanks to new conceptualizations by Martha Sandweiss and large-scale inventories of photographers compiled by Peter Palmquist and Carl Mautz.¹⁰ If this research has immensely enriched our understanding of the variety of objects, their uses and trajectories, it has also added an important biographical and networking dimension to the practice of photography in remote Western regions. Thanks to these new insights into the archival bulk labeled “photography in the American West,” more recent works by historians like Rachel Sailor could emphasize photography’s “functional, deeply felt importance for western settlers” and emphatically assert the role of local photographers as “participa[nts] in the acquisition phase of defining place.”¹¹ And yet, the history of the numerous small camera clubs formed from the 1880s onward – as well as the region’s largest organ, the California Camera Club – has been widely neglected in this field. A rare exception that integrates this more dynamic conceptual approach can be found in a short study by Huntington Library curator Jennifer Watts, who has drawn attention to the involvement of camera clubs in the promotion of Los

⁸ Anne McCauley, “Writing Photography’s History before Newhall,” *History of Photography* 21, no. 2 (1997): 87; for an early criticism of the “masters of photography” approach with regard to camera clubs, see Michel Poivert, “Le Pictorialisme en France, 1892-1914” (PhD diss., Université Paris 1, 1992), 21-22.

⁹ See Weston J. Naef, *Era of Exploration: The Rise of Landscape Photography in the American West, 1860-1885* (New York: Albright-Knox Art Gallery and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1975) and *Photographers of Genius at the Getty* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2004). For catalogs of Western institutions, see Therese Thau Heyman, ed., *Picturing California: A Century of Photographic Genius* (San Francisco and Oakland: Chronicle Books and the Oakland Museum of California, 1989); Thomas Weston Fels, ed., *Watkins to Weston: 101 Years of California Photography, 1849-1950* (Santa Barbara and Niwot: Santa Barbara Museum of Art in cooperation with Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1992); Drew Heath Johnson, ed., *Capturing Light: Masterpieces of California Photography, 1850 to the Present* (Oakland and New York: Oakland Museum of California and W.W. Norton & Company, 2001).

¹⁰ Sandweiss, *Print the Legend*; Peter E. Palmquist and Thomas R. Kailbourn, *Pioneer Photographers from the Mississippi to the Continental Divide. A Biographical Dictionary, 1839-1865* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005); Peter E. Palmquist, *Shadowcatchers: A Directory of Women in California Photography Before 1901* and *Shadowcatchers II: A Directory of Women in California Photography, 1900-1920* (Arcata: Eureka Printing Company, 1990 and 1991); Carl Mautz, *Biographies of Western Photographers. A Reference Guide to Photographers Working in the Nineteenth-century American West* (Nevada City: Carl Mautz Publishing, 1997).

¹¹ Sailor, *Meaningful Places*, xix. On the role of Western geography in photography and identity formation, see also Liz Wells, *Land Matters: Landscape Photography, Culture and Identity* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011).

Angeles between 1880 and 1920, disclosed thanks to the riches of photography collections in Southern California. Her assertion that club productions embody a “regional identity-building project as performed through photography” is a crucial contribution to a field that has profoundly revised its analytical tools, and yet not applied them to the complete chronology. As such, her footnoted remark that “the field is wide open for study” holds true, still, some two decades after publication.¹²

The shift in focus from geography to chronology reveals comparable gaps and narrative constructions. The designation of the years between 1890 and 1910 as marked by the advent of amateur photography and the striving for the recognition of photography amid the fine arts has defined Alfred Stieglitz at the forefront of this movement in the United States. The history of the Photo-Secession, which has stratified into diverse fields since the 1970s and continues to generate scholarship to this day, has nominated Stieglitz as an indispensable figure in the history of American photography, and in art history at large.¹³ Despite the recognition of eminent curators like Keith Davis that “[p]hotographic history has been strongly biased in favor of the Stieglitz circle,” practically no other comprehensive study has been written for other American camera clubs of the same period.¹⁴ While the underlying dynamics of this history necessitate much closer discussion, it may be stated here that there is a tangible awareness vis-à-vis the narrowness of this focus. Yet, rather than developing alternative histories, scholars have formulated critical approaches that have illuminated the conditions leading to the authority of the Photo-Secession. The notion of Stieglitz’s “power to displace” by excluding specific practitioners to shape a collection, or the stylization and standardization of exhibition displays at the New York gallery, are useful to an understanding of how this restrained focus came about.¹⁵ Even though this research furnishes valuable tools that will be mobilized in this thesis,

¹² Jennifer A. Watts, “Picture Taking in Paradise: Los Angeles and the Creation of Regional Identity, 1880-1920,” *History of Photography* 24, no. 3 (2000): 243, 248.

¹³ See for example, William Innes Homer, *Alfred Stieglitz and the American Avant-garde* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1977); Weston J. Naef, *The Collection of Alfred Stieglitz: Fifty Pioneers of Modern Photography* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Viking Press, 1978); Jay Bochner, *An American Lens: Scenes from Alfred Stieglitz’s New York Secession* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2005); more recently see, Lauren Kroiz, *Creative Composites: Modernism, Race and the Stieglitz Circle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

¹⁴ Keith Davis, *An American Century of Photography. From Dry-Plate to Digital*, 2nd ed. (Kansas City and New York: Hallmark Cards, Inc. and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1999), 69; one exception can be found in Anthony Bannon and C. Robert McElroy, *The Photo-Pictorialists of Buffalo* (Buffalo: Media Study, 1981). Recently, an exhibition catalog on the much later Lexington camera club has been published, examining its artistic membership and communal anchorage, see Brian Sholis, *Kentucky Renaissance: The Lexington Camera Club and Its Community, 1954-1974* (New Haven and Cincinnati: Yale University Press in association with Cincinnati Art Museum, 2016); for a recent criticism of the New York-centered narrative and its repercussions, see Jessica S. McDonald, “Centralizing Rochester: A Critical Historiography of American Photography in the 1960s and 1970s” (PhD diss., University of Rochester, 2014).

¹⁵ See notably Roger Hull, “Emplacement, Displacement, and the Fate of Photographs,” in *Multiple Views: Logan Grant Essays on Photography, 1983-89*, ed. Daniel P. Younger (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press,

the plea made in 1986 that a study of what happened outside the confines of the Stieglitz circle would be “both desirable and overdue,” has still not been revised.¹⁶

As such, the history of California Pictorialism, which has been treated in some detail in recent decades by Michael Wilson, Dennis Reed, and Stacey McCarroll, does shed light on the existence of the California Camera Club, and yet remains closely within the standards of the Secessionist circle by tending to acknowledge all too readily New York’s influential presence in San Francisco.¹⁷ An analysis of Californian photography through the prism of the Photo-Secession necessarily denies the local conditions of production and the isolation in which they took place. Despite brief acknowledgments of the eclectic nature of these corpora, their relation to the promotional industry of the state, and emerging regional identities, “Pictorialist” readings cannot embrace the complexity of Californian photography in the 1900s.¹⁸ Such art-historical evaluations have provided visibility for practitioners, and yet have installed a comparative vision in which the Club’s productions are made to fit the label of photography as a quest for artistic recognition.

While alternative histories of camera clubs in the United States of the period around the turn of the century are de facto nonexistent outside these conceptual categories, the broad range of photographic material by “amateurs” residing in American archives has undergone yet other art-historical conceptualizations. The attempt to unite the mass of unknown photographs produced through a Kodak leisure practice under the label of “folk art,” or even as precursors of an avant-garde that relied on spontaneous collage and other techniques, does not prove useful for camera club corpora of the period. Even though some of the material belonging to clubs was anonymous and remained uncredited even in photographic journals, it cannot be inserted into a formalist scheme of snapshot or vernacular aesthetics.¹⁹ These analytical confines deny

1991), 169-191; see also Jeff Rosen, “Das große Rahmenkomplott: Zur Institutionalisierung der modernen Fotografie am Beispiel von Alfred Stieglitz’ Photo-Secession,” trans. Jochen Barkhausen, *Fotogeschichte* 11, no. 42 (1991): 17-30.

¹⁶ Gillian Barrie Greenhill, “The Outsiders: The Salon Club of America and the Popularization of Pictorial Photography” (PhD diss., The Pennsylvania State University, 1986), iii.

¹⁷ Michael G. Wilson, “Northern California: The Heart of the Storm,” in *Pictorialism in California: Photographs 1900-1940*, eds. Michael G. Wilson and Dennis Reed (Malibu and San Marino: The J. Paul Getty Museum and the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Collections, 1994), 1-22; Stacey McCarroll and Kim Sichel, eds., *California Dreamin’: Camera Clubs and the Pictorial Photography Tradition* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004).

¹⁸ For one of the first studies to mention this eclectic nature, see Margery Mann, ed., *California Pictorialism* (San Francisco: Museum of Modern Art, 1977), 7-29; see also, Naomi Rosenblum, “California Pictorialism,” in *Capturing Light: Masterpieces of California Photography, 1850 to the Present*, 61-72; for a brief study that takes into account the diversity of productions at the time, especially related to the Californian Arts & Crafts, see Christian A. Peterson, “The Photograph Beautiful, 1895-1915,” *History of Photography* 16, no. 3 (1992): 189-232.

¹⁹ See Barbara Levine and Stephanie Snyder, eds., *Snapshot Chronicles: Inventing the American Photo Album* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006); Sarah Greenough et al., eds., *The Art of the American Snapshot, 1888-1978. From the Collection of Robert E. Jackson* (Washington and Princeton: National Gallery

the broader societal and cultural-historical ramifications of photographic practice and its localized understandings. Instead of approaching the photographs through a formalist lens, it is important to embrace the archival bulk in its material complexity and its position within local and national contexts – as research by European historians has convincingly demonstrated.

The binary framings of turn-of-the-century photographs as either Pictorialist or anonymous, as either fine art or the “vernacular,” which are still prevalent in American scholarship, have been renegotiated in European photographic history in recent years, notably by Elizabeth Edwards and Christian Joschke. While still focusing on the same period, that is, the mid 1880s until the mid 1910s, the chronological choices of these authors are not linked to an artistic trend, but rather embedded in the political and sociohistorical context of Europe before and during World War I. By pushing the more rigid analytical and formalist boundaries commonly imposed on photo-club material, they have found new articulations that are closely related to the staging of a local narrative in the context of emerging nationalisms and the desire for a meaningful archival residue. Here, the photograph is spelled out as an historical object embedded in contexts of production, exhibition, discourse, and archiving. Through this new focus on the objects and their performance, the photographers emerge as local agents and their practice unfolds as a carefully orchestrated endeavor with an anchorage in the environment.²⁰ Recent scholarship on Japanese photography has likewise recognized the necessity of a shift in focus, spurred by the realization that artistic photography “represents a mere fraction of the archive.” Here, the corpora’s exploration is guided by the developing supply markets, journals, and leisure practice.²¹ What these recent studies demonstrate is that camera clubs require a much more versatile analytical focus than has previously been admitted. Inasmuch as rigid standards of appreciation have allowed for the medium’s integration in fine-art institutions and have fostered the emergence of the photo-historical discipline, it appears necessary – thanks to recent fruitful research – to expand these concepts to the American field. To do so, the division of American photographic history, whose fraction between an “art” and a “social history” has loomed large in the canon since the 1930s, would need profound revision.²²

of Art and Princeton University Press, 2007); this process started in the 1960s, see Michel Poivert, “La mémoire photographique ou la sensibilité historique des photographes,” *Histoire de l’Art* 79, no. 2 (2016): 38. A similar aesthetic framing was already developed in a 1951 MoMA exhibition “Forgotten Photographers,” curated by Edward Steichen, see “Forgotten Photographers, August 23 – November 4, 1951,” The Museum of Modern Art, accessed June 11, 2018, <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/3285>.

²⁰ See Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*; Christian Joschke, *Les Yeux de la Nation. Photographie Amateur et Société dans l’Allemagne de Guillaume II (1888-1914)* (Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 2013); see also Costanza Caraffa and Tiziana Serena, eds., *Photo Archives and the Idea of Nation* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015).

²¹ See Kerry Ross, *Photography for Everyone. The Cultural Lives of Cameras and Consumers in Early Twentieth-century Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 1-13.

²² See François Brunet, *La Photographie Histoire et Contre-histoire* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2017), 209-264.

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In the light of the resourceful reconceptualizations of photography in the American West and of camera club material – and in the ambition to remedy fundamental shortcomings with regard to the Californian photographers of the turn of the century – this thesis develops a new approach through the rich and diverse corpus of the California Camera Club. What is at stake here is the articulation of a new history *from* the San Franciscan and the broader Californian context, which implies careful attention to the role of local history, culture, and collecting institutions. This locally anchored approach both questions and seeks to revise the prevalent chronology of Western American photography and the dominant framings of American camera clubs. It becomes even more compelling when applied to the vast material output of a club that declared in its magazine to be “the largest Camera Club in the world in the city of the Golden Gate.” Even though the numbers cannot be verified on an international scale, they do hold true in the American context, where the 425 active Californian members constituted indeed the country’s largest association in 1900.²³ The insistence on large membership numbers reveals not only the Club’s diverse setup, including professionals, amateurs, and newcomers to the medium. It also points to the ambition to be recognized as an organization of local weight and of national relevance. In acknowledging that the Club productions and activities took place in marked geographic and institutional isolation to the rest of the nation, we come to realize that the isolated dimension of the works were translated in the medium’s history later on. The idea of this thesis is therefore to turn the context of isolated production – and the contemporary awareness of this condition – into an analytical category. It asks how the self-definition as a “Californian” camera club was integrated into the material output, visual and verbal, and how it operated for the sake of local demarcation and national recognition. It interrogates the tension between a search for uniqueness within the local confines and the desire for national awareness of this locality – and how this dual ambition was negotiated in the practice of photography and its contemporary discourses.

Several hypotheses, challenges and extensions of existing concepts, may be proposed with regard to this main argument. The first hypothesis concerns the phenomenon of “Westerling.” This process – describing the move toward the West – emerged with the circulation of images representing the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. In the place where East and West met, a new territory was made accessible to a reunified nation. The photographic depictions of the construction process and its realization, in the words of Martha Sandweiss, “spoke not to the past, but to a future yet to unfold; and they narrated a

²³ Editorial, *Camera Craft* 1, no. 1 (1900): 26; Editorial, *Camera Craft* 1, no. 4 (1900): 192-193; see also Chapter 4.

single powerful story about the inevitable and triumphant growth of the American nation.”²⁴ Accompanied by a compelling rhetoric, the photographs were to validate achievements and lure the viewers’ imagination into remote yet possible futures – many of which were bound for California. As historians of the state have asserted from early on, by taking into consideration its imaginative potential we come to realize the “promise” California embodied for the nation. By recognizing its role as a projection screen, we can grasp how the promise rapidly turned into “expectations” that were related to California’s location on the map and its appearance on the national stage at a crucial moment in national history.²⁵ If the imaginative associations with the state have been oftentimes underlined, they need special emphasis with regard to San Francisco. As one historian put it: “There is a history in San Francisco as its inhabitants have wished it to be, which keeps pace with the history of the city as it has become.”²⁶ Whereas the schism between myth and reality of the city, and the state at large, its violent conflicts, and the somewhat inevitable disappointment of the “dreamscape” can only be touched upon at brief intervals throughout this thesis,²⁷ it will be of greater importance to explore the function of San Francisco and the Californian landscape as an imaginative screen for a nation moving westward. Its full meaning cannot be grasped unless the city becomes “connect[ed] [...] to broader patterns of empire-building and nation-making.”²⁸

It can be argued, then, that the process of “Westering” was to have a decisive impact on the conception of San Franciscan culture, and notably the resident photographers of the turn of the century.²⁹ While the term refers to a move in Western direction, we may also envision a lexical shift to a verb in the present continuous; accordingly, “Westering” becomes an act that integrates the shaping of the westward move through photographs and the expression of its “promise” in the actual practice. In other words, to understand the specificities of the California Camera Club’s activities and works, they must be put into relation to the circulation of Western photographs and the national imagination. In this regard, it should be asked to what extent the practitioners’ anchorage in San Francisco heightened the awareness of their location and its role in the national geography. Tracing the interweave of the phenomenon of “Westering” in the

²⁴ Sandweiss, *Print the Legend*, 161.

²⁵ Kevin Starr, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), vii.

²⁶ Paolo Polledri, “Visionary San Francisco: Dreamscape and Reality,” in *Visionary San Francisco*, ed. Paolo Polledri (San Francisco and Munich: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and Prestel Verlag, 1990), 19.

²⁷ For an exploration of this conflicted relationship in literature, see David Wyatt, *The Fall into Eden: Landscape and Imagination in California* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); see also more recently Joan Didion, *Where I was from* (London: Harper Perennial, 2003).

²⁸ Barbara Berglund, *Making San Francisco American: Cultural Frontiers in the Urban West, 1846-1906* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 11.

²⁹ This idea was briefly touched upon by Martha A. Sandweiss, see “Undecisive Moments: The Narrative Tradition in Western Photography,” in *Photography in Nineteenth-century America*, ed. Martha A. Sandweiss (New York and Fort Worth: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers with the Amon Carter Museum, 1991), 125.

Club's works can thus further our comprehension of how the local landscape and national history operated as a mobilizing principle for photographers. This assertion is furthermore inspired by the notion of a mutually nourishing relationship between photographic practice and the landscape, in which photographs become "spatial forms" and, in turn, their production and uses are informed by "spatial contexts." It is from this perspective of photography as a practice by which "ideas about landscape and identity were negotiated" that we can approach the various activities and productions of the Club.³⁰

While the phenomenon of "Westering" in photography invites new understandings of how a collective practice was coherently envisioned, it cannot be dissociated from San Francisco's strong promotional machinery. Therefore, the second hypothesis concerns the examination of Club photography in tandem with promotion and marketization. Even though the question of professional photography is oftentimes omitted from histories of the Pictorialist period due to the Photo-Secession's autonomist, anti-commercialist stance, it needs to be brought to the center of attention if we are to recognize the dynamics of collective photography – and, in fact, of any form of artistic production – in turn-of-the-century California. Since it has long been established that artistic creation in the Northern and Southern parts of the state was closely intertwined with regional development and advertisement for settlement, the resident photographers must be inserted into this promotional context. As city boosters, that is, investors and chambers of commerce, advertised the creation of new communities in the remote Pacific West, verbal and visual contributions by writers, painters, and photographers bolstered the representation of a pleasant environment with a refined culture.³¹ An on-site practice out in nature, in intimate connection with the Californian landscape, was constitutive to these representations. As such, the practice of Club photographers can be approached through W.J.T. Mitchell's definition of landscape photography as "a body of cultural and economic practices that makes history in both the real and represented environment, [and] play[s] a central role in the formation of social identities."³² Since art, investment, and community coalesced in the production of landscape photographs, their different uses form an ideal terrain to trace the involvement of Club photographers in the establishment of local culture and economy. While

³⁰ Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan, introduction to *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination*, eds. Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 6-9.

³¹ See Claire Perry, *Pacific Arcadia: Images of California, 1600-1915* (New York and Stanford: Oxford University Press and Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts, Stanford University, 1999); Sheri Bernstein, "Selling California, 1900-1920," in *Made in California: Art, Image and Identity, 1900-2000*, eds. Stephanie Barron et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 65-98; for a discussion of Los Angeles, see Nancy Dustin Wall Moure, *Loners, Mavericks and Dreamers. Art in Los Angeles Before 1900* (Laguna Beach: Laguna Art Museum, 1993).

³² W.J.T. Mitchell, ed., *Landscape and Power*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 2.

strategies of marketization and professionalism within camera clubs are often relegated to the fringes of chronological histories of the medium – ceasing around the 1880s with the introduction of the dry plate and the subsequent accessibility of photographic supply to larger parts of society – professional membership was common for a majority of American clubs.³³ Due to the longstanding photographic industry in the city since the 1850s, this presence was even more tangible within the California Camera Club that explicitly invited professionals. Therefore, the Club’s relationships to the state boosters – and the response of its non-professional membership to this industry – need close inspection.

Any attempt of grasping the functions of collective photographic practice within a specific local context necessitates not only a look at the objects, but also at the words which accompanied them. The third hypothesis then concerns the reliance on written material to bolster and to unify the membership under one banner. For more than three decades, historians have advocated for a closer inspection of the language attached to photographs, and the shared discourses that were formulated in photographic journals. Yet, especially for the variety of late nineteenth-century magazines published in the United States, this call for consideration still remains largely unanswered.³⁴ As the Club was well represented on the editorial board of two photographic journals over the course of half a century,³⁵ the visual and written material in these sources constitutes a coherent addition to an otherwise scattered corpus. Published over four consecutive decades, *Camera Craft* furnishes a detailed portrayal of the Club’s projects and achievements, as well as the ambitions and questions specific to being a photographer on the West Coast. Since the Club did not generate a unified archive and portions of its output are either lost or were destroyed in the earthquake and fire of April 1906, its written statements are an indispensable addition. Furthermore, these publications allow us to rethink the magazine as a platform of exchange on which the practice was articulated through announcements, calls to participation in excursions, and exhibitions. Even though many photographic traces of these undertakings have perished, their verbal remnants constitute important touchstones to understand how the communal practice of photography was envisaged and which agents participated in it.

³³ Davis, *An American Century*, 43; for further information on the creation of a supply market, see François Brunet, *La Naissance de l’Idée de Photographie*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2012), 214-267.

³⁴ See Ulrich Keller, “The Myth of Art Photography: A Sociological Analysis,” *History of Photography* 8, no. 4 (1984): 249, on *Camera Notes* and *Camera Work* as part of the “very few accepted and overused contemporary publications”; see also Alan Trachtenberg, introduction to *Multiple Views*, 2-5; in a recent issue of *Fotogeschichte* on “writing about photography,” historians and curators, notably Geoffrey Batchen, Clément Cheroux, and Elizabeth Edwards referred to photographic journals of the late nineteenth century as widely understudied sources, see Steffen Siegel and Bernd Stiegler, eds., *Fotogeschichte* 37, no. 145 (2017): 37-42.

³⁵ The *Pacific Coast Photographer* (1892-1894), *Camera Craft* (1900-1942).

Since “Westering” was just as much a verbal process, articulated and circulated in alliance with photographs, “the original narrative context” of the photographs, that is, their production, initial uses, and material supports must be reconstructed.³⁶ In short, John Tagg’s call for awareness of “the determining level of the material apparatus and of the social practices within which photography takes place” very much demands application to the corpus discussed in this thesis.³⁷ One possibility for tracing the material, or, the *original* conditions of photographic practice is found in the photographers’ communication platforms. In this regard, magazines like *Camera Craft* or its short-lived predecessor, the *Pacific Coast Photographer*, reveal not only contemporary expectations related to the medium, but also disclose how exchanges via the region’s only verbal platform for photographers enabled a process of self-definition as Californian practitioners. If newspapers in the American West operated through a “ritualized language” to develop “cultural distinctiveness,”³⁸ the vocabulary used in the only magazine representative of Western American photographers requires the same critical scrutiny. Looking at the twenty-five-year chronology outlined for this thesis, we may ask how the writing about the medium evolved, which specific local attributes were added to it, and how these could be inserted in the national literature of photographic journals.

It is from this perspective that Anderson’s concept of imagined communities can assist the reconstruction of the California Camera Club’s written corpus. If the emergence of “print-as-commodity” popularized the nation concept through increased circulation, it similarly initiated the development of a language that could be identified and shared by larger groups. In this process, “languages-of-power” surfaced, that is, a dominant discourse developed through standardized circulation. It is this formation and spreading of a common vocabulary which “laid the bases for national consciousness.”³⁹ For San Franciscan photographers, then, the creation of their own written exchange platform allowed them to relate to other American practitioners. It likewise enabled the conception and circulation of a specifically local language-of-power. The body of words mobilized for this language provided a tool of identification for a community of photographers that was based in the city and reached out to photographers across the state. Since print was a commodity, it also represented a vehicle for promotion. The practitioners’ self-promotion through the written word may then constitute an additional layer of analysis.

³⁶ Sandweiss, “Undecisive Moments,” 126.

³⁷ John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 2.

³⁸ Patricia Nelson Limerick, “Making the Most of Words: Verbal Activity and Western America,” in *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America’s Western Past*, eds. William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), 179.

³⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 37-38, 44-45.

It might be argued that such a strong reliance on verbal articulation appears unusual or perhaps inadequate for a contribution to the history of photography, yet this component is necessary if we are to understand the medium as a shared practice which generated material objects *and* developed a language that echoed its sociocultural and geographical setting.⁴⁰ The reconstruction of the history of a camera club requires this intertwined approach to image and word, not least since Alan Trachtenberg's acknowledgement that it is not "the interpretation of photographs as such" that furnishes new understandings, but the focus on the "social and cultural processes illuminated and empowered by photography."⁴¹ Through the aforementioned three factors – the extension of "Westering" as a practice, the role of regional promotion within camera clubs, and the function of journals as platforms to define a localized practice, – the corpus of the Club can be explored from a network-based perspective. Through this lens, we can detect local actors and supportive structures. This approach opens geographies, extends chronologies, and uncovers archival boxes, and it similarly unveils the trajectories of productions by tracing the avenues traveled by photographers and the imprints they left on the road.

To situate oneself vis-à-vis a forgotten corpus implies not simply an appreciation, but represents an opportunity to rethink the tools with which to approach photographs, their makers, terrain, and their subsequent institutionalization. It activates a process of reinserting photographs into a context where they can exist as objects in their own right, and where their makers become authors. With regard to the California Camera Club, a more stratified perception is indispensable since its objects, makers, and the places where we encounter them today are just as diverse. The challenge consists in the dispersion of this corpus, as there is no unified archive to consult, or historical persona to retell.⁴² What the localized history of the Club needs to unfold, then, is a methodology that draws its riches from established collections and emerging concepts.

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Inasmuch as the discovery of the Club allows us to apply recent research questions and criticize longstanding paradigms, the methodology for this thesis is just as much animated by the expansive exploration of local archives and the embrace of the sometimes unexpected nature

⁴⁰ See also Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 217.

⁴¹ Trachtenberg, introduction to *Multiple Views*, 7; see also Tagg's notion of "discursive systems," in *The Burden of Representation*, 4-5.

⁴² The challenges that Marin Dacos has identified with regard to individual amateur photographs in archives also hold true for camera club sources. They imply difficulty of access, of exact dating and author identification, and oftentimes an absence of written records, see Marin Dacos, "Le regard oblique. Diffusion et appropriation de la photographie amateur dans les campagnes (1900-1950)," *Études Photographiques* 11 (2002): 66.

of this material. To formulate a critical approach therefore also means to accept and to adopt this variety and to develop new hypotheses *from* these sources. The primary source material used in this thesis spans a chronology of twenty-five years, between 1890 and 1915, with a few additions from the precursor period of the mid nineteenth century and several extensions to the following two decades. In the specific context of San Francisco, it may be expected that the large-scale destruction of the city by the earthquake and fire of April 1906 makes comprehensive research of any kind challenging, especially when examining a Club whose headquarters were first severely shaken and eventually burned down entirely. As the majority of collecting institutions in the city perished, and some 28,000 buildings in total were destroyed, it is impossible to estimate the losses.⁴³ Even though Club members formally declared that “[n]othing was saved,”⁴⁴ it has been possible to recover large portions of individual photographer- and Club-related material dated prior to 1906. The sheer amount and variety of sources that precede and follow the disaster, mobilized in this thesis, counter any supposition that photo-historical research on turn-of-the-century San Francisco is futile.

Recent histories of photography in the American West have relied on the “social historian of photography,” Robert Taft, who suggested in the 1930s “that local historians would find a fertile field of research [in state and local historical societies], not only in locating [...] material, but in preparing brief photographic histories of their localities.” This localized approach to photographic history is immensely facilitated through digitization that displays to researchers on site and from afar the amount of material to tap, and reveals hitherto underestimated complexities.⁴⁵ The relevance of local institutions has been recognized more than three decades ago by collector-historian Peter Palmquist. A preface to one of his innumerable catalogs advocated that “[t]o study photography as material culture, the net must be cast wide. One cannot solely rely on assessments based on art historical methods, nor can one make a case based on a few major institutional collections with their built-in biases.”⁴⁶ While the criticism of institutional collecting will be addressed further on, it is essential at this point to illuminate this extensive “net.” As the sole institution unharmed by the earthquake and the richest historical collection in the Pacific West, the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, holds the most valuable and relevant primary sources related to the Club.

⁴³ Philip L. Fradkin, *The Great Earthquake of Firestorms of 1906: How San Francisco Nearly Destroyed Itself* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 188-192. The death toll of the earthquake and fire is estimated between 3,000 and 5,000. Deaths on the part of the California Camera Club could not be found. See Part III.

⁴⁴ “The California Camera Club,” *Camera Craft* 13, no. 1 (1906): 259.

⁴⁵ See Sailor, *Meaningful Places*, 165-166; the quotation is taken from Robert Taft, *Photography and the American Scene: A Social History, 1839-1889* (New York: Dover, 1938), 259.

⁴⁶ Edward W. Earle, introduction to *Return to El Dorado: A Century of California Stereographs from the Collection of Peter Palmquist* (Riverside: California Museum of Photography, 1986), 2.

This corpus is expanded by material housed in San Francisco-based institutions like the California Historical Society, the city's public library, and the Society of California Pioneers. Collecting institutions throughout the Northern and Southern expanses of the state, including the California State Library at Sacramento, the Los Angeles Public Library, or the Huntington Library at San Marino furnish useful additions, as does a handful of private collectors. The geographic expanse of the material and its availability in municipal or state institutions, rather than fine-art museums, point to the dense societal involvement of the photographers. Their presence throughout the state, and stretching out to the Southwest, becomes more conspicuous when juxtaposed to the almost complete absence of material in the Eastern United States. A notable exception is the Beinecke Library at Yale University, which houses the Peter E. Palmquist collection of male photographers in the American West and a large inventory of female photographers across the globe.⁴⁷

Since a direct keyword search for the "California Camera Club" on standard digital search engines or in library catalogs hardly ever generates any source, the individual contributors must be examined. Again, here, reliance on writing is indispensable, since a closer look at the Club magazines helps identify the main contributors. An expansion of this written material to the local press completes the picture, as newspapers regularly published Club announcements. In the absence of a unified corpus and the almost complete lack of membership lists, the argument developed in this thesis relies on *Camera Craft*, and on photograph collections, correspondence, and manuscripts of individual members. Since the latter furnish not only photographic objects produced during Club membership, but also written insights into activities undertaken with the Club, they coalesce into an extremely detailed and materially diverse assemblage. As the restrained focus on individuals can, at each moment, only provide insight into a micro-experience and a small-scale contribution to its membership, it will be carefully avoided to renew the application of a "master narrative" onto the corpus. Rather, these testimonies, and the large number that could be retained, are made to merge into a more complete portrayal, that is then enriched and validated by the magazine.

Even though this thesis articulates a history of collective practices, the focus on individual practitioners therefore strongly informs the group narrative. A central figure to this endeavor – to whom the methodology of this thesis is greatly indebted – is Peter Palmquist. As staff photographer of Humboldt State University in California and an ardent collector of material related to nineteenth-century photographers in the American West, and notably his home state, Palmquist assembled primary sources for more than three decades. Even if the

⁴⁷ See bibliography for a complete list of the consulted collections and institutions.

“paucity of basic research tools to the photographic historian” can still be lamented, it was Palmquist, the professional photographer and amateur historian, who made probably the most useful contribution to any historical investigation into the medium’s role in California.⁴⁸ His own background informed the material scope of his collection that ranges from photographic prints to magazines, advertisements, and other memorabilia. Here, each individual folder dedicated to a photographer, however thin his output, contains a micro-archive that points to the variety of practice at hand in California.⁴⁹

To handle, appreciate, and insert the profoundly new source material gathered from archival searches in California and the Palmquist Collection into histories of the medium and the American West, a strong conceptual scaffolding is required. An overarching theme through which the primary source material may gain depth is Abigail Solomon Godeau’s notion of “a history of photographic uses.” Developed in opposition to the increasingly monographic and formalized character of the medium’s history and its institutional appreciation, “where the analysis of a photograph will always stop short at the framing edge,” her proposal instead sought to inquire “the dense interweave of the social, the political, and the economic with the cultural in the production and reception” of photographs. A shift from the surface to the surroundings, from the print to its context, would make researchers move beyond the narrow framework of aesthetic evaluation and museal validation. While her argument represents a political response to an increasingly affluent market of art photography and its role within a broader conservative cultural ideology, it was formulated around the same time as Palmquist started to argue in favor of a contextual photographic appreciation outside the boundaries of select East Coast institutions.⁵⁰ With regard to this corpus of hitherto unexplored visual and verbal sources, the focus on the *uses* made of photographs and the awareness of their *utility* expressed in writings allow us to stimulate a contextual reading from the onset.

As mentioned with regard to the state of the arts, the tools developed by Sandweiss and Sailor – who both drew on Palmquist’s inventory – provide another touchstone of the conceptual framework. Both authors have fostered an awareness of the importance of

⁴⁸ Martha A. Sandweiss, foreword to *Photographers: A Sourcebook for Historical Research*, 2nd ed., ed. Peter E. Palmquist (Nevada City: Carl Mautz Pub., 2000), 1; for further information on Palmquist, see Gary F. Kurutz, foreword to *Points of Interest: California Views, 1860-1870. The Lawrence & Houseworth Albums*, ed. Peter E. Palmquist (Berkeley: Berkeley Hills Books, 2002), 10; François Brunet, “Humboldt’s Nephew,” *Revue française d’études américaines* 100, no. 2 (2004): 18-19, <https://doi.org/10.3917/rfea.100.001>.

⁴⁹ The Peter E. Palmquist Collection of Male Photographers in the American West (Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, ca. 1840-2003 (WA MSS S-2733)) contains more than 600 boxes, organized alphabetically with a folder for each photographer, generating a total of 9,000 entries.

⁵⁰ Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the Dock. Essays on Photographic Histories, Institutions, and Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), xxii-xxvii; see Earle, introduction to *Return to El Dorado*, 2.

circulation, the national aspirations accompanying Western images, and their myriad functions when produced at local level. By covering emblematic figures of landscape photography and small-scale businesses, by moving from grand national projects to local endeavors of photographic production, and by integrating the variety of processes used and objects generated, these studies largely inform our understanding of collective photography in the American West. Here, it is especially the awareness of “the response of [...] original audiences” to photographic objects, as well as the discourses ensuing from their circulation, that will shed new light on the functions of communal photographic practice.⁵¹

As the promotion of the city and the region loomed large in many of the photographic productions and informed the conception of the medium from early on,⁵² the ambition of this thesis is to mobilize the literature available on the promotion of regional settlement and tourism in the early twentieth century American West, and to combine it with studies on identity-building through photography. If we gain a more intimate understanding of the processes that served to demarcate geographic regions, that infused them with aesthetically pleasing features, and rendered them meaningful to national history, we can approach the photographic objects, practices, and discourses of a remote community through a new reading grid.⁵³ As culture and economy intertwined in the shaping of new places in the West, California’s most powerful infrastructure, investor, and promoter of settlement – the Central and Southern Pacific Railroads – need to be taken into account. The railroads’ desire to carefully construct regional distinction and, at the same time, build a tangible connection to the rest of the nation echoed the ambition of the Club, hence the relationships between railroad investors and photographers have to be illuminated. While much is known about the early history of the transcontinental railroad, its place in Californian society, and its strategic uses of photography,⁵⁴ the period of the turn of the century remains obscure regarding patron-photographer, or company-community relations. A genealogy of this network and its strategies, that traces its evolution into the twentieth century, imposes itself in the light of the bulk of railroad brochures in which photographs by Club members and local languages-of-power came to figure prominently.

The study of the demarcation of the local and its ambivalent relationship to the nation

⁵¹ Sandweiss, *Print the Legend*, 9.

⁵² See Rodger C. Birt, “Envisioning the City: Photography in the History of San Francisco, 1850-1906” (PhD diss., Yale University, 1985).

⁵³ See Catherine Cocks, *Doing the Town: The Rise of Urban Tourism in the United States, 1850-1915* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Phoebe Schroeder Kropp, *California Vieja. Culture and Memory in a Modern American Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

⁵⁴ See William Deverell, *Railroad Crossing: Californians and the Railroad, 1850-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Richard J. Orsi, *Sunset Limited: The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Development of the American West, 1850-1930* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2005); Glenn Willumson, *Iron Muse: Photographing the Transcontinental Railroad* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2013).

has likewise been at the heart of recent European research on photographic societies. While these differ profoundly from the American context in their conception and sociopolitical stakes, the processes of network-formation, the “consolidation” of a social position through photographic practice, and the outreach to local publics,⁵⁵ are fundamental elements that facilitate a reading of the Californian photographers. Christian Joschke’s examination of regional aesthetics for the “internalization” of a patriotic discourse in early twentieth-century photography exhibitions in Germany⁵⁶ also proves useful in the American context, where the uniqueness of the Californian landscape was to validate the “exceptionalism” of the national territory. The search for a characteristic local narrative as a coherent addition to the national, through photographic practice and materiality, has been examined in detail by Elizabeth Edwards.⁵⁷ It is the special place she has granted to materiality that has inspired conscious decisions on the tools applied to the sources of this thesis. Her notion of a “material culture” of photographic societies, including prints, magazines, exhibition catalogs and prize medals, is a valuable instrument to grasp the embeddedness and outreach of photographers to their communities. It encourages an understanding of camera club corpora as physical entities whose fabric and density tell of their various engagements.⁵⁸

This form of material thinking about photographs leads to a more general reappraisal of such diverse primary source material, as it implies a parallel critique of collecting practices. Within the broader opposition to the “framing discourses” of the fine arts that display photographs as autonomous aesthetic objects, it has been suggested to reconsider their shape and functionality. An appreciation of these original features heightens the awareness of both researchers and general publics regarding the production context and trajectory of photographs over time. From this “new set of criteria rooted in the material existence of the photo-object at specific historical moments,” alternative histories emerge that may supplement or just as much contradict the assumed linearity of the museum narrative.⁵⁹ With regard to the corpus of the California Camera Club, the material thinking of the photograph as an object in a spatiotemporal context and its dispersion in a variety of institutions constitute two fundamental characteristics of the methodology adopted in this thesis. They allow us to explore the places where the objects circulated at the time and how we encounter them today, which will urge us

⁵⁵ Joschke, *Les Yeux de la Nation*, 87-111.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 309-317.

⁵⁷ Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 123-161.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁵⁹ Glenn Willumson, “Making Meaning: Displaced Materiality in the Library and Art Museum,” in *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images*, eds. Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 76-78.

to interrogate collecting practices. Ultimately, this combined critical method may provide a partial answer to the pressing and somewhat omnipresent question of why these primary sources have not been unearthed before, and how we can find concepts to embrace their complexity. The organization of this thesis works toward an answer to this question.

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To reconstruct the history of the California Camera Club's most creative period means to understand how its members came to forge a community where locally rooted practices were negotiated and a shared vocabulary of at times uniquely San Franciscan, at times specifically Californian features were developed. To map out these features, the chronology used in this thesis draws on the framework of the years between 1850 and 1915. This choice is useful for two reasons. The first is related to the aforementioned study of an "imaginary" California which entered the national imagination upon statehood in 1850. Its closing point has been identified as 1915 "when, in its own eyes and in the eyes of the world, California came of age."⁶⁰ Much less related to the beginning of World War I, which constitutes a fixture in European history, this end point refers to a transitional moment in culture and technology that became manifest at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco in 1915. The second reason favoring a chronological approach is related to the profound novelty of the corpus. Even though the material might lend itself to subject-matter-related analysis, it is first necessary to construct a chronology that coherently introduces the main actors and the scope of their activities. Similarly, an understanding of the productions and discourses generated within the Club, from its foundation in 1890, would not be possible without an awareness of the cultural and technological processes of the four preceding decades which created the matrix for a collective practice.

Accordingly, this thesis is divided in four parts, dated roughly between 1850 and 1915. While the years between 1890 and 1915 remain at the core, the four parts range from Emergence (1850-1900), to Maturation (1900-1906), Rupture (1906-1908), and Demise (1909-1939). Even though the chronological scope narrows progressively, moving from half a century to one specific event, these choices are always animated by the specific conditions of photographic practice in California and the Club membership based in San Francisco. The titles chosen for each part therefore reflect not so much the anticipation of a downfall, but rather echo the situation of the photographers in each period. To counterweigh the risks of a 'storytelling' mode that appears all too linear, the ambition is to draw attention to both the continuities and ruptures

⁶⁰ Starr, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915*, vii-viii; see also Perry, *Pacific Arcadia: Images of California, 1600-1915*.

of this chronology, and to forge, without pretending to be exhaustive, a detailed portrayal. A brief overview of the chapters will illuminate the choices of chronological division.

The first part, Emergence (1850-1900), traces in three chapters the first stages of the in-tandem development of photographic practice and of San Francisco as an urban and cultural center in the American West, up to the first decade of the Club's existence. In this context, the contents of the first chapter may be considered a precursor. By looking at the first photographic businesses in San Francisco, the evolution of the city's cultural institutions, the emergence of railroad sponsorship of the arts, and the accessibility of soon-to-be emblematic locations like the Yosemite, the first chapter reconstructs how a fertile soil for communal photography was cultivated. It is deemed important to illustrate this overlapping development, even though readers well-acquainted with the history of the American West may be familiar with its details. It represents the terrain on which later clubs would physically operate and mentally envision their practice. The second chapter deals with specificities of the San Franciscan photographic scene by looking at the first and only strict amateur photographer organization in California – the Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association (PCAPA), founded in 1883. Interrogating the practical and ideological underpinnings of the “amateur” label, this chapter integrates the PCAPA into the competitive photographic industry of the city and examines its aspirations as both a local art organization and as an isolated Western association within a growing American camera club network. An extension to the “Westerling” discourse in photography is then built in the third chapter, which discusses the foundation of the California Camera Club in 1890 because of a quarrel among PCAPA members. Its inclusive program and its first publication, the *Pacific Coast Photographer* (1892-1894), constitute the main elements by which we will examine the Club's position in both the local photographic scene and the society at large. Its connection to the thriving network of American clubs, as well as its role in the promotion of California will be looked at through two universal expositions, the 1893 World's Fair at Chicago, and the Midwinter Fair in San Francisco the following year. For both events, the analyses trace how members came to favor an appreciation of the state “*only through photography.*”

The second part, Maturation (1900-1906), consists of three chapters that seek to crystallize a set of actors who developed a confident self-definition of the Club as a useful local organization. Although the term maturation may evoke aesthetic achievement and institutional reach, it must be considered just as much as a process of coming-of-age with regard to the practice as a communal tool. The fourth chapter looks at the extension of the network from Northern to Southern California, sparked by the formation of a camera club in Los Angeles. It

seeks to map out the role of the first solid publication, *Camera Craft*, that was launched in 1900 and would run for four decades. As a communication platform for photographers throughout the state, its pages may answer the question of how an awareness was cultivated – both of photography’s utility to California and of the state’s impact on photographic practice and its history. To connect the growing state network to the national scene, the fifth chapter discusses the series of photographic salons held in San Francisco and Los Angeles in the 1900s, and their role across the country. In the context of the salon, the notion of camera club materiality unfolds its full potential, as it allows us to envisage the exhibition of photographs not merely as a moment of institutional appreciation, but just as much as a local event that required preparation and staging. Eventually, by examining the relations between San Francisco and New York, the generally asserted impact of the Photo-Secession will be critically questioned from the perspective of a network that operated at a distance of 5,000 km from the Stieglitz circle. To further investigate the meaning of geographic isolation and its function for a mature self-definition, the sixth chapter analyzes depictions of minorities. It discusses the Club’s approach to Native American life in the American West and to San Francisco’s Chinatown population through excursions and articles, and interrogates the place granted to minorities under the label of a distinctive ‘Californian’ practice.

While the first five years of the twentieth century sparked a remarkable output of material, this production came to an abrupt halt on April 18, 1906, when an earthquake struck off the Bay of San Francisco, followed by three days of intense firestorms. The third part, Rupture (1906-1908), looks at the event itself and two years of the aftermath, first and foremost from the perspective of the Club members, their immediate experience and recovery. Through *Camera Craft* and the circulation of illustrated “instant” histories, chapter seven traces the participation of Club members in the formulation of an intelligible communal narrative of the traumatic event. In turn, it will be asked how the experience of being part of the disaster community reshaped the Club’s practice. Through the lens of material culture – which proved essential after the immense losses for the city – the following chapter examines the photographic album as a visual tool to render the traumatism tangible and give meaning to the aftermath. By comparing albums assembled by anonymous San Franciscans with albums made by Club members, it asks which expectations were related to this material format in the wake of catastrophe. This comparative examination seeks to complexify our understanding of the “imaginative” role of the medium by looking at the community at large *and* at a specific group involved in the network of city officials, boosters, and reconstruction organisms.

As a closure to the aftermath of the catastrophe, the last part, Demise (1909-1939),

examines the run-up, staging, and aftermath of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco in 1915, which celebrated the achievement of urban reconstruction within less than a decade and, at the same time, witnessed profound shifts at the heart of photographic practice. Chapter nine combines an analysis of the members' contribution to the fair with the developments at the heart of the Club whose first generation, after twenty-five years, gradually came to an end. In approaching the 1920s, it looks at the formation of new, explicitly "Pictorialist" societies in San Francisco and Los Angeles, and traces how the Club – as a much more broadly defined group of practitioners – reacted to these new actors. How could the label of "California" be upheld within these gradual organizational and aesthetic shifts? And which role would the Club continue to play in the newly formed fine-art institutions that incorporated photography in their collections by the 1930s? These questions set the basis for the epilogue that reaches back to the historiographical shortcomings of a narrative of Californian photographers from "Watkins to Weston" by mapping out and evaluating the place the Club occupied as a meeting and exchange platform in the city for more almost five decades between the 1890s and 1930s. The epilogue will be followed by a conclusion that puts the hypotheses of this introduction into perspective, outlines potential results, and illuminates the shortcomings of the methodology. Included in the bibliography will be a complete list of the archives consulted, as well as a directory of the Club photographers mentioned in this thesis.

From this two-fold analysis – combining the practice, output, and discourse of San Franciscan photographers with the evolution of the Californian "imaginary" over the decades of the turn of the century – it is hoped to connect a dense corpus with a communal narrative which led practitioners to claim, more than once, that "out here it is different."⁶¹

⁶¹ "The Professional and the Magazine," *Camera Craft* 14, no. 6 (1907): 270.

Part I: Emergence (1850-1900)

In the heyday of the gold rush, the immigrants were busy building California's physical infrastructure: dams, roads, cities, farms. At the same time, a more subtle project of construction was launched, of California as a distinct culture. Immigrants bent the place's meanings to suit their needs and dreams, and when they were done, something entirely new had been invented, something that would change the world, a kind of headstrong, rootless sense of heroic possibilities and glamour still summed up by the word California.

Rebecca Solnit, *River of Shadows. Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 123.

The west and the camera shutter opened up together, each rushing the other along, as photographs recorded, and bragged about, and advertised the "new" lands, two technological enterprises in symbiotic relationship.

Elizabeth Hampsten, "Land in Time and Space," in *Reclaiming Paradise: American Women Photograph the Land*, ed. Gretchen Garner (Duluth: Tweed Museum of Art, 1987), 10.

[...] a department of art which, though but in its infancy, ramifies through the whole fabric of society, affording equal pleasure in cottage and palace, [...] an art which has given form and tangibility to the exquisite pleasures of memory, and placed them within the reach of the very humblest; an art which rivals the mighty Press in the power of repeating copies of the impressions for universal circulation, and exceeds in force and beauty the ability of the most eloquent orators in depicting the sublimities of nature; an art the chief agent of which is Light, the very fountain of Truth and Fidelity.

Constitution of the San Francisco Photographic Artists' Association (San Francisco: Alta California Book and Job Printing Office, 1866), v-vi.

In California climatic conditions, beauty of landscape and general picturesqueness of scenery all greatly favor the work of the camera.

"Caught by the Camera. Remarkably Fine Exhibition of Amateur Photography; the envy of professionals," *Daily Alta California*, December 11, 1888, 8.

Through all the complex facts that are here set down in their somewhat confused order, I have felt running the one thread of the process whereby a new and great community first came to a true consciousness of itself. The story begins with the seemingly accidental doings of detached but in the sequel vastly influential individuals, and ends just where the individual ceases to have any very great historical significance for California life, and where the community begins to be what it ought to be, viz., all important as against individual doings and interests.

Josiah Royce, *California. A Study of American Character* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1886), viii.

Introduction

In January 1892, when the *Pacific Coast Photographer* issued its first number, it would be the first photographic magazine to be published West of the Mississippi. Based in San Francisco, the magazine opened to an article entitled “California for the Photographer.” Destined to the local practitioner, as much as to a nationwide readership, the statement read as nothing short of a rallying cry. The most poignant passages of the two columns suggested the following:

Much has been written, and more said, about the many attractions of the Pacific Coast, and particularly California, and its advantages over the older and less favored States on the side of the great divide. The climate, of course, has had its full share of praise, and to people who have never visited the Golden State, a plain and unvarnished tale has often seemed like a wild exaggeration. [...]

So the wild and varied scenery has furnished a rich theme for all descriptive writers, as well as for the brushes of many eminent artists. There is, perhaps, but little that is beautiful or grand in the natural scenery of other portions of the country which cannot be duplicated within the confines of this State, and most of it without making a long journey from any one point. [...] I doubt very much if many amateur photographers who are native Californians really appreciate the advantages which surround them in the way of a choice of the best subjects. All sorts of picturesque things can be reached by the minimum consumption of time. Certainly no other large city is favored as San Francisco is in this respect, and it is no wonder that the amateurs of this city have taken so prominent a position among the artistic photographers of the country. [...]

Nowhere can be found more beautiful marine views than about the bay of San Francisco and the adjacent coast; nowhere more exquisite cloud and fog effects than can be seen from the hills surrounding the bay and in the neighboring valleys. It is not easy for the most accomplished photographer to do even partial justice to these ever-varying scenes, but it is at least a satisfaction to have such subjects to work upon, even if the highest standard of excellence is not reached. Now that the want of a local journal is supplied, the amateur and professional photographers of California should be independent of the rest of the world, and be as well represented on the literary side, as they have long been in the artistic departments of the photographic art.¹

From this wording, it would seem that by the close of the century, Californian photographers had become strikingly aware of the widespread laudatory rhetoric on their state, as well as of the fanciful and fictitious scenarios envisioned for their environment. In this sweeping mission statement, that barely covered two pages, was contained a broad range of associations with the state, notably the idea of an untamed landscape, the perception of easy access to a bountiful territory, as well as the longstanding rivalry with and yearning for “independence” from “the East.” It integrated the contemporaneous tenor of the striving for photography as art, while at the same time calling out to both amateurs *and* professionals to work toward the realization of this goal.

¹ S.W. Burnham, “California for the Photographer,” *Pacific Coast Photographer* 1, no. 1 (1892): 3-4.

If this statement appears commonplace through the lens of the booster rhetoric of the nineteenth-century American West, it is yet important to recognize its appearance in a magazine whose subtitle read “devoted to photography as an art” and which was published in a city that – merely four decades earlier – had constituted the Westernmost outpost of an expanding American nation. The *Pacific Coast Photographer* was to represent the first platform of written exchange for Californian photographers – and its opening pages demonstrated a keen awareness of the cultural, historical, and geographic context in which it was embedded. If we are to understand how, within less than half a century, the associations with California as a promised land for the nation had turned into a rallying motif for a thriving community of professional and amateur photographers, a thorough understanding of the complex and yet extremely rapid development of San Francisco from its admission to the union in 1850 to the close of the century is required. As the first daguerreotype studio opened in the city the same year as large numbers of migrants from across the country and the Pacific rushed to find gold in the vicinity, in 1849, it can be argued that photography held a prominent “place [...] in the lives of ordinary people” from the onset, and in this, “creat[ed] a visual iconography of California that would become recognized around the world.”² Similarly, from the start, the production of photographs was intended to strengthen ties over long distances, reinforcing a “voracious hunger for photographic images,” that would lead to the creation of a thriving market.³

As a two-fold examination of the expansion of collective photographic practices in San Francisco and of the city’s particular position in the national geography, this first part seeks to trace the roots of the medium in the sociocultural and economic development over a period of fifty years. It will be of interest, first and foremost, to evaluate the relationship of the new medium to the cultural and economic ambitions of an increasingly urbanized settlement in one of the most remote locations of the national territory. If we are to grasp the heavy and somewhat self-evident, almost casual reliance of the *Pacific Coast Photographer* on associations with California that had become standard rhetoric by the late nineteenth century, it appears necessary to reconstruct the intimate relations between San Francisco’s growth as an urban center and the place attributed to photography from the first decades of communal life. In this first part, it will be argued, then, that the strong presence of the medium in the community forged an early means of self-identification that echoes Martha Sandweiss’ notion of “a new medium and a new place that came of age together” over the course of the second half of the nineteenth century.⁴

In exploring the processes of coming-of-age of society, culture, economy, and infrastructure – all related to the development of the medium – this first part looks at the emergence of what can be

² Palmquist, “The Pioneers: Landscape and Studio,” 4-8.

³ Drew Heath Johnson and Marcia Eyman, eds., *Silver and Gold: Cased Images of the California Gold Rush* (Iowa City and Oakland: University of Iowa Press and Oakland Museum of California, 1998), 2-9.

⁴ Sandweiss, *Print the Legend*, 2.

labeled a “territorial approach.” This conception of the medium entailed a production of photographs that consciously drew on the geographic specificities of the broader region around San Francisco, and that defined its practice in close relation to these regional features. Therefore, the territorial approach to the medium in California needs to be cross-examined with the formation of cultural institutions and the establishment of an extensive railroad infrastructure. As the statement in the *Pacific Coast Photographer* took these geographic, cultural, and infrastructural features as a given – and as a marker of its distinctiveness – it has to be traced how they came to constitute a fruitful terrain for the evolution of a local practice. A closer look at the specific institutions and agents that fostered photography, like the railroad companies or the city’s exhibition venues, allows us to interrogate how the medium became an integral part of the city’s development – and how its photographers came to understand themselves as valuable contributors to the community. It is in the breeding ground of territorial exploration, economic sponsorship, and artistic exchange that the locally rooted performance of photography could be encouraged and would eventually become a congenial leisure activity. By addressing the societal ramifications as well as the contemporaneous beliefs attached to the community-building potential of the medium, this discussion seeks to articulate a localized “history of photographic uses” and practices.⁵

An examination of photography’s meaning that is rooted, in the broadest sense, in the chronology of the mid and late nineteenth century American West necessitates a contextualization within the process of national myth-making that was related to this region. As California historian Kevin Starr has argued, the state held a special place in the history of the nation and on its map, as the “special texture” of its geography qualified it as a terrain charged with manifold expectations. The building of a Californian society “out West” came to represent a decisive locality for future glory in the conflict-laden process of nation-building during both the ante- and postbellum era. In the larger scheme of a national history of conquest and settlement, this Western community became a meaningful place, imbued with the ideology of the expanding nation, and yet marked by its very own spatial characteristics.⁶ As remarked by Rebecca Solnit in the epigraph to this first part, the communal construction moved beyond material solidification and penetrated the realm of the imagination in order to strengthen an emotional attachment to the region. Sentimental spatial belonging was further spurred through the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, which anticipated settlement in allegedly unoccupied territories as an heroic act constitutive to a self-reliant national character. The narrative of this frontier thesis, and its contestations, point to the strong extent to which “geography molded the American identity” and how it was mobilized for the creation of communities in remote locations

⁵ Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the Dock*, xxiv.

⁶ See Starr, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915*.

of the West.⁷ With regard to San Franciscan society in the early 1850s, it has then been rightly suggested that “nowhere was a mythology more manifest than on the frontier because nowhere was a mythology more needed. Our myths are the great structures we try to hang our own smaller lives upon in order to give meaning to them or make them bearable.”⁸ This myth endowed the small settlement with a purpose – other than gold-seeking – in projecting its purposeful existence onto the national scene.

The promotional discourse, highlighting the benefits of California’s climate, its aptness for scenic exploration, its special historical place, and its inspiration for artists – all evoked in the *Pacific Coast Photographer* – would be embraced by numerous cultural institutions and companies discussed in this first part. The construction of a coherent narrative of settlement could provide “a fictive sense of unity and permanence” for this “fragile [outpost] in contested terrains.” The local community was to be united through and identify with the “founding myth” of the Gold Rush in order to overcome its conglomerate demographic make-up which was implicit to its immigrant origins.⁹ Inasmuch as the fierce booster rhetoric by local officials to promote settlement and trade contributed to the creation of a myth about the Californian landscape and its inhabitants, it needs to be examined in what ways this characterization of the region was taken up and reshaped by local photographic practitioners – and how they came to cultivate an intense desire for their own publishing platform. To understand how these scenarios were articulated and materialized, it is important to trace how this imaginative perception was formed in the early years and which platforms later on enabled its diffusion.

If photographic production was constitutive to communal identification and was likewise destined to circulate beyond state borders, we need to examine its function at both local and national level. The negotiation of spatial belonging through photographic practice and image dissemination can be explored through Jennifer Roberts’ claim that “geography *inhabits* pictures.” The idea here is that geography is not only inherent in the trajectories of Californian images, traversing long distances from West to East, but that it is rooted, as will be shown, in their very subject matter. Robert’s argument of geographic separation as “constitutive” to all “visual communication” is essential to this discussion, given the geographic isolation of Californian society and its reliance on railroad infrastructure for promotion, dissemination, and legitimization.¹⁰ The visual content of the disseminated material was to be enriched by verbal statements that spelled out the geographic as its distinctive local feature and that operated to bridge geographic distances. Through a discussion of the

⁷ David Jacobson, *Place and Belonging in America* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 96.

⁸ John Wood, *The Photographic Arts* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997), 16.

⁹ Glen Gendzel, “Pioneers and Padres: Competing Mythologies in Northern and Southern California, 1850-1930,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (2001): 56, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3650837>.

¹⁰ Jennifer L. Roberts, *Transporting Visions: The Movement of Images in Early America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 3-6; François Brunet, introduction to *Circulation*, Terra Foundation Essays, Vol. 3, ed. François Brunet (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 20-23.

complex interweave of economy and culture, of societal development and communal photographic practice, this first part seeks to show how the discourse of a unique Californian culture would be internalized by practitioners. In this context, Elizabeth Edwards' pointedly formulated question of "[h]ow [...] the intensely local desire and sense of local distinctiveness translate[d] into the national" provides a valuable point of departure.¹¹

Such an analysis is strengthened by a major strand of research conducted in the history of photography of the American West over the past two decades. Martha Sandweiss' in-depth study of visualizing the West through photography, which rectified a persisting gap, aimed at a historically situated and culturally informed understanding of the uses of photography in the newly claimed territories and underlined their imaginative potential.¹² Her reappraisal of the archival riches to be tapped for this period has provided the starting point for more detailed studies on the uses of photography in communities and their impact on the formation of local identities – a research trend in which this study equally seeks to inscribe itself. The relevance of such image-production not only for local affirmation, but just as much for national propagation, was confirmed recently by Sailor who stated that "the community of photographers [...] significantly [augmented] nationalist rhetoric at grassroots level."¹³ The examination of these local photographic practices, which move beyond a mere "documentation of a new home,"¹⁴ plays into the imagination of the West and thus attests to the sociocultural mobilization of the new medium for both the creation of community-belonging and the search for national recognition. In examining the variety and density of photographic practice, this study relies substantially on Peter Palmquist's inventory of male and female photographers of the American West in the nineteenth century. In combining material on photographic businesses, individual productions, and writings, the sheer bulk of the Palmquist collection reveals the omnipresence of the medium in the majority of the remote Western locations. As an extremely fertile source to tap, Palmquist's vast information available on photographic practitioners in California will be used to insert these agents into the socioeconomic and cultural context of San Francisco in the second half of the nineteenth century. The ambition here is to shed new light on the strategic presence of the medium for community identification and a subsequent ambition to disseminate. Stretching over five decades, the question of recognition would shift back and forth between territorial and communal visibility on the national stage – and the recognition of the medium in the broader cultural scene. In both cases, the earlier-mentioned mission of "California for the photographer" and the striving for its own discursive platform can be taken as a driving force.

¹¹ Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 147.

¹² Sandweiss, *Print the Legend*, 11-13.

¹³ Sailor, *Meaningful Places*, xix.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, xxi.

The following three chapters propose an analysis of the development of a territorial approach in photography, rooted in the San Franciscan context that blended commercial venture, cultural formation, and leisure activity. The first chapter traces how the foundations of a community practice were forged, first through the publication of booster albums which portrayed San Francisco as a prosperous venue, second through the exploration of its environs – notably the Yosemite – as a site for landscape exploration, and third, through the establishment of a railroad infrastructure which facilitated access to these sites and made them part of a distinctive local culture. The patronage of these railroad companies and their exchanges with local photographers will set the basis for the following two chapters which examine the emergence of a collective communal practice. It is worth examining the metaphorical value attached to the Californian territory at some length in this first chapter, as it sets the tone for the closing decades of the nineteenth century in which this imaginative potential of the state would be mobilized by local photographers. By the same token, the intimate connections between patrons and photographers, between the railroad and the medium, would become constitutive elements to the later photographer organizations. It is therefore indispensable to draw a detailed picture of these early communications.

With this framework of the local practice set, chapters two and three take into consideration the nation-wide emergence of amateur photography – a practice advocating for an elevation of the medium to the fine arts and allegedly opposed to professionalism. More explicitly, they will examine the formation of two societies: the strictly non-professional Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association (founded 1883), which, after disbanding, was followed by the more inclusive California Camera Club (founded 1890). Both societies were firmly based in San Francisco, yet they also started to orient toward a dynamic national network of photographic exchange. While both chapters propose a move beyond the amateur/professional distinction, the second chapter provides an in-depth discussion of the amateur label and its conflicted position in the booming marketplace of San Francisco. The third chapter traces then how the diversity of image-production would be continued in the region during the last decade of the nineteenth century. The ambition of the collective of photographers to both aesthetically elevate the medium and to appreciate the region culturally and historically will be examined in parallel. Through a focus on exhibitions, lectures, as well as international fairs in the 1890s, the internalization of a discourse on the uniqueness of the Californian territory – and its role as an American region – will be traced in the Club's visual productions and in their accompanying texts. In this context, it will be of interest to interrogate the pertinence and persistence of the early discourse on the state and its continuation within collective groups of photographers, most notably the California Camera Club which used the state label in its name. The various shapes, additions, and omissions of the Californian rhetoric, when taken up by larger parts of the local population as photographers, has to be subject to scrutiny. With the guiding search for local

distinctiveness and national recognition, the social, cultural, and economic uses of the medium will be examined together in order to furnish a more comprehensive picture of how a local practice of photography emerged – with California as its major impetus.

Chapter 1

Building the foundations for a communal photographic practice in San Francisco, 1850-1880

Histories of urban photography and surveys of visual culture in California have repeatedly marked out the period of the 1850s as an exemplary moment of community formation which was efficiently assisted by the new medium. San Francisco is designated here as “the most photographed city of its day” which, over the course of the second half of the nineteenth century, would generate an extremely diverse corpus.¹ While a large number of such views was to circulate across the country from the Pacific to the Atlantic coast, their on-site production fulfilled a specific purpose. With regard to the population’s receptiveness of the medium, Peter Hales has argued that “San Franciscans had great plans for their city, and they wanted to see their dreams objectified and ratified.”² One means of validating such projects – and literally projecting them in material form – was the daguerreotype, and later the photographic print. If the city figured prominently in these plans, the surrounding coastal region and back countries would become just as important in assisting the elaboration of future scenarios. What has been termed the “paradigm” of California as a “Pacific paradise” was expressed in images and reinforced in a laudatory vocabulary from the 1850s onward. As the numerous trajectories of the images suggest, they cannot be considered as objects that were conceived “in an aesthetic void.” Instead, they need to be taken as exchange objects in a culture that would use newspapers, advertisement, guidebooks, and magazines as material supports to project a Californian narrative.³ If we seek to interrogate the practices, uses, and functions of photography in the early history of San Francisco – as well as its progressive mobilization for a Californian self-image – it is essential to approach the medium from a versatile sociohistorical and material point of view.

Following this conceptual model, this first chapter looks at the various functions attached to photography in the cultural and economic development of a young American city in an isolated setting. If the medium and the region evolved in tandem, we need to examine what this dual relationship implied, that is to say, a link has to be established between the technological advances in photography and the societal context in which these took place. As San Franciscans had shown a keen awareness of photography’s narrative potential from the onset, it will be the goal of this chapter to illuminate the various processes by which the medium became interwoven in the exploration of the state and in the formation of a local identity. Here, the establishment of a local marketplace for photography, the building of cultural institutions, and the creation of a coherent infrastructure in the

¹ Therese Thau Heyman, foreword to *Capturing Light: Masterpieces of California Photography, 1850 to the Present*, vii.

² Peter Bacon Hales, *Silver Cities. Photographing American Urbanization, 1839-1939*, 2nd ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 30.

³ Perry, *Pacific Arcadia: Images of California, 1600-1915*, xii-xiii.

region constitute key moments of community formation in which a photographic contribution would manifest itself. As the completion of the transcontinental railroad and the decision of public access to the Yosemite figure as prominent events in the chronology between 1850 and 1880 – and are inextricably related to San Francisco’s economy and culture – these two moments are taken as major touchstones for the analysis.

In cross-examining cultural and technological advances, alongside ideological projections on the local territory, it will be explored how photographic practice and railroad infrastructure were combined to claim the landscape beyond San Francisco, especially the Yosemite, as sites of local distinctiveness and of national expansion. The urban cultural scene that gained in dynamics by the 1870s would become deeply embedded in this projectional outlook on the territory, all the while being sponsored by railroad capital. The combination of culture and capital, of a search for cultural distinction and economic prevalence, was to be at the heart of the local image-production. In the framework of this rapidly evolving conceptualization of the Californian landscape, its geographic and cultural features, the role of individual photographers and of collective professional organizations needs to be addressed. Their collaboration with the city’s foremost enterprise has to be more closely looked at with regard to the internalization of the prevalent discourse.

If the medium was to become a tool for self-identification and a vehicle for promotion beyond state borders, it is on these actors and at the instrumentalization of their productions that we need to concentrate. From their diverse engagements and versatile understandings of the medium we can set out to define a set of characteristic elements of photography’s practices and uses in San Francisco. While the imagination of the American West as well as the histories of the railroad and of the city may constitute well-explored research terrain, it will be the ambition of this chapter to embed these decisive developments in the history of the medium in California and point out its repercussions. By linking these two spheres, the sociocultural understandings of photography can be mapped out – and the relevance of these developments for practitioners of later decades emphasized. It is through the multiple expectations related to both photography and to the Western landscape that we can trace the articulation of a territorial approach that would become the basis for Californian photography.

1.1 *The 1850s: the onset of a search for local distinction*

The recurring definition of San Francisco as an “instant city” probably describes most adequately the result of the “massive influx of people and materials” which set the stage for thriving enterprise in the city by late 1849.⁴ Due to its strategic location as a port city as well as its growing

⁴ Brian J. Godfrey, “Urban Development and Redevelopment in San Francisco,” *Geographical Review* 87, no. 3 (1997): 312-313, <https://doi.org/10.2307/216033>. The notion of the “instant city” is used by Godfrey to describe the period after the 1906 earthquake and fire (see Part III) as well as for the period of intensive modernization of the city from the 1960s

demands in supply, the mining outpost rapidly became an urbanized community in the following decade. Marked by strong beliefs in the future possibilities of San Francisco as an economically strategic location, the city's chamber of commerce sought "to bring stability and efficiency into the market" and into the community during the 1850s.⁵ The generation of white male settlers who came to shape the city's government over the following decades had brought with them "the conviction that the gold rush was at bottom about equality, opportunity, and individual liberty" – a discourse of property, prosperity, and appropriation that would necessarily lead to conflict. This "idealization of self-seeking within a market society" fostered the belief in the accessibility of California for such self-realization and raised expectations of future economic power.⁶ Settlement and life in California accordingly came to be imagined through a grid of property acquisition and land management.

What Patricia Limerick labeled "a passion for profit" constituted a driving principle in the conceptualization of the territories on the Pacific Coast. The fervent pursuit of settlement was a process which "inspire[d] at once extraordinary courage and extraordinary cruelty," two phenomena of which the former was mobilized for shaping the idealized vision of a national character in a remote, unspoiled setting.⁷ Despite the tense political climate of the 1850s – with two Vigilance Committees seeking to establish order by initiating "reigns of terror" – the city drew large numbers of immigrants, generating a population increase of almost 90% with a total of 57,000 inhabitants by 1860.⁸ This rapid settlement was encouraged through promotional material in print form which circulated to the Eastern cities and beyond national borders. From the start, this promotion was "a deeply metaphorical enterprise," requiring the creation of a strong imaginative appeal as well as a more hands-on commercial offer. When violent political conflict arose over the city's government and six major fires ravaged early settlements between 1849 and 1851, the narrative of "an inflammable and easily romanticized frontier" was used to spur the curiosity of national audiences.⁹ Again, here, the conceptualization of San Francisco as an instant city attested to its utility, as it implied a "[coming] into existence Athena-like, full-blown and self-reliant" – even after a series of fires.¹⁰

The appeal of this adventurous narrative of a pioneer community on the outskirts of the nation was developed just as much in literature and pamphlets as in visual material, such as painted

onward. The term was originally coined by Gunther Barth, see *Instant Cities: Urbanization and the Rise of San Francisco and Denver*, 2nd ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988).

⁵ William Issel and Robert W. Cherny, *San Francisco, 1865-1932. Politics, Power, and Urban Development* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 15.

⁶ David Alan Johnson, *Founding the Far West. California, Oregon, and Nevada, 1840-1890* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 7.

⁷ Patricia Nelson Limerick, *Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1987), 77.

⁸ Issel and Cherny, *San Francisco, 1865-1932*, 19, 24.

⁹ David Wyatt, *Five Fires: Race, Catastrophe and the Shaping of California* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 8.

¹⁰ Barth, *Instant Cities*, xxv-xxix.

panoramas or engravings made from daguerreotypes. As both photographic processes and community life evolved rapidly, San Franciscans “inordinately relied on visual referents,” turning the city into “an unusual center of new forms of visual representation and consumption.”¹¹ The following analysis of image-production and uses from the 1850s onward will focus on the visual output, which was not exclusively destined to circulate, as often suggested, but more importantly, served to shape the perception of the community itself. Produced on site, encouraged and used by a variety of local officials and individuals, the imagery was intended to smooth out conflict and forge a more coherent representation of the community for the future. This rallying function of local image-production, which would remain a key element of collective photographic practices in San Francisco into the early twentieth century, reflects photography’s anchorage in the community and the diverse functions it fulfilled. In order to probe the medium’s entanglement in the development of community life, we may rely on Alan Trachtenberg’s notion of photographs as “cultural texts.” From this perspective, it will be of interest to examine how visual practice and written document entered into dialogue and shaped “explanatory accounts of collective reality.”¹² This interplay of word and image would have wider repercussions on the establishment of a local cultural scene which, from the start, built a keen awareness of photography’s function within the community.

The prompt formation of an urbanized San Francisco animated a market for engravers and lithographers, whose productions were often modeled upon daguerreotypes and photographs, and served to illustrate pamphlets, prints, panoramas, and newspapers. In this period, the caption “after a daguerreotype” became an indicator of authenticity, thereby heightening the sense of promise communicated via the image.¹³ The widespread conviction of photographs as truthful and “infallible” indeed catered to a “cultural need” in a period of rapid urban, economic, and societal changes.¹⁴ This need was even more pronounced in vastly expanding distant territories that lacked antecedents and immediate reference to the rest of the nation. Photography as “a keyword linked to modernity itself” originated in this period as it allowed practitioners and viewers to explore and trace the development of the new environment, notably in hitherto unknown territories.¹⁵ Therefore, the shutters opening onto the new Western cities produced a number of meaningful depictions that responded to local and national demands.

Before and during photography’s emergence in the 1840s, panoramas were produced in order to satisfy the need of visualizing national expansion. Touring the country from West to East, partly

¹¹ Amy Lippert, “‘Seeing Just About Everything:’ Visual Desire and Virtual Reality in Antebellum San Francisco,” in *San Francisco à l’ouest d’Éden*, eds. Sophie Vallas et al. (Aix: Presses Universitaires de Provence, 2012), 93.

¹² Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History. Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), xvi, 6.

¹³ Palmquist and Kailbourn, *Pioneer Photographers*, 54.

¹⁴ Alan Trachtenberg, “Photography: The Emergence of a Keyword,” in *Photography in Nineteenth-century America*, 17-18.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

sponsored by local businesses, the panoramas underwent a “Westering” process that depicted mining scenes alongside an allegedly unoccupied territory.¹⁶ They would show on a large scale and to wide audiences what photographic technology was not yet capable of communicating. The large attendance to panorama lectures revealed the “cultural demands” of a public yearning to be informed on the possibilities of the West.¹⁷ Inspired by the all-encompassing potential of panoramic depiction, the daguerreotypists of San Francisco soon elaborated their own representations. While the earliest advertisement for a daguerreotype studio appeared in the *Alta California* newspaper in the same month of January 1849 as the Gold Rush started, the photographic trade was thriving by the early 1850s with prominent galleries by Robert Vance or William Shew, who both had their tries at panoramic depiction.¹⁸ This production required considerable effort and did not, in the end, attract the desired audiences. Since the imagination of the public had to be stirred, visually enticing depictions turned out to be more appealing – with an elaborate mixture of a daguerreotype as “truthful” model, embellished by painterly adjustments, and enriched with the necessary vocabulary.¹⁹ While such productions became significant tools in an entertainment-oriented form of local promotion, Martha Sandweiss pointedly remarked that they fulfilled an equally useful, “reassuring” function in the community itself. As the settlements underwent rapid transformation, its inhabitants longed for a more stable future – a scenario that could be envisioned through photographs.²⁰ In this process, the anchorage of a communal photographic practice in the construction of a regional history and identity surfaced for the first time and would become more pronounced in the following years.

Even though the earliest photographic panoramas failed, they did not thwart the ambition of creating an all-embracing view of the city. Since such representations salvaged a sense of “regional pride” in the conflictual first decade of urban settlement, they were used by local practitioners as well as individual customers to create a sense of connection to the new surroundings.²¹ If, as suggested by California historian Kevin Starr, “cities envision themselves through the dreams and speculations of their individual inhabitants,” this assumption holds true especially for the early San Franciscan settlers’ and their risky ventures. The imagined future of a city, marked by its “splendid isolation” as the nation’s “only urban hold on the Pacific Rim,” served as a rallying motif for the community.²² To materialize such aspirations, the community of photographers became involved in the production of

¹⁶ Sandweiss, “Undecisive Moments: The Narrative Tradition in Western Photography,” 102; Palmquist and Kailbourn, *Pioneer Photographers*, 57-58.

¹⁷ Sandweiss, “Undecisive Moments,” 103-106.

¹⁸ Peter E. Palmquist, “The Daguerreotype in San Francisco,” *History of Photography* 4, no. 3 (1980): 208-220.

¹⁹ Sandweiss, *Print the Legend*, 82-86.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 61.

²¹ Palmquist and Kailbourn, *Pioneer Photographers*, 60.

²² Kevin Starr, preface to *Visionary San Francisco*, 11, 14.

a promising vision in which past, present, and future merged into a coherent vision. The camera thus assisted in the “mythologising [of] the West as a place of prospects (in every sense of the word),” that is, the West epitomized “an extensive view,” “a mental consideration,” “something that is awaited or expected,” and not least “financial expectations.”²³

In his comprehensive study on “historical interpretations” of the American West, Gerald D. Nash has affirmed the impact of this conceptualized West “in the imagination of men and women” as well as “in their daily lives within a geographical or cultural community.”²⁴ The understanding of the West as an imaginative principle, mobilizing daily activities within its societies, is central to the discussion of photographic practices in the local community. The framework of the specific geographical setting around San Francisco and its emerging cultural scene brought about practices infused with the desires attached to this vision. What was imagined in the mind would then be literally *imaged*, thus projected onto a surface, and came to represent the desired community conception. Nash is right to acknowledge that in this *imaginative* process, which lexically hints at the visual component, “the visual image makers – whom historians have largely ignored – were among the most important shapers of the West as myth.”²⁵ Nash’s historical interpretation was enriched by William Goetzmann’s major study on art of the American West in which the latter defined the “vision-makers” as essential agents, not only in producing representations of the region, but also in *envisioning* or anticipating future scenarios.²⁶

In order to provide this imaginary scenario with a concrete stage, the cameras would be pointed at strategic locations of San Francisco, such as the port or the busy areas around Montgomery Street, where prosperity became visible and yet enough room for speculation was left. Here, again, the truth-telling abilities of the medium, as championed by contemporaneous practitioners, served to “validate” the growing – albeit isolated – existence of the community. Inhabitants, as the first consumers, disseminated these images, accompanied by portraits and written testimonies to relatives in distant cities and thereby gave a material validation to their aspirations.²⁷ Encouraged by a similar process of validation, daguerreotype portraits of miners were enriched with props that suggested the harsh conditions of work on the frontier and, at times, showcased the gilded fruit of their labor. Developing a new form of “Western theatricality,” the portraits sought to authenticate the ideal of the self-made man and, simultaneously, evoked the building of “communes of possibility” in even the

²³ Wells, *Land Matters: Landscape Photography, Culture and Identity*, 128-129; definition of “prospect” retrieved from Merriam-Webster dictionary.

²⁴ Gerald D. Nash, *Creating the West: Historical Interpretations, 1890-1990* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), 197.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 250.

²⁶ William H. Goetzmann and William N. Goetzmann, *The West of the Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), xvii.

²⁷ Hales, *Silver Cities*, 25-30; Sailor, *Meaningful Places*, 162.

most remote locations.²⁸ Through the increased circulation of images and words laying claims on the city and carving out the characteristics of its inhabitants, new representations were shaped.

Through this active engagement with the local setting, as argued by Sailor, the landscape was turned into a “cultural [space]” in which a communal identity was negotiated. Through its practices and discourses, the community “conceptualize[d]” the landscape on its own and forged its self-image.²⁹ Attributing such a powerful identity-shaping dimension to the practice and the dissemination of local photography represents a novel approach to nineteenth-century American photography, as Sailor concedes,³⁰ and yet, such arguments have been developed on the tradition of landscape painting for a long time. By instilling the landscape with historic meaning for the local community and the nation at large, and conceiving it in aesthetic rather than sectional terms, landscape painting forged a “nationalist aesthetics” through “a distinctly American inventory of natural resources.” The experience of this “shared nature” shaped a sense of unity and belonging and could provide the nation with a projection screen for the future.³¹ Acknowledging the potential of such landscape conceptualizations, it is of interest here to understand how visual practices at the micro-level of the community helped likewise in “claiming, constructing, reconstructing, and appropriating the landscape.”³²

In this development of a territorial approach in photography, by studios and consumers, a specific local representation would be internalized. This process was encouraged through what Elizabeth Edwards has termed “material manifestations” and “discursive practices.”³³ The hence shaped corpus of visual and textual productions assisted San Franciscan society in its self-definition as Californian, and as such, part of the nation. To further the demarcation of a local character, having undergone the process of provisional Gold Rush settlement to more solid urbanization, the landscape was taken as a main feature to attest to this progressive development. As argued in a comparative study on the mining communities in California and Australia, a symbolic relationship between the inhabitants and the environment was established “as if to emphasize more clearly the strenuous obstacles that these individuals had to overcome and to underscore the tenacity necessary to conquer such an adverse, if awe-inspiring, environment.”³⁴ The concept of a pioneer character, overcoming the imposed difficulties of settlement and forging a new community, was to become an essential feature in the unique Californian narrative. Due to the absence of “personal roots” in the region for

²⁸ John Wood, “Theatrical Narratives and the Documents of Dream: California and the Great American Image,” in *Silver and Gold: Cased Images of the California Gold Rush*, 25-37; Perry, *Pacific Arcadia*, 38-41.

²⁹ Sailor, *Meaningful Places*, xxvi.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, xxvii-xx.

³¹ Angela Miller, *The Empire of the Eye: Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825-1875* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 13-16.

³² Sailor, *Meaningful Places*, xxvii.

³³ Elizabeth Edwards, afterword to *Photo Archives and the Idea of Nation*, 325-326.

³⁴ Erika Esau, *Images of the Pacific Rim. Australia and California, 1850-1935* (Sydney: Power Publications, 2010), 48.

the vast majority of the community, it appeared necessary to draw “a link between local people and endured hardship, between local people and the special character of the place.”³⁵

By the mid 1850s, through the rapid evolution of technologies, the demand for more “refined” pictures grew more vocal and would be satisfied for the first time through a photograph album that showcased San Francisco as a cultivated community in all its facets.³⁶ At this point, photographers had worked toward faster and cheaper methods, especially for reproducing and assembling images. The wet collodion process, invented in 1851, was a crucial addition to this development as it implied the use of glass negatives with shorter exposure and heightened detail.³⁷ One of the earliest photographers in the city, George Robinson Fardon, used this technique in 1855 to create a 38-image-sequence of central locations photographed from rooftops, bound up in a book published the following year, entitled *San Francisco Album: Photographs of the most beautiful views and public buildings of San Francisco*. The photographs were conceived as salted paper prints, which could be easily reproduced thanks to the wet collodion technique. Furthermore, the prints’ soft and warm tones attributed the images a sophisticated quality.³⁸ The album was to be the first photographic rendition in a long-established tradition of printed views depicting urban and civic development in American cities that had started in the late eighteenth century. Its publication in the 1850s coincided with a “rising demand for prints of patently American scenes,” stimulated by printers such as Currier and Ives in Boston, who provided an overview of national progress and an inventory of the crafts, industries, and respectable cultural institutions the nation had to offer.³⁹ Assembled in a similar fashion, integrating a sequence of thriving businesses and aesthetically pleasing architectural venues, the album was used to counter associations with San Francisco as an uncultured backwater (**fig. 1.1**).

As shown by Rodger Birt, the album was published at the time of the second Vigilance Committee which fought crime in the city. It was rapidly turned into an instrument to alleviate anxieties about the political climate. Notorious for their violence, racism, and bigotry in the municipal government, the members of the Committee – among whom the album publisher William Herre – sought to appropriate Fardon’s album for illustrating “ideals of community.” The Committee, consisting chiefly of businessmen, was eager to reestablish a peaceful image of the frontier community in a period when investment from the East was dropping. Despite its lack of political commentary, Fardon’s publication would be used to legitimize the Vigilance Committee at their

³⁵ Richard White, “*It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own*”: *A History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 618.

³⁶ Palmquist and Kailbourn, *Pioneer Photographers*, 13.

³⁷ Sarah Kennel, *In the Darkroom: An Illustrated Guide to Photographic Processes before the Digital Age* (London and New York: Thames & Hudson, 2010), 25-27.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 71; Peter E. Palmquist, “George Robinson Fardon: Photographer,” in *San Francisco Album: Photographs 1854-1856*, ed. Jeffrey Fraenkel (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1999), 14, 16.

³⁹ Stephen Daniels, *Fields of Vision: Landscape Imagery and National Identity in England and the United States* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 178-179.

victory in 1856. Further, it shaped the image of San Francisco as “an urban paradise from which noise, dirt, and political dispute have been banished.”⁴⁰ Even though the album itself did not circulate widely, since it was “customized” and separately assembled on demand, it did set an important precedent in the massive booster image-production by local photographers which would mark the later decades of the nineteenth century. In its focus on civilized society and its relevance for the national economy, as well as in its conception as a book to be skimmed through sequentially rather than a daguerreotype case to be opened, the album included all the necessary elements for a promotional urban enterprise.⁴¹

1.2 *The 1860s: defining the parameters of Californian culture*

While the political utility of the album and its model for future booster publications is undeniable, its service in the initial articulation of a local history and a cultural self-image is equally worth noting. Even though the album did not include any text, the retrospectively added rhetoric determined many of its uses. Through these discursive statements, it became a useful tool in formulating a local historical record. The engravings illustrating the pages of the city’s first official history, *The Annals of San Francisco* (1855), were made from Fardon’s photographs and underline the relevance of the camera in the narrative conception of the young city.⁴² More generally, by the time that the first cultural organizations, collections, and libraries were formed, the production of a photographic record had become a major endeavor of the local community. Starting in 1850, the Society of California Pioneers was the city’s first collecting institution. Even though systematic collecting became more relevant throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, it has been argued that “the primary purpose of the society in its early years was social.” Importantly, it created a common understanding of the city’s early community and thus sought to overcome the “sense of geographic isolation.”⁴³ By “recogniz[ing] the historic causes and import of events in which they were participants,” its 350 members wished to preserve all material documenting the history of California in a library which, by 1860, would include books, literature, maps, newspapers, and by the later decades also photographs.⁴⁴

The photographic undertakings by Fardon as well as the increased awareness of the need for preservation reveal the interconnectedness of the medium with the formulation of local history. With

⁴⁰ Rodger C. Birt, “The *San Francisco Album* and Its Historical Moment: Photography, Vigilantism, and Western Urbanization,” in *San Francisco Album*, 100-122.

⁴¹ Hales, *Silver Cities*, 78-86.

⁴² Palmquist, “George Robinson Fardon: Photographer,” 24.

⁴³ Glassberg, *Sense of History*, 171.

⁴⁴ Harry W. Abrahams, “The Society of California Pioneers,” in *Seven Pioneer San Francisco Libraries*, ed. Roxburghe Club of San Francisco (San Francisco: The Club, 1958), 1-5. See also Chapter 2, for photographs given to the Society of California Pioneers for historic preservation.

the establishment of collecting institutions and improvised exhibition spaces as well as more popular amusement locations, the needs of an increasingly prosperous San Franciscan society for entertainment and learning – in short, for shaping a local culture – became stronger. This urban culture needed an image-production not only for promotion, but even more so for asserting its own “appearances and renown.”⁴⁵ The timid beginnings of urban culture that became visible in Fardon’s album, and their relevance for a historically meaningful local narrative, unfolded from the mid 1850s and blossomed by the 1870s. In these decades, when refinement had to be demonstrated and the community gained a sociocultural dynamic, the newly established cultural organizations and places of exchange actively integrated photography in their network.

While the 1850s saw the formation of spaces for entertainment and for knowledge-collecting, the city was in need of more locations for cultural exchange by the next decade. Early amusement venues such as the What Cheer House – expanded into Woodward Gardens by 1868 – were popular with miners in the early 1850s and became easily accessible “public pleasure grounds” the following decade. They included restaurants, a prototypical art gallery showing paintings by Virgil Williams, and stereographs by Eadweard Muybridge, to be purchased on site. More refined institutions, such as the Mercantile Library founded in 1853, started collecting paintings by 1856, yet “targeted a more affluent patron base,” including the businessmen of the Vigilance Committee. This more restrained organizational structure gave way to a development of art patronage by local industrialists who sought “to secure their cultural authority” – an aspect of Californian culture that would become more significant (and controversial) by the 1870s.⁴⁶ Since San Francisco had developed into a “trade-oriented urban center” with banks and manufacturing industries, the emerging local culture was marked by commercial enterprise and the celebration of its success.⁴⁷ This prosperity was also based on its attraction to immigrants, explaining the city’s “high levels of ethnic diversity,” notably settlers of Italian, Irish, and Chinese descent. Despite the latter’s contributions to the industry, the first cultural institution to celebrate local business – the Mechanics’ Institute (1854) – championed the white male American population as its principal patrons.⁴⁸

The fairs organized by the Mechanics’ Institute from late 1857 displayed economic and civic improvement by focusing on the “promotion of home industry” and abandoning the strict separation of fine arts and mechanic arts, thereby stressing the utility of both for society.⁴⁹ Modeled upon the fairs of the early nineteenth century, which “conflated commercial production and cultural

⁴⁵ Lippert, ““Seeing Just About Everything,”” 93.

⁴⁶ John Ott, *Manufacturing the Modern Patron in Victorian California. Cultural Philanthropy, Industrial Capital, and Social Authority* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2014), 56-62.

⁴⁷ Issel and Cherny, *San Francisco, 1865-1932*, 14-15; Jeffrey Haydu, *Citizen Employers: Business Communities and Labor in Cincinnati and San Francisco, 1870-1916* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 63.

⁴⁸ Haydu, *Citizen Employer*, 63, 67, 69.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 185-186; Ott, *Manufacturing the Modern Patron*, 57-60.

production, mechanical ingenuity and aesthetic quality,” the Mechanics’ Institute fairs in San Francisco became important events for the local industry to stage its high quality.⁵⁰ The fairs had a vast visual display to offer, ranging from paintings and lithographs to photographs. A substantial number of local photographers participated in the fairs from the start, often with notable success.⁵¹ The 1865 industrial exhibition, for example, included a large number of views of San Francisco and its surroundings produced by professional photographer Nathaniel Klain, who was awarded “a premium.” Praised as “fine specimens of the art – clear, sharp, and well toned,”⁵² such photographic productions were lauded not only as valuable commercial products, but also as aesthetically pleasing objects that highlighted the inventiveness of local photographers. In these fairs, where the local environment was embraced as both artistic and profitable, the landscape came to be used as both a vehicle for cultural expression and as a tool for promotion. It would perform what W.J.T. Mitchell has described as the power of the landscape: its “double role as commodity and potent cultural symbol.”⁵³ Through the exhibition of local views “on the undifferentiated walls” of the fairs,⁵⁴ the territorial approach adopted by local photographers became an intrinsic element of San Franciscan culture. Since such events were “integral to the development of commercial space as a site of bourgeois cultural authority,”⁵⁵ the productions by resident photographers became powerful representational tools in the assertion of a dominant American culture in the West.

The 1860s may then be considered as a decade in which a number of early cultural organizations and practices were formed, blending the commercially useful and the aesthetically pleasing with the aim of shaping a distinct local culture. Since the decade saw a population increase of some 163%, adding up to almost 150,000 inhabitants by 1870, dynamic platforms for negotiating and expressing local culture were needed.⁵⁶ In order to overcome the image of a commercially exploitable yet culturally unrefined outpost, the ideals of a respectable San Franciscan society required sharp definition. In this quest for respectability, the local scenery was infused with a glorifying discourse – as in the case of Fardon – intended to appeal to the sensibilities of artists and writers alike. The frequently used vocabulary on the region’s beneficial climate and its strategic economic location as a port city on the Pacific became a powerful motif in the local imagery. Associations with the region as a fertile territory with a unique geography dated back to sixteenth-

⁵⁰ Ethan Robey, “The Steady Supporters of Order: American Mechanics’ Institute Fairs as Icons of Bourgeois Culture,” in *The American Bourgeoisie: Distinction and Identity in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Julia B. Rosenbaum and Sven Beckert (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 119.

⁵¹ *Report of the first Industrial Exhibition of the Mechanics’ Institute of the City of San Francisco* (San Francisco: Frank Eastman, 1858), 105. Class 38 included “Ambrotypes and Photographs,” specifying that “[a] large number of specimens in this class were presented.”

⁵² Quoted in Palmquist and Kailbourn, *Pioneer Photographers*, 353.

⁵³ W.J.T. Mitchell, “Imperial Landscape,” in *Landscape and Power*, 15.

⁵⁴ Robey, “The Steady Supporters of Order,” 123.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁵⁶ Issel and Cherny, *San Francisco, 1865-1932*, 24.

century Spanish literature when California was first mapped out as an island. Until the eighteenth century, geographers would draw the region as an island off the Western coast of Mexico. Its “insular destiny,” as argued by Yves Figueiredo, would remain firmly rooted in the minds of its population. Calling on isolation from the nation as a distinctive feature, the inhabitants were to develop their own form of “local patriotism.”⁵⁷

Recent research on landscape photography has suggested that the focus on unique environmental features, which distinguish and literally *distance* a region from other locations, also shapes a local identity. In other words, the process of local identity-formation “directly articulates the geographic.”⁵⁸ Through this “[r]eaffirmation of identity [...] through difference”⁵⁹ the isolated position is turned into an advantage. In the Californian case, this form of distinction would be used in the upcoming decades to claim uniqueness. As recognized by Gerald D. Nash with regard to the second half of the nineteenth century, “[t]he geographical features loomed much larger than the cultural attributes of the inhabitants” of the new communities in the Western United States.⁶⁰ It can be argued, then, that the lack of cultural institutions was alleviated by the very geographical features that came to define an emerging Californian culture in the late nineteenth century.

In taking San Francisco as a point of departure for Californian culture at large, promoters of the state projected the city’s promising future onto the entire state. The ascent of San Francisco as an urban center and its Gold Rush anecdotes were widely used to characterize the culture and history of the state as a whole. This sweeping generalization was necessary in order to obtain legitimacy as a region – “the West” rather than a separate urbanized outpost – to subsequently compete with “the East.”⁶¹ In the competition with the Eastern United States, the publication of literary magazines alongside the organization of local art associations lent the population a distinctive voice. By the late 1860s, the founders of the first literary magazine in the West, *Overland Monthly*, who took their cue from the *Atlantic Monthly* of Boston, clearly envisioned a commercial success for the state. They published articles on the cultivated and economically thriving communities of California.⁶² This process was predated by the region’s newspapers whose contributors, from the onset, functioned “as active and practical wordsmiths, trying to hold the town together and to advance its fortunes [...] with

⁵⁷ Translated from Yves Figueiredo Couto, “Du Monumentalisme à l’Écologie : Politique et esthétique de la nature en Californie, 1864-1916” (PhD diss., Université Paris VII Denis Diderot, 2005), 191-195. The imagined insular condition of California has a long history, see Perry, *Pacific Arcadia*, 4-9; for a comprehensive discussion, see Dora Beale Polk, *The Island of California: A History of the Myth* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991).

⁵⁸ Wells, *Land Matters*, 54.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Nash, *Creating the West*, 104.

⁶¹ See Gendzel, “Pioneers and Padres,” 55-79, for a discussion of the conflicts arising from this imposed Northern Californian mythology on the state as a whole and its competition, by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, with an emerging Southern Californian myth of Spanish missionary heritage. See also Part II, for a discussion of photographic practices with regard to these mytho-historical conceptions.

⁶² Cécile Cottenet, “San Francisco sous la plume de Bret Hart : *The Overland Monthly*, 1868-1871,” in *San Francisco à l’ouest d’Éden*, 143-146.

their words.”⁶³ The combined ambition of local recognition and material welfare was symptomatic of the period of culture-formation in California between the mid and the late nineteenth century. It will be important, in the following, to identify the agents, individuals as well as corporations, that spurred this development. Their interactions would become closely tied to the formation of a Californian discourse, as sketched out above. If we are to grasp photography’s integration in this development, a closer look at the general emergence of artistic production in the city is required.

While artists – painters or lithographers trained in Europe – had arrived in California with the onset of the Gold Rush in 1849, producing mining scenes or commissioned portraits, it was not until the mid 1860s that the first artistic associations were formed. Due to the improvised art spaces in hotel lobbies, the conglomeration of “mechanic” and “fine arts” in industrial fairs, and the vexing problem of preservation due to recurrent fires, the local painters were the first to found the California Art Union in 1865 with the hope of establishing a more permanent institution.⁶⁴ In selling “paintings, engravings, lithographs, and photographs” and seeking “to erect an Art Building that will be a worthy monument to the liberality and refinement of our population,” the members expressed a belief in the educative potential of the arts and its “influence in the formation of a national character.” Setting up these high goals, the Art Union considered it “a measure of public necessity” to create an organization comparable to art institutions in European cities and the Eastern United States.⁶⁵ In its desire to make the collection accessible, the Union proposed a 25 cent admission to the gallery where works by resident painters such as Virgil Williams or Thomas Hill were shown.⁶⁶ This “antebellum conception of art as a moral and educational force,” serving the community at large, persisted until the late 1860s.⁶⁷ However, both the Art Union, as well as its successor, the San Francisco Artists’ Union of 1868, failed after only a few months, due to their lack of serious management and variety in exposed objects. Given the direct contact of collectors with individual artist studios in the city, the establishment of these “consumer-oriented” structures failed. Yet, the attempt “to downplay the commercial aspects of buying art” was very much present in these early associations in order to define respectable forms of artistic expression, less driven by capital spending.⁶⁸ These associations united painters, but equally appealed to local photographers, like Carleton Watkins and William Herman Rulofson, whose names were listed among the subscribers to the San Francisco Artists’ Union.⁶⁹

⁶³ Limerick, “Making the Most of Words: Verbal Activity and Western America,” 178.

⁶⁴ Edan Milton Hughes, “A Brief History of Early California Art,” in *Artists in California, 1786-1940*, Vol. 1, 3rd ed., ed. Edan Milton Hughes (Sacramento: Crocker Art Museum, 2002), 6-8.

⁶⁵ *Catalogue of the California Art Union* (San Francisco: Wade & Co., Steam Book and Job Printers, 1865), 5-8.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

⁶⁷ Ott, *Manufacturing the Modern Patron*, 54.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁶⁹ “San Francisco Artists’ Union, Subscription List,” dated December 5, 1868. Original from California Historical Society (MS1870A), copy from Palmquist Collection (Box 209).

In the effort to overcome a purely commercial production and create a more serious – perhaps “respectable” – local practice, photographers were just as engaged as painters. By 1866, the first of such organizations had formed – the San Francisco Photographic Artists’ Association, which included local figures like William Herman Rulofson, the Shew brothers William and Jacob, and Isaiah W. Taber, who had well established businesses in the city from early on. Keenly aware of the increased demand for affordable pictures fueled by improved reproducibility and a competitive marketplace of stereographs and cartes de visite, the members advocated a more dignified, craftsmanlike approach to the production of photographs. In working collectively, they aimed at “convincing some members of the profession that ill-directed zeal, a mistaken spirit of rivalry, or a divergence of interest where unity is essential, may convert what should be an honorable, artistic, remunerative profession, into a great social evil.”⁷⁰ The Association had a prominent local membership, notably with William Shew as trustee. Shew had been active in San Franciscan society and photographic business since 1850, notorious for his daguerreotype studio on wheels which “travel[ed] around the city and country, taking views and portraits.” He was praised for his five-plate daguerreotype panorama of the city in 1852, the numerous views submitted to industrial fairs in the 1850s and 60s, and – like Fardon – his photographs were reproduced as engravings in *The Annals*.⁷¹ With such strong ties to the societal development of the city and a first-hand experience of local needs, it is not surprising that the photographers demonstrated a remarkable awareness of photography’s role in the community. They declared photography:

a department of art which, though but in its infancy, ramifies through the whole fabric of society, affording equal pleasure in cottage and palace, [...] an art which has given form and tangibility to the exquisite pleasures of memory, and placed them within the reach of the very humblest; an art which rivals the mighty Press in the power of repeating copies of the impressions for universal circulation, and exceeds in force and beauty the ability of the most eloquent orators in depicting the sublilities of nature; an art the chief agent of which is Light, the very fountain of Truth and Fidelity.⁷²

Here, the usefulness of the medium for cultural development and historical narration, its accessibility and dissemination potential, its aptness for landscape depiction as well as the belief in its truthfulness are articulated in the shape of a collective statement of local photographers. Its wording echoes early writings on photography of the 1840s, especially by François Arago, who – in the framework of a patriotic campaign for establishing the medium as a French invention – insisted on its character as

⁷⁰ *Constitution of the San Francisco Photographic Artists’ Association, together with the by-laws, rules of order, and order of business. Organized August 6, 1866* (San Francisco: Alta California Book and Job Printing Office, 1866), iii-iv. Original from the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley (xF869 S3.4 S1816), copy from Palmquist Collection (Box 209).

⁷¹ Palmquist and Kailbourn, *Pioneer Photographers*, 496-498; Sandweiss, *Print the Legend*, 62.

⁷² *Constitution of the San Francisco Photographic Artists’ Association*, v-vi.

“open to everyone and universally understandable and utilisable.”⁷³ Members of the Association, like William Shew, held similar convictions. As early as 1854, he had insisted on the particularly American use of the medium, declaring it “the only branch of the fine arts in which we decidedly excel our European contemporaries.”⁷⁴ This set of shared beliefs in the medium as well as the benefits of the practice would be taken up and rearticulated more forcefully by collective photography organizations in the following decades.

Most importantly, in their organizational purpose, the photographers did not conceal the commercial dimension of the practice – since it constituted the reason for them to cooperate in the first place.⁷⁵ Members of the Association, like Rulofson and later Taber, held prestigious galleries and conducted profitable businesses until the later decades of the nineteenth century. They had a strong interest in controlling the marketplace, which could be a potential explanation for their insistence on the exigencies of the profession (“to fix a scale of prices for the various descriptions of work in our art, so as to prevent that ruinous spirit of competition”⁷⁶). Yet, given the wording of the constitution, a conviction of the craft and its potential for the production of knowledge and aesthetic contemplation, was also discernible. Here, the professional aspect of photography was turned into a means of “inform[ing] the public of the complex, costly, delicate and difficult nature of many of the processes necessary to procure a photographic picture complete, with all the most recent improvements.”⁷⁷ Tying in with the broader movement within American photographers’ circles, the activities of the Association reflected what William Welling has termed “the fraternal years” of photography, dated between 1868 and 1880. The aim of such collective groups was primarily to gain control of competition and to contest attempts at licensing the medium’s productions.⁷⁸

As an extension of its activities – and in order to obtain approval as artisans – the San Franciscan Association set up regular meetings for photographers to exchange and improve. The goal was to “establish a library and reading-room for the use of its members,” and to admit art students as honorary members.⁷⁹ By proclaiming the study of the medium as useful to the arts in general and by excluding members “guilty of practices calculated to bring the profession of Photography into public disgrace” (that is, selling pictures at lower rates), the organizers took on the discourse of a respectable

⁷³ François Brunet, “Nationalities and Universalism in the Early Historiography of Photography (1843-1857),” *History of Photography* 35, no. 2 (2011): 99; see also François Brunet, “‘An American Sun shines brighter,’ or, Photography was (not) invented in the United States,” in *Photography and Its Origins*, eds. Tanya Sheehan and Andrés Mario Zervigón (New York and London: Routledge, 2015), 131-144.

⁷⁴ Wendy Cunkle Calmenson, “‘Likenesses Taken in the Most Approved Style’: William Shew, Pioneer Daguerreotypist,” *California Historical Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (1977): 11-14, <https://doi.org/10.2307/25157680>.

⁷⁵ Palmquist and Kailbourn, *Pioneer Photographers*, 13.

⁷⁶ *Constitution of the San Francisco Photographic Artists’ Association*, 19.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ William Welling, *Photography in America: The Formative Years, 1839-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1978), 195-268.

⁷⁹ *Constitution of the San Francisco Photographic Artists’ Association*, 8-10.

art association.⁸⁰ They confidently expressed the belief – overlapping with the contemporaneous notion of the didactic power of the arts – that once the public had understood the artisanship involved in producing photographs, they would discard inferior pictures like “cheap cutlery, cheap clothing, or cheap food.”⁸¹ In defining a standard of superior production, the members seized what would become a major tension at the heart of later such organizations – the marketability of images. In expressing these convictions, this early collective organization embodied the parameters of associative photography in San Francisco in the long-run: a locally embedded practice seeking to establish its craft on the cultural scene.

In their ambition to build up cultural exchange as well as a distinct local image, these organizations of the late 1860s relied on an emerging discourse, prevalent in literary and booster publications, that explicitly praised the Californian landscape. The focus on the particularities of the environment was part of the mythologizing enterprise of the West, yet it took on more pronounced ideological underpinnings in the conflict-laden decade of the 1860s. Rooted in the “pastoral ideology” – synonymous with a return to nature – the Arcadian conception of the American landscape had served territorial occupation and national demarcation from the early nineteenth century. It had been mobilized “in the service of cultural self-definition” in order to enhance national expansion and define “the “empty” landscape [...] [as] arrestingly different from any old world counterpart.”⁸² This kind of “environmental imagination,” as stated by literary scholar Lawrence Buell, used the aesthetic conception of the landscape for “putting the nation under the sign of the natural.”⁸³ While the identification of the United States as “nature’s nation” has been extensively researched over the course of the twentieth century,⁸⁴ it is important at this point to understand the use of this concept in the regional Californian context. In the political complex of the postbellum era, the restart for the unified nation was to take place in the West. Here, the “empty landscape device,” that had been a recurring element in the history of the American West,⁸⁵ was used to imagine this new beginning in a territory open for settlement and uncorrupted by secessionist conflict. The state of California, with its Gold Rush mythology and promotion of allegedly unoccupied stretches of land, became a useful projection screen for these longings.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 16.

⁸¹ Ibid., 19.

⁸² Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1995), 31-33, 53-54, 78.

⁸³ Ibid., 61-62.

⁸⁴ See Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967); Perry Miller, *Nature’s Nation* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967); Hans Bak and Walter W. Hölbling, eds., *Nature’s Nation Revisited: American Concepts of Nature from Wonder to Ecological Crisis* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 2003).

⁸⁵ Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*, 80.

If we want to examine how the Californian scene sought recognition as a culture and historical relevance for the nation, we need to focus on how this discourse was formulated. Relying on Homi K. Bhabha's suggestion of "culture at its most productive position" when used for the nation concept,⁸⁶ the verbal and visual articulation of a distinct Californian culture must be seen in response to the narrative of nation-building in the West after the Civil War. A glance at the early issues of *Overland Monthly*, the "first literary magazine of the West," founded in 1868, suggests the impact of this rhetorical conceptualization of Californian culture. A series of articles discussing "Art Beginnings on the Pacific," praised "resident artists, professional and amateur" as the foremost image-makers – "vision-makers" in Goetzmann's words – who had direct access to the Californian landscape:

It is their high privilege to first translate the meanings that lurk in all the exquisite tints and shapes of our unhackneyed scenery, to inspire love from the virgin land that was sought from avarice, and to help elevate the tastes of its people.⁸⁷

This firsthand contact – a take on the "empty landscape device" – was one of the markers of uniqueness sought out by the advocates of Californian culture. The experience of the environment by the artist – visual or literary – infused his (more often than her) artistic production with a "distinctive individuality," a characteristic that refers back to the myth of the frontiersman.⁸⁸ Through this mytho-historical conceptualization of the Californian artist, the local culture could insert itself into the process of American nation-building. In playing out "the natural myth that America has been set apart from the beginning by its freedom to test itself against the unmediated," the small-scale local art scene in California would reenact the widely held assumption of American expansionism as a grand national plot.⁸⁹ In turn, as remarked by Elizabeth Edwards, such "micro-discourses of the regional and the local," articulated in local magazines and on a vast array of other platforms, as will be shown, "become *foci*, concretisations and strategies of the nation."⁹⁰

The reciprocity between the local and the national drew its most important impetus from the conceptualization of the landscape. On the one hand, it was defined as a veritable leitmotif of local culture. On the other hand, the specific verbal description and visual depiction of the territory gave legitimacy to national claims on an allegedly "virgin" territory. While the paradigm of the "empty" Western territory – devoid of humans and history, discovered by American settlers – has been challenged by historians of the American West and will become subject to discussion in the following chapters, it needs to be underlined here that it operated as a powerful vehicle in the self-definition of

⁸⁶ Homi K. Bhabha, introduction to *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London and New York: Routledge (1990), 1995), 3.

⁸⁷ Benjamin Park Avery, "Art Beginnings on the Pacific II.," in *Overland Monthly* 1, no. 2 (1868): 114, 119.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁸⁹ Wyatt, *The Fall into Eden: Landscape and Imagination in California*, 206-207; see also Perry, *Pacific Arcadia*, 20.

⁹⁰ Edwards, afterword to *Photo Archives and the Idea of Nation*, 325-326.

Californian culture. In this, the specific conception of the local territory came to assist not only cultural, but also political, economic, or scientific purposes.⁹¹ The promising vacancy of the Californian territory then was inserted into a much broader conception of the nation's geography. As Simon Schama reminds us: "National identity [...] would lose much of its ferocious enchantment without the mystique of a particular landscape tradition"⁹²

In encouraging an engagement with the local landscape and embracing its suggestive power in the quest for recognition, the practitioners turned the scenery into a "cultural symbol," and sought to downplay its "commodity" appeal. Benjamin Park Avery, the author of the *Overland Monthly* series on "Art Beginnings," picked up on the geographical features of the region, as we have seen, to mark out its appeal to artists. He equally used these spatial features when recounting the brief history of San Francisco, which, according to him, showed "already [...] more evidences of aesthetic culture than exist in any other community so isolated, so exposed to frontier influences, and so youthful."⁹³ The author did admit that "the first introduction of fine pictures had a purely commercial motive" because of commission demands. However, by the late 1860s, these works – like the mining paintings by Charles Nahl – would have acquired "a real historic value" due to their documentation of the rapidly evolving community and their production under difficult conditions.⁹⁴ In this shift in focus away from patronage and in favor of a historically and culturally meaningful production, we see the attempt to shape a local history of the arts, deeply rooted in geographic conditions.

In his study on art patronage in California, John Ott elaborates on this phenomenon of concealing commercial ramifications by defining cultural practices as "putatively disinterested and non-economic."⁹⁵ Avery, who advocated for the creation of public art spaces as a trustee of the California Art Union, relied, like many of his contemporaries, on the art critic James Jackson Jarves. The latter promoted the accessibility of art as uplifting and moralizing for the public – a compelling need of San Franciscan society, which had been governed by Vigilance Committee rule only a decade earlier. In veiling the patronage of art by a specific group under a banner of benefit for all, a model of public charity was developed. In attempting to build spaces where art was to be enjoyable for the public, it would serve a regional identity-building function since the works could be claimed and internalized by society as a whole.⁹⁶ Even though this identity-shaping process was integrated more strongly by the local cultural associations in the following decades, it was also inextricably – and much more visibly so – related to economic ventures. In the second half of the nineteenth century,

⁹¹ Sandweiss, "Photography, the Archive and the Invention of the American West," in *Photo Archives and the Idea of Nation*, 43-58.

⁹² Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995), 15.

⁹³ Benjamin Park Avery, "Art Beginnings on the Pacific," *Overland Monthly* 1, no. 1 (1868): 28-29.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 30-32.

⁹⁵ Ott, *Manufacturing the Modern Patron*, 28.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 28-34.

San Francisco's promoters had to grapple with this "particular dilemma" of rendering the city attractive to investment and industry while at the same time envisaging a favorable space for artistic production.⁹⁷

Given this dual ambition, Avery's outlook on the Californian art scene constitutes a reflection of the city's promotional rhetoric, as he underlined "the utility of art as a guide in history, an aid in all the walks of industry, a handmaid of commerce, and a promoter of metropolitan growth."⁹⁸ This statement strikingly mirrors the discourse on the communal role of photography in memory, artful creation, and honorable profession advanced by the San Francisco Photographic Artists' Association. Its members had expressed a comparable belief in "so appreciative and liberal community as that of San Francisco."⁹⁹ As much as Avery's mention of "landscape photography," encouraged by "[t]he clear atmosphere of California," was intended to highlight the inspiring and aesthetically pleasing features of the territory, these works took on an unprecedented marketable value in the late 1860s and 1870s.¹⁰⁰ This development of the San Franciscan scene draws our attention to the idea that, if we seek to grasp the complex functioning of Californian culture, "we need a study that reenvisions the artists' West as the patrons' West." It is only through a detailed reconstruction of the interests of investors, patrons, and "local commercial concerns" that we can comprehend the full range of art and imagery produced in California.¹⁰¹ From this perspective, the place that Avery heralded as "the mecca of all artists"¹⁰² – the Yosemite – has to be connected to its economic and ideological value. The Valley was to become, over the course of the decades, the main destination of entrepreneurs and tourists alike, thanks to a technology that had just as many repercussions on Californian society and national imagination as the landscape: the transcontinental railroad.

1.3 *The transcontinental railroad as an ideological marker of local culture*

The connection of the Eastern and Western United States through a railroad must be seen in parallel with the development of photographic technologies as these accompanied the construction process and would be appropriated as testimony from the 1860s onward. In this context, the "aesthetically composed and purpose driven" dimension, that was emblematic of the photographs produced in this period, performed a prime function at the local and the national level.¹⁰³ Their uses for attractive representation, factual validation, and nationwide dissemination were mobilized on a

⁹⁷ Birt, "Envisioning the City: Photography in the History of San Francisco, 1850-1906," 229.

⁹⁸ Ott, *Manufacturing the Modern Patron*, 34.

⁹⁹ *Constitution of the San Francisco Photographic Artists' Association*, vii.

¹⁰⁰ Avery, "Art Beginnings on the Pacific II.," 116.

¹⁰¹ Martha A. Sandweiss, "Views and Reviews: Western Art and Western History," in *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past*, 193.

¹⁰² Avery, "Art Beginnings on the Pacific," 33.

¹⁰³ Sailor, *Meaningful Places*, xxvi.

large scale by the businessmen who sought to portray the railroad as a national enterprise. While the history of the transcontinental railroad has been examined in critical detail,¹⁰⁴ this discussion seeks to focus primarily on its function within and influence on Californian society. As this new infrastructure would become a hallmark of collective photographic practice around the turn of the century, it is important to grasp the ideological and historical meanings attached to this enterprise, as well as its firm anchorage in San Franciscan society from the onset.

In his recent examination of the sociocultural functions and archival itineraries of the transcontinental railroad's construction photographs, Glenn Willumson has highlighted the relevance of circulating images for making the railroad a national endeavor. In the political context of the postbellum era, the "new East-West orientation" of the railroad tracks became a metaphor for national unification. This ideologically charged project, which shifted the definition of the national territory from a conflictual North-South to a progressivist East-West conceptualization, envisioned "the possibility for national unity and cultural identity" in a new territory. The fierce competition between the entrepreneurs of the two coasts, which in reality dominated this new conception, was veiled under the banner of a national "redemption" for the Civil War – a deliverance from the recent past.¹⁰⁵ It was as much a physical construction as a mental one, which employed the emptiness paradigm of the American West in order to demarcate a specific territory in which these scenarios could become a reality. The conceptualization of the transcontinental railroad in these terms very much reflected the "longings for rebirth" that defined the nation after the rupture of the Civil War. By intertwining "private desires and public policies," this form of longing was expressed in grand entrepreneurial endeavors, like the idea of an infrastructure traversing the continent and leading to California.¹⁰⁶

Importantly, the construction of the railroad "redefined the mythology of westward expansion" by infusing it with a new purpose for settlement and for materializing the progress that the nation had striven for from the beginning of the century.¹⁰⁷ In this mobilization of industrial progress, we can see how the new technologies of infrastructure and image-production served an ideological construction and alimented the myth. As David Nye put it:

It would seem that in the American imagination first there is an empty space traversed by a grid of surveyor's lines, followed by the dramatic imposition of human will on this space. An act of imagination and expropriation creates a landscape.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ See John Hoyt Williams, *A Great and Shining Road: The Epic Story of the Transcontinental Railroad* (New York: Times Books, 1988); Deverell, *Railroad Crossing: Californians and the Railroad, 1850-1910*; Bruce Cooper, ed., *Riding the Transcontinental Rails: Overland Travel on the Pacific Railroad, 1865-1881* (Philadelphia: Polyglot Press, 2004); Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010).

¹⁰⁵ Willumson, *Iron Muse: Photographing the Transcontinental Railroad*, 19, 23, 58-61.

¹⁰⁶ Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009), 4. For the "peaceful mingling" of North and South in California, see also Royce, *California*, 228.

¹⁰⁷ Daniels, *Fields of Vision*, 182-184.

¹⁰⁸ David E. Nye, *Narratives and Spaces: Technology and the Construction of American Culture* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997), 4.

His subsequent conclusion that “landscape views are socially constructed,”¹⁰⁹ by integrating new technologies and carrying ideologies, does not only apply to the exhaustively discussed photographic documentation of the territory by the Western geographical surveys. It can also be considered for the small-scale local production. Over the past two decades, photo-historical scholarship has aimed at a re-contextualization of these national survey works by focusing on their production, display as well as their archival legacy. It has thereby done away with art-historical readings that tended to aestheticize and formalize the images, and instead, has opted for a more socially, culturally and politically embedded understanding.¹¹⁰ As argued by Rachel Sailor, the sociocultural role of Western landscape images should rather be examined through the more circumscribed local production of photographs, since it reflects the degree to which the communities relied on this industry.¹¹¹ It is exactly this local image-production that needs to be kept in mind with regard to the railroad industry and its presence in San Francisco, as it came to carry wider ideological meanings by the later decades of the nineteenth century.

First constructed in Sacramento Valley, San Francisco, and San Jose in response to the transportation needs of the mining communities in the mid 1850s, the Central Pacific railroad had its infrastructural as well as its business roots in California. The engineer Theodore H. Judah, who first envisioned a railroad connection to Nevada, convinced the Sacramento-based businessmen Leland Stanford, Collis P. Huntington, Mark Hopkins, and Charles Crocker to incorporate the Central Pacific in the summer of 1861. After Judah’s premature death in 1863, the “Big Four” – as the businessmen were labeled – rapidly seized control of the incorporation by lobbying political and financial support on the East Coast through land grants and federal subsidies. Republican governor of California between 1861 and 1863, Leland Stanford became instrumental in seeking political support and public approval.¹¹² In the financial endeavors, as well as in the cultural ambitions of Stanford and his associates, we can detect the dual ambition of these businessmen to make the state prosper economically and culturally.

In order to understand how the practice of photography and the development of the arts at the local level were infused with this corporate ideology, we need to first understand how the railroad achieved to mobilize the widespread need for images of national progress. Since the urban panoramas

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 5.

¹¹⁰ For further literature retracing the reconceptualization of these survey images, see Eugene Ostroff, ed., *Western Views and Eastern Visions* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1981); Rosalind Krauss, “Photography’s Discursive Spaces: Landscape/View,” *Art Journal* 42, no 4 (1982): 311-319, <https://doi.org/10.2307/776691>; François Brunet, “‘Picture Maker of the Old West’: W.H. Jackson and the Birth of Photographic Archives in the U.S.,” *Prospects: An Annual of American Cultural Studies* 19 (1994): 161-184; Sandweiss, *Print the Legend*, 180-204; Robin Kelsey, *Archive Style: Photographs and Illustrations for U.S. Surveys, 1850-1890* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

¹¹¹ Sailor, *Meaningful Places*, xx-xxii.

¹¹² Orsi, *Sunset Limited. The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Development of the American West, 1850-1930*, 3-14.

of the 1850s, Fardon's *San Francisco Album*, and Currier & Ives' widely circulating prints of technological progress, representations of a linear narrative toward prosperity had become important tools for visualizing the national territory coherently. By 1869, when the transcontinental railroad was completed at Promontory, Utah, the search for continuity in Western development could be efficiently visualized.¹¹³ During the four-year period of construction, the Central Pacific had compiled an inventory of its construction made by former painter and traveling photographer Alfred A. Hart. His stereographic views communicated accomplishments as well as ongoing works, and were enriched by his painterly sense of composition. They appealed to the Central Pacific patrons, especially to Huntington and Crocker, who praised them "[a]s a work of Art that cannot be surpassed."¹¹⁴ The former two patrons were keenly aware of the medium's utility for their enterprise and considered the dissemination of stereographs an essential part of the promotional campaigns. The railroad had acquired a controversial reputation in these years due to its aggressive corporate monopoly and therefore endorsed the photographs and their engraved reproduction for the "patina of accuracy and objectivity" they conveyed.¹¹⁵

In this strategy, which underwent much fine-tuning until the turn of the century when the railroad started to sponsor photographic outings and artistic collaborations, the coalition of text and image became the most efficient vehicle. In a recent study, Matthew Johnston has defined the rhetoric accompanying landscape imagery in nineteenth-century illustrated books as "a key persuasive aspect." He furthermore suggests that "the evolution of this rhetoric went hand in hand with the growth and differentiation of disciplines, institutions, and social practices critical in promoting, normalizing, and effecting the nation's territorial expansion and its industrial development."¹¹⁶ The gradual expansion of this discourse of 'normalization' constitutes a major analytical tool when looking at photographic practices. It allows us to trace how notions of technological progress and territorial appropriation were internalized in the production and dissemination of photographic works. By the end of the decade, through the rapid evolution of reproduction techniques and the intensified experience of image-consumption through stereographs, the public imagination could be more directly stimulated. Through these new possibilities, the suggestive potential of the images was sharpened and allowed the photographs to "finally compete with the storytelling images that had long circulated in other media."¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Sandweiss, *Print the Legend*, 157-161.

¹¹⁴ Willumson, *Iron Muse*, 28-40, quote from Crocker in a letter to Huntington dated 1867, 34.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 109-112.

¹¹⁶ Matthew N. Johnston, *Narrating the Landscape: Print Culture and American Expansionism* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), 11.

¹¹⁷ Sandweiss, *Print the Legend*, 161. For a study of stereographs in the late nineteenth century, see William Culp Darrah, *The World of Stereographs* (Gettysburg: W.C. Darrah, Publisher, 1977).

In the case of California, this process implied a visual enrichment of the two-decade history of the Gold Rush up to the completion of the railroad. Here, the region's recent pioneer past was connected to an even more prosperous future with national reach.¹¹⁸ The construction of the railroad as a “peculiarly Californian” endeavor fed into the continuity of the state's mythical founding conception as it required “the audacity of crossing mountain ranges and bringing civilization across the desert.”¹¹⁹ The three-fold improvement of infrastructure, the San Franciscan community, and the photographic medium would lead, in the following decades, to a great number of productions that integrated these three aspects. Associatively produced, these images integrated the progressive communal narrative. The practitioners who used this discourse were part of – and active contributors to – “an American public steeped in the visual and literary rhetoric of westering.”¹²⁰

Before this discourse would be mirrored and mobilized by the local community, the utility of the railroad had to be proven to the public at large. In order for this conviction to reach the majority of the population, the aggressive corporate strategies had to be veiled and replaced by a discourse that drew on what Joel Snyder termed a “culture of technological progress.”¹²¹ This process entailed a celebration of the technological means employed by the executives to construct a national enterprise as well as a more locally rooted performance of its positive effects, for example through the investment in an art scene in the West. In these national and local persuasion efforts, photography took on the role of the projection screen of the executives' goals for the public to imagine its future benefits. The celebration of the completion of the railroad in Promontory, Utah, is a case in point which reveals the patrons' conviction of photography's importance in their endeavors. While Huntington was reluctant to have an official completion ceremony due to financial reasons, Stanford sought “national publicity” for the realization of the project which eventually led to extensive press coverage and Andrew Russell's *East and West Shaking Hands at Laying Last Rail* (**fig. 1.2**). This widely known image, and its gesture of physical contact between the two coasts, erased any sense of competition, as it embodied the desire for national unity.¹²² In California, where the railroad was considered to herald “a new age of prosperity,” it not only served to revive the local economy, but also as a vehicle to connect to incoming populations, desiring to migrate from East to West.¹²³

The constant attempt to drape purely economic endeavors under a promotional banner of national unity and public benefit then became the leitmotif of the Western railroad patrons. The “imagined public service” of the project, in its representation and nationwide appeal, had to outweigh

¹¹⁸ Willumson, *Iron Muse*, 149-150.

¹¹⁹ Deverell, *Railroad Crossing*, 23.

¹²⁰ Sandweiss, *Print the Legend*, 161.

¹²¹ Joel Snyder, “Territorial Photography,” in *Landscape and Power*, 176.

¹²² Willumson, *Iron Muse*, 53-58.

¹²³ See David E. Nye, *The American Technological Sublime* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1994), 72-76; Deverell, *Railroad Crossing*, 23-24.

the strong dimension of “personal gain” involved in its construction.¹²⁴ The investment of the executives, and notably Leland Stanford, in San Francisco after the company headquarters’ move to the city in the early 1870s, extended this strategy by staging cultural patronage as beneficial for the community as a whole and at the same time concealing its financial profit. While the corporation was often denounced as “an octopus” whose tentacles spread across the region, it is important to recognize the intertwined position of the patrons’ network and, as Richard Orsi has noted, how it fused “with other prominent business, civic, educational, artistic, and scientific leaders, with whom they shared values and hopes for their communities.” Accordingly, in order to reinforce the regional importance of the enterprise, the frequently used vocabulary on the Western landscape was adopted to define “the railroad’s character as Californian,” in its operations and infrastructural origins. In this local conception, the patrons “identified their company’s interests with those of their home state, its economic, social, and cultural development, and secondarily with the larger West.”¹²⁵

1.4 Property, prosperity, access: the Yosemite and the railroad in communal self-understanding

The development of San Francisco in the 1870s as “center of finance” with another population increase of 57%, added up to more than 230,000 inhabitants and thus qualified it as the ninth largest city in the United States by 1880. Its popular designation as the “Rome of the Pacific Coast” since “all roads led to it” echoed the prevalence of the railroad’s infrastructure in determining societal development.¹²⁶ Within this context, the need for cultural institutions that could embody the state’s Italianate associations became more vocal. By the time the railroad’s headquarters moved to San Francisco in 1873, its executives were building ostentatious villas on California Hill – an elevated neighborhood of the city overlooking the Bay and soon renamed Nob Hill after its inhabitants of the urban ‘nobility.’¹²⁷ Only two years earlier, a new attempt had been made to found a local art association: The San Francisco Art Association (SFAA), organized in March 1871, was supported among others by writer Benjamin Park Avery of the *Overland Monthly*, local painters Thomas Hill and William Keith, as well as Charles Crocker from the Big Four. The SFAA’s California School of Design was founded two years later – the fourth art school of this kind in the country – and would be housed, by the end of the decade, in Hopkins’ Nob Hill mansion.¹²⁸ As John Ott succinctly remarked, “San Francisco’s artistic community matured in a city forged by and acutely dependent upon

¹²⁴ Willumson, *Iron Muse*, 26.

¹²⁵ Orsi, *Sunset Limited*, xviii, 21.

¹²⁶ Issel and Cherny, *San Francisco, 1865-1932*, 23-24.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹²⁸ Stephen Mark Dobbs, “A Glorious Century of Art Education: San Francisco’s Art Institute,” *Art Education* 29, no. 1 (1976): 15, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3192083>. Hopkins died in 1873 and his mansion was given to the University of California Berkeley after his wife’s death in 1893. The renamed Mark Hopkins Institute of Art would become a key institution for photographic salons by the early 1900s, see Part II.

industrial capitalism.”¹²⁹ Due to the conspicuous absence of public money to subsidize art associations or programs, the business sector was in charge of the majority of activities and thus exerted a significant influence on practices.¹³⁰

In order to grasp the industry’s impact on culture formation in California, the role of the nineteenth century “American bourgeoisie” – a term recently suggested by Rosenbaum and Beckert – needs to be clarified. An emerging field of research, the study of bourgeois civic engagement enriches cultural histories of the United States as well as art history. It reveals how the economic elites of the United States, in “absence of a formal, historically entrenched aristocracy,” and by “distinctively wedd[ing] culture to capital” succeeded in creating a long-term impact on artistic and institutional development in the major cities of the country. They came to exert much of this “cultural authority” through “philanthropic work and the arts, activities specifically meant to reach much broader and socially less exclusive audiences.” In combining political reach, financial power, and “cultural clout,” the practices of this group of patrons – neither a middle class nor a nobility in the traditional sense – left an imprint on urban culture on both the Atlantic and the Pacific coast.¹³¹ The term “bourgeoisie” in the American context thus needs to be defined along the lines of “control over capital, cultural, and political power” – a process that was enhanced by the economic conditions of the specific location.¹³²

In San Francisco, this form of control was shaped by the early mining and the growing railroad industry, rapid urbanization, and a considerable demand for labor force. The bourgeoisie sought to ensure its economic prevalence among the population and operated strategically through seemingly public-spirited activities such as art commissions and exhibitions. As such, this “elite culture” was not representative of the entire society but rather attempted to define the latter through its cultural signature. Therefore, as Ott rightly notes: “To recognize cultural leadership as a kind of performance is to acknowledge that it is never given or natural but always culturally and historically situated and manufactured.” In the case of the San Franciscan art scene, the following analysis then opts for a cultural-historical approach by examining the anchorage of artistic and photographic organizations in the local and the broader regional environment.¹³³

The appropriation of the social urban space by the patrons worked on a very practical level by commissioning, collecting, and exhibiting works of art and cooperating with local art associations such as the SFAA. It also entailed a strategic use of photography which gave way to an increased dissemination of the collections as well as a more indirect internalization of the patrons’ discourses

¹²⁹ Ott, *Manufacturing the Modern Patron*, 55.

¹³⁰ Issel and Cherny, *San Francisco, 1865-1932*, 111.

¹³¹ Sven Beckert and Julia B. Rosenbaum, introduction to *The American Bourgeoisie: Distinction and Identity in the Nineteenth Century*, 2-3.

¹³² Ethan Robey, “The Steady Supporters of Order,” 119.

¹³³ Ott, *Manufacturing the Modern Patron*, 4-11.

on the part of the photographic community. Keen on collecting “what was fashionable” in New York and in Europe, the Big Four, especially Stanford and Crocker, had toured the major cities of Germany, Italy and France during the late 1860s and early 1870s. The considerable wealth they had accumulated allowed them to assemble a substantial collection of paintings which would, in the 1880s, constitute the core of the Stanford Museum and the Crocker Art Museum collections.¹³⁴ In their wish to “leave to San Francisco the grandest museum of the world,” which did not materialize as such, the patrons demonstrated a desire to leave their cultural imprint on the region from early on.¹³⁵ On a practical level, this entailed the assembling of a respectable collection of European art which would be augmented by paintings of the Western American landscape as well as photographs by Alfred A. Hart and Eadweard Muybridge. In their strategic support of representations of the Californian landscape, the patrons marked out their own contributions to local prosperity since they “endorsed the socioeconomic trends that propelled them into wealth and prominence.”¹³⁶ Their collection of artistic depictions of the American West legitimized their economic endeavors and, by the same token, the public exhibition of the works authenticated the respectability of the patrons. Since their reputation was contested due to the aggressive expansion agenda and a mobilization of Chinese workforce, the patronage of local art became “a sensitive and versatile social instrument” which served to soothe social friction and share notions of good taste.¹³⁷

To illustrate this staging of cultural benevolence and its impact of the self-identification of the community, we can consider Stanford’s collection of Yosemite Valley paintings by Albert Bierstadt. The latter, who had visited California between 1863 and 1864, was praised by Avery in the *Overland Monthly* a few years later for his mastery of “the heroic style of landscape peculiar to America.”¹³⁸ In this period, Bierstadt produced what Angela Miller labeled “operatic views” of the Yosemite whose “unfamiliar dimensions” indeed heightened the desire to envision future scenarios of the territory.¹³⁹ The grand scale of the paintings appealed to Stanford who bought several of Bierstadt’s views, invited him to Sacramento in 1871, and developed a close friendship. Stanford also collected mining scenes by Charles Nahl or landscapes by William Keith who was well acquainted with naturalist John Muir.¹⁴⁰ It was the circulation of Stanford’s collection of Yosemite paintings, not only at national fairs like the Philadelphia Centennial exhibition in 1876, but especially at local institutions, which

¹³⁴ Carol M. Osborne, ed., *Museum Builders in the West: The Stanfords as Collectors and Patrons of Art, 1870-1906* (Stanford: Stanford University Museum of Art, 1986), 37-39.

¹³⁵ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 17.

¹³⁶ Ott, *Manufacturing the Modern Patron*, 4. For a general discussion of artistic production and the railroad industry in the nineteenth century, see Susan Danly and Leo Marx, eds., *The Railroad in American Art: Representations and Technological Change* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988).

¹³⁷ Ott, *Manufacturing the Modern Patron*, 28.

¹³⁸ Avery, “Art Beginnings on the Pacific II.,” 114.

¹³⁹ Miller, *The Empire of the Eye*, 205-206.

¹⁴⁰ Osborne, *Museum Builders in the West*, 24-30.

ensured their visibility and appeal to the San Franciscan population. As Avery confirmed with regard to Bierstadt: his visit “naturally stimulated resident arts, professional and amateur.”¹⁴¹ His paintings were shown at the first exhibition of the SFAA in 1871 and, over the course of the years, the SFAA would grant ample space to local artists and aim for increased visibility. It attracted large audiences, numbering in the upper thousands by the close of the decade. With a lifetime membership coming at a hefty fee of \$100, the SFAA represented both Crocker and Stanford and benefited from loans of the patrons. The latter, in turn, were provided with a space to showcase their collections so as to reframe their abundant collections “as public philanthropy,” rather than sheer fortune.¹⁴²

The patron’s anchorage in the SFAA was important for reasons of public visibility, but the Association itself also became fundamental in the promotion of local subject matter for all fields of artistic production. The ambition to have the local art scene recognized on a national basis was nurtured by the potential of the surrounding landscape, as becomes clear in the SFAA’s statement advocating for the establishment of the California School of Design:

Although now only provincial in point of locality, California contains resources peculiar to herself which render possible almost any degree of excellence in the domain of art. The population, cosmopolitan in character, imaginative, and susceptible to impressions of the grand and beautiful in nature as here presented in their most captivating forms combine the energy of the Teutonic with the artistic traditions of the Latin races; and all the requisites of national aptitude, inspiring scenery and an unequalled climate, seem to be concentrated for the development of a distinct school of art.¹⁴³

Here the particularities of San Franciscan society were projected onto a Californian art scene at large in order to make it a geographically meaningful part of a national culture. The statement drew on the diverse ethnic make-up of the city as an indicator of artistic variety and skill rather than as a source of social conflict. Similarly, the isolation of the city was taken as an advantage in the cultivation of a more sensitive artistic mind with aptness to contemplate the pastoral, in lieu of a lamentation of its detachment from other cities. In singling out its diversity – especially the Germanic and the Romanic presence – as well as its hitherto unknown territory, the local scene fed into the myth of a young nation demonstrating its ability to expand its territory into the remote unknown. It was this particular receptivity to artistic pleasure and the natural environment that would become a recurring aspect of a more established outdoor practice – of painting and of photography – in the years to come. In this statement, then, the laudatory discourse on California materialized institutionally as it implied the establishment of a distinctive art scene, deeply rooted in the ideological and technological enterprise of its supporters.

¹⁴¹ Avery, “Art Beginnings on the Pacific, II.,” 114; Osborne, *Museum Builders in the West*, 30.

¹⁴² Osborne, *Museum Builders in the West*, 25; Ott, *Manufacturing the Modern Patron*, 55, 65-72.

¹⁴³ *Minutes of the SFAA*, March 1873, quoted in Dobbs, “A Glorious Century of Art Education,” 15.

Still, the structure of an institution such as the SFAA as well as comparable organizations like the Bohemian Club or the photographic societies of the 1870s which will be discussed further on, remained inextricably related to a business clientele. The discourse on the Californian landscape adopted by the SFAA was made possible by the city's prosperity and its socioeconomic infrastructure. The benefits of such aesthetic contemplation were in reality limited to a select circle able to pay the high entry fees, exemplified also in the SFAA's first exhibition collaboration with the business-sponsored Mercantile Library. In their patronage of artistic as well as scientific institutions such as the Academy of Science, established in 1853, where members of the Mercantile Library held meetings and the first SFAA shows took place, the railroad executives occupied large parts of the city's spaces of cultural and scientific exchange.¹⁴⁴ Theirs would become a "carefully demarcated social space" that required a level of connoisseurship in science, art, and literature.¹⁴⁵ The development of this kind of cultural refinement then drew heavily on the Californian discourse which took its potential from the ever-expanding railroad infrastructure. If, as Matthew Johnston has argued, the railroad and its related promotional machinery shaped "a fantasy of instant access,"¹⁴⁶ we need to examine how the conception of accessibility was fabricated. Also, in the light of this rather exclusive institutional environment, it has to be questioned how the experience of the Californian landscape via the railroad was reshaped into an accessible endeavor for the community and the nation.

From the early 1860s onward, when Bierstadt was to work in California, his paintings were evaluated as an inspiration to the local artistic community. In his *Overland* series, Avery mentioned the "effects" of the painter's visit which "were first visible in a violent outbreak of Yosemite views, good, bad, and indifferent."¹⁴⁷ This seizure of the Yosemite as an emblematic representation of the American landscape had already started developing in various visual media by the late 1850s, through an exchange between painters, lithographers, and photographers.¹⁴⁸ It would be augmented by scientific exploration of the territory by the California State Geological Survey (1860-1874) as well as literary depictions in magazines. A short discussion of the varied uses of these images – notably the ones by the Valley's most famous photographers Carleton Watkins and Eadweard Muybridge – is useful at this point in order to understand how the appealing Yosemite imagery was appropriated by the community of photographers in the long-run and how it became connected to a national conception of the territory.

¹⁴⁴ Ott, *Manufacturing the Modern Patron*, 69, 144-146.

¹⁴⁵ John Ott, "The Manufactured Patron: Staging Bourgeois Identity through Art Consumption in Postbellum America," in *The American Bourgeoisie*, 265.

¹⁴⁶ Johnston, *Narrating the Landscape*, 51.

¹⁴⁷ Avery, "Art Beginnings on the Pacific II.," 114.

¹⁴⁸ For a discussion of the visual arts' impact on Yosemite's "ideological role" for the nation, see Kate Nearpass Ogden, "California as Kingdom Come," in *Yosemite: Art of an American Icon*, ed. Amy Scott (Los Angeles and Berkeley: Autry National Center and University of California Press, 2006), 23-53.

As extensive scholarly research over the past few decades has demonstrated, the local network of scientists and naturalists, including Clarence King and Josiah Dwight Whitney, cultivated close ties to photographers, painters, and engravers like Watkins, Bierstadt and Keith. The diverse engagements of this network would eventually result in the 1864 decision by Abraham Lincoln to protect tracts of land in the Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Grove for “public use” rather than “private exploitation.” Photography accompanied this process, for example by strengthening scientific hypotheses, or illustrating publications like *Whitney’s Yosemite Guide-Book* of 1868 that included woodcut engravings of Watkins’s views. The book was designed to both mark out specific attractions and sites to be preserved.¹⁴⁹ The early support for preserving parts of the Sierras for public access was, as shown by John Sears, just as much an economic decision since the territory had proven “worthless” for mining or agriculture. Its public uses could therefore be reshaped according to the needs of the railroad companies which sought to attract tourists from the 1870s. Yosemite’s rapid commodification and its appeal to both “an audience hungry for national icons” and “an alliance of scientists, businessmen, writers, photographers, and artists” reveals its cultural function.¹⁵⁰

The diverse uses of the medium for scientific exploration, but especially for tourist attraction and the cultivation of a distinct Californian aesthetic, are tangible in the early image-production of the Valley and would intensify by the later decades through increased accessibility. The first series of forty stereographs of the Valley, made by Charles Leander Weed in late 1859, were immediately seized upon for their marketability. By the early 1860s they were reproduced in *Hutchings’ Illustrated California Magazine* and also marketed by the local photography business of Lawrence and Houseworth.¹⁵¹ Carleton Watkins chose both the stereoscopic camera as well as mammoth plates to produce some one hundred views on his first trip to the Valley in the summer of 1861. By late 1862, the large-scale depictions were shown in a New York gallery and praised for the skilled craftsmanship they exposed. His stereographic views were easily commercialized through their human-scale depiction of the Valley and metaphorically enriched through captions citing verse from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.¹⁵² On a business and personal level, Watkins was related to the railroad network, since Collis P. Huntington of the Big Four had been an early friend. This connection allowed him to produce views in “his own specially outfitted cars” on trains of the Central Pacific Railroad

¹⁴⁹ Translated from François Brunet, “La photographie de l’ouest ou l’histoire expérimentale du paysage,” *Revue française d’études américaines* 26 (1985): 424-425, <https://doi.org/10.3406/rfea.1985.1213>. For discussions of Yosemite’s preservation, see Hans Huth, *Nature and the American: Three Centuries of Changing Attitudes*, new ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990); Figueiredo Couto, “Du Monumentalisme à l’Écologie.”

¹⁵⁰ John F. Sears, *Sacred Places, American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 123-130.

¹⁵¹ Gary F. Kurutz, “Yosemite on Glass,” in *Yosemite: Art of an American Icon*, 55-60.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 60-62; Frank Henry Goodyear, “Constructing a National Landscape: Photography and Tourism in Nineteenth-Century America” (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1998), 74, 83, 96-100. For a comprehensive account of Watkins’s work, see Peter E. Palmquist, *Carleton E. Watkins: Photographer of the American West* (Fort Worth and Albuquerque: Amon Carter Museum and University of New Mexico Press, 1983).

operating the Sierra region by the early 1870s. These images were reproduced for railroad guidebooks in which Watkins's views had a great influence by defining the most important sites. They were equally presented to the patrons in the shape of luxurious albums. The diversity of these uses would mark the onset of a tradition of sophisticated album-making and popular view-production by local photographers that would extend far into the twentieth century.¹⁵³

However, far more than his own works conceived for the railroad, Watkins's business was enriched by Huntington's donation of Hart's railroad negatives from which he produced stereo views under his own name.¹⁵⁴ Watkins's rival on the market, Eadweard Muybridge, produced Yosemite views by 1867 and sought to photograph hitherto unexplored parts of the Valley in order to appeal to larger audiences. In contact with King as well as Bierstadt, Muybridge was just as embedded in the local network of scientists and artists. His photographs were marketed by Bradley and Rulofson, a rival of Lawrence and Houseworth, which densified local competition for view-production.¹⁵⁵ Before his well-known cooperation with Leland Stanford on motion studies and panoramic views of the city in the late 1870s, he had given a large portfolio of Yosemite Views to the director of the Mercantile Library in 1868, thereby joining the elitist circles of cultural exchange.¹⁵⁶ The labels Peter Hales attached to Watkins – “a private entrepreneur,” “a government-sponsored scientific evidence-gatherer,” and “a mass artist,” – apply to numerous practitioners of the time and probably resume best the social, political, cultural, and economic ramifications of photography in the local context.¹⁵⁷

From this brief overview of the diverse uses of Yosemite imagery in San Francisco's emerging cultural circles, it becomes clear that the photographers fostered business relations within the city. The production of appealing imagery of the urban environment and of the nearby back country, with a clearly defined aesthetics and symbolic undertone, became a hallmark of local identity. It is in this period that the “fictionalization of natural space” first took place.¹⁵⁸ This process was incited not only by a thriving local production of photography, but also on a strategic distinction between the “metropolis” and its surrounding “wilderness.”¹⁵⁹ If the railroad companies championed San Francisco as the main operating location for envisioning a journey to the Yosemite and its appealing, seemingly untamed landscape, they were also eager to convey the impression of unrestricted access.

¹⁵³ Ott, *Manufacturing the Modern Patron*, 146. See Part II for a discussion of the collaborations between local photographers and the railroad companies. See also Goodyear, “Constructing a National Landscape: Photography and Tourism in Nineteenth-Century America,” 132-133. Goodyear specifically mentions the travel account *New Life in New Lands* (1873) in which the author, Grace Greenwood, draws on Watkins's reproduced views to visit the most spectacular venues of the Valley.

¹⁵⁴ Willumson, *Iron Muse*, 165.

¹⁵⁵ Birt, “Envisioning the City,” 105-120; Kurutz, “Yosemite on Glass,” 65-74.

¹⁵⁶ Ott, *Manufacturing the Modern Patron*, 146.

¹⁵⁷ Peter Bacon Hales, “American Views and the Romance of Modernization,” in *Photography in Nineteenth-century America*, 212. For a complete overview of Watkins's work and business ties, see Weston J. Naef and Christine Hult-Lewis, eds., *Carleton E. Watkins: The Complete Mammoth Photographs* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2011).

¹⁵⁸ Translated from Figueiredo Couto, “Du Monumentalisme à l'Écologie,” 370.

¹⁵⁹ Ott, *Manufacturing the Modern Patron*, 122.

The new railroad infrastructure allowed travelers to personally validate what had been promoted through circulating images before. Furthermore, it disseminated the penetration into territories that were defined as new communal settlements on the American continent's edge. As Jonathan Bordo suggests, the appropriation of this landscape in text and image gave way to "the symbolic staging of Benedict Anderson's imagined community of the nation-state."¹⁶⁰

While the "wilderness" paradigm and the conception of an American origin story rooted in the Western landscape have been amply discussed in scholarship by authors like Roderick Nash and Ray Allen Billington,¹⁶¹ it is important at this point to emphasize its relation to the experience of the frontier and the subsequent claims on the landscape that proved crucial to San Francisco's self-understanding. As William Cronon has stated in his critical analysis of the term "wilderness," by the mid and late nineteenth century, this concept implied the glorification of the frontier experience that had shaped the "national character" in mapping out unexplored terrain and building up communities. Accordingly, since access to and occupation of this territory had been crucial to national development, its features needed to be preserved "as monuments to the American past." In defining the wilderness as "a creation of the culture that holds it dear, a product of the very history it seeks to deny," Cronon reveals how the ideological conceptualization of the region allowed to make claims on it.¹⁶² It is important to realize that the promise of access was not inherent in the landscape as such, but rather constitutes the very aspect in which it reveals its history prior to American settlement. The Miwok, a group of Native Americans who had inhabited the Yosemite for centuries, had shaped its ecosystem through cycles of harvest and fire, and had thereby preserved its vegetation. As M. Kat Anderson succinctly states in her study on indigenous land practices: "Much of the landscape in California that so impressed early writers, photographers, and landscape painters was in fact a cultural landscape, not the wilderness they imagined."¹⁶³ This indigenous cultivation was rarely recognized, admitted or visualized. Native Americans – if visible at all – were inserted into the double myth of a sacred pre-history and a savagery to be tamed, and thereby lost their own cultural landscape. If the Yosemite was "a cultural asset rich in metaphors that supported the national agenda of expansion" for the United States, its aesthetic perception and facile access had to stage the promise of unoccupied land rather than a history of violent seizure.¹⁶⁴ In this appropriation through image and text, we see the process of "imaginative possession of a place" strongly reflected.¹⁶⁵ By the close of the century, the re-writing

¹⁶⁰ Jonathan Bordo, "Picture and Witness at the Site of the Wilderness," in *Landscape and Power*, 292.

¹⁶¹ See Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*; Ray Allen Billington, *America's Frontier Heritage* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966).

¹⁶² William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in *Uncommon Ground. Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), 77-79.

¹⁶³ M. Kat Anderson, *Tending the Wild: Native American Knowledge and the Management of California's Natural Resources* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 155-158.

¹⁶⁴ Amy Scott, introduction to *Yosemite: Art of an American Icon*, 3.

¹⁶⁵ Sears, *Sacred Places*, 152.

of Native American history and its place in the American cultural landscape would be fine-tuned alongside the lines of the national myth, alimented through a dynamic local practice of photography.

As the denial of the earlier history of the region will be subject to examination in the second part of this thesis, it is essential to understand how these claims on the past, present, and future of the nation were made efficient by combining the territorial conceptualization with the visual and infrastructural technologies imposed on it. Photography, in its technical qualities as well as its communal realization, and the railroad, in its infrastructural as well as its symbolic value for the nation, furnished a mastery of the new territory which could be “bent” in Rebecca Solnit’s words, to the “needs and dreams” of the communities. This alignment of photography and the railroad for the creation of a community – and the consolidation of a community of photographers – had reached a very practical dimension by the 1870s. As the myth-making of the landscape had unfolded its economic potential by the 1870s, the images oscillated between a pastoral vision and a glorification of progress. In this, they had to strike a balance between the celebration of an untouched scenery – as heralded by Avery – and the facilitation of access to it via new technologies. This combination of an allegorical natural setting and an embrace of mechanical invention was embodied by the railroad, crossing the country and achieving “a mixture of the natural and the man-made sublime.”¹⁶⁶

The new access and malleability of the landscape fed into the strategies of the railroad executives who envisaged “the Pacific Coast as potential real estate and as a site for eastern investment and development.”¹⁶⁷ Such a territorial conceptualization ties in with Patricia Limerick’s aforementioned notion of the “property values” which motivated Western expansion in the first place. By “turning the open expanses of North America into transferable parcels of real estate” – a strategy aggressively implemented by the railroad – the executives considered “the acquisition of property as a cultural imperative.”¹⁶⁸ The acquired land was then made attractive through various strategies, among which the production and dissemination of photographs. In order to make the images “invitational,” representing a controllable landscape – as opposed to contemporaneous “inhospitable” images of the Grand Canyon in the American Southwest – the Yosemite would be portrayed as accessible.¹⁶⁹ By the same token, the city, from which all of these boosting activities were managed, was turned into an ideologically fertile terrain. We need to understand, then, how its inhabitants, as well as its photographic businesses, progressively aligned with these “Westering” elements.

¹⁶⁶ See Nye, *The American Technological Sublime*, especially pages 45-76 on the railroad as “dynamic sublime.” For the earliest discussion of this connection between landscape and technology, see Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Idea in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964); see also Max Kozloff, *Photography and Fascination: Essays* (Danburg: Addison House: 1979), 60-75.

¹⁶⁷ Snyder, “Territorial Photography,” 185-189.

¹⁶⁸ Limerick, *Legacy of Conquest*, 55-56.

¹⁶⁹ Snyder’s chapter in *Landscape and Power* discusses this opposition between an “invitational” and an “inhospitable” photographic depiction by comparing Watkins’s Yosemite views and the survey images of the Grand Canyon.

1.5 *The 1870s: a collective of photographers and the dawn of San Francisco as an American city*

During the 1870s, when the railroad patrons came to settle in the city and San Francisco reached a broader national audience, the photographer community evolved toward more collective forms of organization. Apart from Watkins and Muybridge, a number of well-established local photographers set out to found a new association in 1875 – the Photographic Art Society of the Pacific – which sought to forge a more direct connection to the national scene. It will be argued here that the search for this exchange with photographers from other regions went beyond dissemination of local imagery and represents a shift in the perception of photography’s possibilities. Rather than merely boasting the beauty of the local scenery in the name of a railroad company, the local association strategically sought to manifest the singularity of its practice by drawing on the local landscape. This collective focus on local subject matter, combined with the discourse tapping California’s artistic appeal, was used to create an outlook toward the nation rather than fulfill a mere commercial goal.

The members of the Society certainly maintained close ties to the railroad company – which facilitated their organizational endeavors – yet they also articulated a nationally oriented ambition which concerned the recognition of the artistic value of their practice. By this time then, the discourse of Californian potentialities had been internalized by the photographer community, which had actively contributed to the “Westering” with its own imagery and now used these features to attribute itself a more legitimate character. Contemporary to the claims made by the SFAA and linked to a number of its associates like the Mercantile Library, the Photographic Art Society of the Pacific merged the Californian discourse of refinement with the technological advancement of the profession. The decade represents an emerging phase of a vocally defended local practice and, as such, constitutes the onset of a matured definition of photography’s goals for the community. In reaching beyond the regional horizon, the Society represents the beginnings of a search for another form of validation in the shape of cultural legitimacy.

The San Francisco Directory of 1875 placed the Photographic Art Society of the Pacific in the category of “Literary, Historical, Etc.” organizations in which the SFAA, the Mechanics’ Institute as well as the Mercantile Library and the Society of California Pioneers were also listed. Founded on February 20, 1875, it stated as its goal:

To improve the science and art of photography by diffusing scientific knowledge among its members, fostering photographic literature, stimulating discovery and invention, and encouraging the home production and the manufacture of the many articles required for photographic use; also, to establish the relation between members of the profession and the people at large upon just and business principles which shall promote the public welfare and be of mutual advantage.¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ Henry G. Langley, *The San Francisco Directory for the Year 1875* (San Francisco: Commercial Steam Presses, S.D. Valentine and Son, 1875), 995.

Its officers included Thomas Houseworth as president, William Rulofson on the executive committee and the Shew brothers, Jacob and William, as vice president and treasurer. Involving these leading photographic businesses in the city, it is clear that the Society followed the 1866 San Francisco Photographic Artists' Association in regulating professional concerns at local level. Yet, in its formulation of intertwining the practice with San Franciscan society ("the people at large"), it represented a broader outreach toward the social, scientific, and commercial aspects of community life. In the Society's organizational statement, the focus on "public welfare" certainly still had an economic undertone, yet it equally allowed for a more beneficial, accessible enjoyment of the photographic practice which would "be of mutual advantage" to photographers and the community. This focus on the role of photography within the local community can be seen as an extension of the statement made by the San Francisco Photographic Artists' Association of 1866 which had already recognized that the medium "ramifies through the whole fabric of society."¹⁷¹ In the clear articulation of the goals stated in 1875, as well as in the Society's listing in the same category as long-established cultural institutions, we can see the emergence of a more socially embedded practice of photography which sought to connect the medium to the more "respectable" disciplines of the arts and sciences.

As Jennifer Tucker has noted in her study on photographic societies and scientific culture in the Victorian era, the establishment of such exchange societies advanced the idea of improvement through collective practice. These "[r]ituals of exchange were collective experiences that created social relationships as they created meaning," and as such, turned a shared practice of photography into "a site for education and self-improvement."¹⁷² What Tucker applies to early societies of the 1850s can be transferred onto the local scene in San Francisco which equally created communal relationships in working toward an improvement of "the science and art of photography." They created a more meaningful local practice, beyond purely commercial goals, by working toward "discovery and invention" at large, and also, more specifically, by shaping an individual canon in "fostering photographic literature." In this first effort we see the onset of a practice, which relied on dynamic exchange in the construction of a communal representation beyond state borders. Since the Society chose "the Pacific" as its geographic designation, it opted for an all-encompassing model of Western practitioners. This extensive geographic definition, chosen by a handful of practitioners who were all settled in and around San Francisco, reflects the increased need to shape an idiosyncratic practice of "the West." In the competition between East and West, between Atlantic and Pacific, the creation of a style rooted in the coastal regions of the Pacific could evoke the singularity of Western settlement – epitomized by San Francisco – as well as the aesthetic pleasures of its landscape –

¹⁷¹ *Constitution of the San Francisco Photographic Artists' Association*, v-vi.

¹⁷² Jennifer Tucker, *Nature Exposed: Photography as Eyewitness in Victorian Science* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 55.

symbolized in the Californian scenery. Through this self-definition as an Art Society of an entire region, the organization could forge a unified, allegedly collective representation of a territory which was marked by scattered settlement rather than well-connected urban centers.

While the majority of photographic societies in the US until the early 1880s united professional photographers in addressing their needs in terms of supply and material – as in the San Franciscan case – a new movement toward a distinct “identity for photographic art” emerged around the same period. This search for an aesthetically pleasing production which focused on collective exchange and improvement embodied the attempt to leave behind the purely commercial dimension stuck to the profession and establish the medium among the arts. In bonding together under the banner of a search for photography’s legitimacy as an art form, an increasing number of practitioners sought to free themselves from financial constraints and opt for more artistic freedom.¹⁷³ In the articulation of its goals, the 1875 Society may be seen as a precursor of such a search for identity which would intensify by the closing decades of the century with the formation of amateur societies – a development which will be discussed in depth in the next chapter.

It is important to recognize that, in the specific context of the San Franciscan Society, the search for the medium’s integrity as a form of aesthetic contemplation and craftsmanship was closely intertwined with a search for cultural recognition of the region at large. In examining the local activities and national projects of the 1875 Society, the onset of this two-fold search for identity can be exposed. The aim of such an analysis is to reveal how photography’s aesthetic qualities and its collective exertion were mobilized to shape the distinctive character of a region marked by its surrounding landscape. In this quest for identity-building of practice and region, the geographic designation of the association for the entire Pacific Coast became a key element. This usage reflects again the imposition of the San Franciscan myth of pioneer settlement and community building onto the region as a whole.¹⁷⁴ Here, the ambitions of a small circle of urban practitioners were articulated not merely as the goals of the state of California (as in the case of the railroad or the SFAA), but of a vast territory directed toward the Western sea.

A closer examination of the short-lived activities of the photographic society between 1875 and 1876 shows how this attempt to reach out to a national scene was envisaged concretely and how it differed from preceding organizations. One of the major strategies of the Society to gain national visibility was its appearance in an increasingly widespread corpus of photographic magazines of the Eastern United States. As specified in its mission statement to “[foster] photographic literature,” the Society sought to share its activities on a progressively thriving platform of writing practitioners in

¹⁷³ Paul Spencer Sternberger, *Between Amateur and Aesthete: The Legitimization of Photography as Art in America, 1880-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 111-113.

¹⁷⁴ See Gendzel, “Pioneers and Padres.”

the East. As San Francisco lacked a forum for printed exchange (and would do so for another decade), the Society had to rely on Eastern magazines. In early 1875, the constitution and bylaws of the Society were reprinted in *The Photographic Times*, followed by a report of its activities in *The Philadelphia Photographer*. The latter had been founded by photographer Edward Wilson in 1864 and used the former as its supplement. Appearing monthly and running for five decades, the Philadelphia-based magazine was advertised as “The Oldest Magazine in America” and sought to bridge the increasing professional-artistic divide that would manifest itself more vividly by the close of the century.¹⁷⁵

In 1875, these magazines received the statement of the Society “having for its object *the mutual improvement and welfare* of all photographers on the Pacific Coast, and the fostering of everything pertaining to our noble art.” In stating this two-fold goal, the Society marked out its mission for the entire Western territory which had become a necessity (“a society of this kind has long been needed”). Its 29 members, including the aforementioned renowned local photographers, were integrated into the National Photographic Association (NPA) when William Rulofson of San Francisco became its president.¹⁷⁶ The NPA had been based in Boston since 1868 where it held annual meetings. It addressed the needs of professional photographers in supply and business matters, but equally sought to “elevate” the medium beyond its professional dimension by encouraging exchange.¹⁷⁷ This collective improvement of practitioners on a national platform mirrored the desire of the San Franciscan photographers to become part of a more diverse network. Rather than merely focusing on boosting local enterprise or the regulation of competition, the ambition was to reach out toward other circles which cultivated an interest in the medium.

The strategy to gain full visibility in this national network then worked not only through the documentation of the Society’s objectives in circulating magazines, but through the establishment of a physical connection with the National Photographic Association during Rulofson’s presidency. The reprinted report of the Society’s first meeting in *The Philadelphia Photographer* in early 1875 reveals exactly this ambition. It stated first the importance of the Society “to resist unusual and unjust taxation” in the city since “photographs and works of art were free from tax or license” due to a law passed by Congress in 1872. This declaration reveals the concrete economic reasons for which the photographers united in the first place. Yet, the report disclosed also the project of integrating local photographers in the national exchange by suggesting San Francisco as the meeting place for the NPA’s annual convention in 1875. The proposal was, according to the report, supported by the members who ensured “a hearty and sincere welcome.”¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ William and Estelle Mader, “Nineteenth-century American Photographic Journals: A Chronological List,” *History of Photography* 17, no. 1 (1993): 97; Hales “American Views,” 207-208.

¹⁷⁶ “Photographic Art Society of the Pacific,” *The Photographic Times* 5 (1875): 168; Palmquist and Kailbourn, *Pioneer Photographers*, 467.

¹⁷⁷ Hales, “American Views,” 213.

¹⁷⁸ “San Francisco, December 31st and January 5th,” *The Philadelphia Photographer* 12 (1875): 58-60.

Even though these plans eventually failed, the organizational proposals preceding the 1875 Convention reveal the sense of urgency felt by the local photographers to become a legitimate part of the national network. In a letter published in the New York-based *Anthony's Photographic Bulletin* in January 1875, Rulofson stated the advantages of organizing a convention in San Francisco. The event was to be supported by the SFAA that granted the photographers its exhibition hall, which, as we have seen, had become an important cultural attraction in the city by the time. Rulofson equally negotiated “reduced rates” with the local railroad companies in “granting the NPA very favorable terms for crossing the continent.” In boasting his deal with the railroad, Rulofson’s statement underscored the necessity of an extended infrastructure for any kind of San Franciscan visibility beyond the city limits. He finished by specifying “that photography is necessary even to railroads.”¹⁷⁹ This combination of sponsorship from both the art scene and infrastructure shows the efforts undertaken by San Franciscan photographers to integrate local venues into national culture.

The months following the decision, however, showed that the question of geographic isolation loomed large and eventually disfavored the San Franciscan president of the NPA. In an article in *Anthony's* entitled “Ho! For California,” the author “[sought] to interest our Eastern brethren to “go West” – with all the metaphorical ramifications this idea would imply. A meeting in the West would not only fulfill “the pleasure promised of meeting for the first time our Californian co-workers” but also familiarize Eastern practitioners with “the varied points of interests and attraction” of the Pacific Coast.¹⁸⁰ Yet, by June 1875, *Anthony's* announced that the San Francisco convention would be postponed until 1877, with an interlude, the following year at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia toward which all efforts “for a creditable presentation of our art” should be channeled. While railroad travel to the Pacific Coast appeared too immense a time and money expenditure, the members decided to invest their energy in the national fair.¹⁸¹ Even though this cancellation confirmed the geographic isolation of San Franciscan photographers and the impossibility to stage a nationally important event in the West, the members – and especially Rulofson – attached great importance to an appropriate representation of the medium at the Philadelphia fair, as had been done at preceding fairs at Paris and Vienna. In the year of the Philadelphia fair, a financially difficult one for the NPA, Rulofson’s presidential address decorated the first page of *The Philadelphia Photographer* and confirmed that “the stimulating influence of this Association has been felt by the humblest photographer in the land.” He stressed the importance of mutual exchange and improvement for a collective representation of photography at the world’s fair that year:

¹⁷⁹ “San Francisco and the Next Meeting of the N.P.A. Association,” *Anthony's Photographic Bulletin* 6 (1875): 17.

¹⁸⁰ “Ho! For California,” *Anthony's Photographic Bulletin* 6 (1875): 83.

¹⁸¹ “Proceedings of the Executive Committee of the N.P.A.,” *Anthony's Photographic Bulletin* 6 (1875): 177-178.

Would it were [sic] in my power to spread before photographers in letters of gold, a simple enumeration of the advantages we have all enjoyed in the past few years, the material advancement we have all made as the direct result of combined effort. Not, perhaps, that the National Photographic Association, in its corporate capacity, has done so much, but in that it has opened the mouths of its members, furnished a vehicle for conveying their best methods to and fro, warmed into life local societies having kindred objects in view, stimulated honorable generous competition, discouraged and well-nigh crushed out the jealousy which has been the bane of our profession.¹⁸²

As Peter Palmquist has noted, Rulofson was “instrumental in efforts to construct the photographic pavilion at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia.” Established in San Francisco in 1863 with his business partner Henry Bradley, the firm Bradley and Rulofson had been awarded many prizes at local Mechanics’ Fairs and was awarded a first prize in the Philadelphia exhibition of 1876.¹⁸³ The Photographic Exhibition Building at Philadelphia, conceived through Rulofson’s help, showed a large variety of photographic processes and material, granting an unprecedented visibility to the medium which it would not even regain at the Chicago fair of 1893.¹⁸⁴

While the surviving archival records do not allow for an estimation on when the Photographic Art Society of the Pacific disbanded, it is clear that by 1876 it was in a financially difficult situation. The president’s partner firm with Bradley went bankrupt the following year in San Francisco’s economic downturn and by the time of Rulofson’s untimely death in 1878, there was no further coverage on the Society.¹⁸⁵ A report by Jacob Shew in *Anthony’s* in April 1876 stated the financial difficulties of the Society and was surprisingly frank about the photographers’ situation in their remote location which implied “the limited number practicing our art or directly interested in it on the Pacific Coast, from whom to draw upon membership.” Shew’s insistence on “fraternal feelings” among the members and the importance of mutual improvement detached from purely commercial goals hints at the socially tense atmosphere in the Society at the time.¹⁸⁶ This internal struggle related to the search for serious membership – opposed to the pure marketing of photography – reveals the controversy which would dominate photographic societies in the upcoming decades.

Despite the failings of the Society, it became clear by the close of the decade that local figures, like Rulofson, had turned into key agents for the establishment of photography’s fixture in Californian culture. Rulofson, Houseworth, and a few other members of the Society present the two-fold ambition

¹⁸² “Address from President Rulofson,” *The Philadelphia Photographer* 13 (1876): 2.

¹⁸³ Palmquist and Kailbourn, *Pioneer Photographers*, 115-117, 465-467.

¹⁸⁴ Estelle Jussim, *Visual Communication and the Graphic Arts: Photographic Technologies in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: R.R. Bowker & Co., 1983), 281-282. For further discussion of Californian photographers at world’s fairs, see Chapter 3 and Chapter 9.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 467-468. In this discussion, I have taken Peter Palmquist’s assembled notes on camera clubs in California as a major point of reference. His meticulous documentation of the San Franciscan photographers’ appearance in national magazines and local newspapers does not include any other activity of the Society after 1877. See Palmquist Collection (Box 209).

¹⁸⁶ “Report of the Photo. Art Society of the Pacific,” *Anthony’s Photographic Bulletin* 7 (1876): 122.

outlined at the beginning of this section, which implied the elevation of the medium by transcending its commercial dimensions alongside the advancement of a distinct Californian identity. An article entitled “Photography on the Pacific Coast” published in *The Philadelphia Photographer* of 1875 exemplifies this regional canon-shaping. The author declared Rulofson “one of the pioneers of California” who “by his indomitable energy, artistic attainments, and unswerving integrity, has made himself a business, and given photography a social as well as a business standing in San Francisco that is an honor to us all.” In defining local photography as infused with “a dignity and character equal to any other calling,” the presence of a figure such as Rulofson attributed the practitioners a craftsman reputation. This expertise was to be verified for example in a collection of portraits by Bradley and Rulofson sent to the editors of the Philadelphia-based magazine in lieu of the San Franciscan convention which had been initially scheduled that year.¹⁸⁷ Here, the glorifying rhetoric on the particularities of the photographs produced in San Francisco was illustrated with a rich display of portraits and thereby lent visual credence to their talent. Through the identification as “pioneers of California,” the photographers joined the ranks of the pioneer communities forged in the mining era and augmented the value of their art through its production in a remote location. Again, here the geographic distance and the hardships involved in the production became the vehicle for asserting a distinct identity as practitioners. This designation of notable local figures can be seen as an extension in the quest for cultural legitimacy initiated with Fardon’s *San Francisco Album* in 1855. The Western characterization of the practitioners and their mastery of the medium was linked to the subject matter they embraced. While portraits had been and would remain important for local assertion, as will be demonstrated later on,¹⁸⁸ the focus on the local landscape was the leitmotif through which distinction could be marked out. As Sternberger has recognized, “landscape photography afforded many photographers more opportunity to assert their own agency” and in this, it represented one of the “legitimizing strategies within the context of American culture in general.”¹⁸⁹

Bradley and Rulofson’s works were part of the San Franciscan photographic community in which other firms like Lawrence and Houseworth sought to attain the same kind of prevalence through their productions. Despite the efforts to establish a more “dignified” practice, that is, especially a regulated marketplace, local business remained highly competitive and often implied aggressive marketing strategies. Based in the city since 1855, Lawrence and Houseworth had marketed, as we have seen, Weed’s first Yosemite views, and were involved in the fairs at the Mechanics’ Institute. They had produced, by the late 1860s, an assemblage of three albums, totaling 1,500 images made from half-stereographs, which traced the development of California and Nevada

¹⁸⁷ “Photography on the Pacific Coast,” *The Philadelphia Photographer* 12 (1875): 247-248.

¹⁸⁸ See Chapter 4; for a comprehensive discussion of the role of portraiture of eminent citizens and minority populations in San Francisco, see Birt, “Envisioning the City,” 141-226.

¹⁸⁹ Sternberger, *Between Amateur and Aesthete*, xi.

since the Gold Rush. These images circulated in the fiercely competitive local market of tourist imagery, in which Watkins and Muybridge (the latter being marketed by Bradley and Rulofson) also had their stakes. Reaching their peak of production with a display at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876, Lawrence and Houseworth's, however, also went out of business by the end of the decade.¹⁹⁰ The market also brought forth the "cutthroat business" of Isaiah W. Taber, who will be subject to closer discussion in the next chapters. Having been invited to San Francisco by Bradley and Rulofson, and a member of the 1866 Photographer's Association, Taber operated his own studio in 1871 and by mid-decade acquired the entire collection of Watkins's Pacific Coast negatives, as the latter's gallery had been mortgaged. He sought out cultural venues such as the Mechanics' Institute fairs and the SFAA to showcase his work, while at the same time promoting San Franciscan commerce in publishing illustrated tourist guides available at hotels and on steamships (like the 1880 *Photographic Album of Principal Business Houses, Residences and Persons*). Taber was omnipresent in tourist locations and published widely, which earned him praise from the press for his "general contributions to San Francisco's prosperity."¹⁹¹ From these numerous involvements in tourist industry and settlement promotion as well as in the emerging cultural institutions in the city, the connection between the photographers' ambitions and the patrons of the railroad are further illuminated.

The relationship between corporate power and cultural development became more complex by the closing decades of the nineteenth century and increasingly concerned relations between individual photographers, as well as later photographic societies, and the railroad network. An early example in this setup, and probably the most well-known, is the collaboration between Eadweard Muybridge and Leland Stanford. As the animal locomotion studies sponsored by Stanford have been subject to ample scholarly research,¹⁹² this discussion opts for another commissioned work by Stanford which is emblematic of the patrons' use of photography in the city and furthermore emphasizes their position in San Francisco's growing self-assertion as an American city. As has been clarified before, the railroad patrons, and especially Leland Stanford, were "fascinated by photography." Having photographed the Stanford family estate at Sacramento in 1872, Muybridge was commissioned, in 1877, to photograph the then "recently completed and furnished Italianate residence on Nob Hill in San Francisco."¹⁹³ Showcasing the family collection of art objects from all over the world, among which the Yosemite paintings by Bierstadt shown at the SFAA, the interior tangibly featured the wealth accumulated through the railroad corporation. The 62 prints included in Muybridge's album were destined first and foremost to the family members and friends, yet Stanford

¹⁹⁰ Palmquist, *Points of Interest: California Views, 1860-1870. The Lawrence & Houseworth Albums*, 13-28.

¹⁹¹ Gary F. Kurutz, introduction to *Taber: A Photographic Legacy*, eds. Linda and Wayne Bonnett (Sausalito: Windgate Press, 2004), 9-12; Palmquist and Kailbourn, *Pioneer Photographers*, 538-541.

¹⁹² See Anita Ventura Mozley, *Eadweard Muybridge: The Stanford Years, 1872-1882* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1972); see also Solnit, *River of Shadows*.

¹⁹³ Anita Ventura Mozley, "The Stanfords and Photography," in *Museum Builders in the West*, 107.

also made strategic use of the press to ensure his position as a patron in the city. After his move to Nob Hill in 1875, he gave an interview to the *San Francisco Chronicle* in which he expressed his desires for his future home:

I shall hope to live to sit upon yonder balcony and look down upon a city embracing in itself and its suburbs a million of people. [...] I shall look out through the Golden Gate and I shall see fleets of ocean steamers bearing the trade of India, the commerce of Asia, the traffic of the islands of the ocean...¹⁹⁴

This vision of the city from his ostentatiously decorated mansion out to the Pacific Ocean, which embodied unlimited access to trade, reveals Stanford's search for approval in bringing prosperity to the city. In a decade of labor protest and racial tension, the showcasing of the wealth of Stanford and his pairs marked the impact of this 'bourgeoisie' on the city. The patrons came to choose separate locations to define their privileged position, not only through mansions overseeing the city, but also in prestigious venues like the San Francisco Palace Hotel that was completed in 1875. As Barbara Berglund has remarked, the Hotel became a symbol of San Francisco's metamorphosis "from boomtown to established city," and the presence of Stanford, Crocker, and Huntington – as the first guests to dine and hold banquets – became an integral feature of this ascent. Through the reception of Civil War heroes at the Hotel and the strong business anchorage of its clients, the Palace Hotel was to become "an emblem of America's landed empire" and, more importantly, asserted "the city's own regionally imperial position."¹⁹⁵

This development must be embedded, however, into the broader context of social tension which marked the decade of the 1870s. With the completion of the transcontinental railroad, the resulting unemployment of the labor force, and a reinforced antagonism vis-à-vis the Chinese population, the decade saw recurrent economic downturns. After the executives had developed a monopoly, controlling 85% of all Californian railway infrastructure by 1877, many workers turned against their corporate politics. Yet, the main threat sensed by the local population remained Chinese laborers, who were barred from immigration to the U.S. by 1882 – a decision which had been embraced by a vast majority of San Franciscans in a referendum in 1879.¹⁹⁶ In this tense period, a development toward a more distinct "expression of class identity" took place, which was also reflected in the patrons' strategic settlement on top of the city. This evolution toward reinforced social boundaries implied the decline of "a unified, harmonious, and necessarily local public culture." In fact, the only element which remained public by the late 1870s was the "marked visibility of

¹⁹⁴ Leland Stanford in *San Francisco Chronicle* of May 19, 1875, quoted in Ventura Mozley, *Eadweard Muybridge*, 64. Further information retrieved from the San Francisco Public Library, where it can be consulted in its digital version, see "Eadweard Muybridge – Leland Stanford's Residence," San Francisco Historical Photograph Collection, San Francisco Public Library, accessed June 30, 2017, <https://sfpl.org/index.php?pg=2000336401>.

¹⁹⁵ Berglund, *Making San Francisco American*, 40-46.

¹⁹⁶ Issel and Cherny, *San Francisco 1865-1932*, 31; Haydu, *Citizen Employers*, 63-71; Limerick, *Legacy of Conquest*, 262-268; Deverell, *Railroad Crossing*, 35-46.

collections within print culture,” rather than their physical exhibition in the city’s art institutions like the SFAA.¹⁹⁷ Despite widespread criticism of railroad corporations, the company’s reliance on printed media, especially the dissemination of photographs, became a key element through which the patrons (and after their disappearance by the 1900s, the corporation) maintained their impact on cultural practices in the city.

So as to counter these tensions and to assert the railroad executives’ commitment to the local community, the patrons were assisted by Muybridge in an efficient photographic showcasing. In 1877 and 1878, the photographer set out to take panoramic photographs from California Hill, by the time renamed into Nob Hill. It had been the preferred location for panoramic depiction for photographers like Charles Leander Weed, Robert Vance, and William Shew in the 1850s, and Carleton Watkins by 1864. However, when Muybridge produced his panoramas (in three different versions varying in scale) in the late 1870s, these would be shot from the Stanford home as well as from the highest viewpoint in the city, which was the tower of the neighboring Mark Hopkins mansion.¹⁹⁸ The building, which would later represent an important meeting point for local photographers, provided then already the stage for “a spectacular technical feat” carried out by Muybridge and his assistants in developing the glass negatives of his mammoth-plate camera on site. The panorama, in its all-encompassing, physically “impossible” view of the city, mirrors the experience of railroad travel in which the landscape unfolded before the viewer. The combination of photographic mastery in a location dominated by the railroad’s corporate wealth represents a two-fold visual assertion of power of the urban space.¹⁹⁹ As Peter Hales has rightly remarked, the panoramic depiction and its production on Nob Hill sponsored by corporate means, gave way to “a peculiar sort of panoptic power previously unknown, far beyond even the pleasures of sight traditionally reserved for the richest and most powerful.”²⁰⁰ The all-embracing vision of the surrounding territory as a site for potential investment, ownership, and wealth – as expressed in Stanford’s aforementioned statement – came full circle in this double achievement of photographic technology and corporate sponsorship. What John Ott termed “a mechanized and managerial mode of spectatorship” in these panoramas clearly served the patrons’ legitimation of their economic control over the city and the state’s landscape.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁷ Ott, *Manufacturing the Modern Patron*, 54, 71-72.

¹⁹⁸ David Harris, “Eadweard Muybridge and the Photographic Panorama of San Francisco, 1850-1880,” in *Eadweard Muybridge and the Photographic Panorama of San Francisco 1850-1880*, eds. David Harris and Eric Sandweiss (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1993), 37-45. For a general discussion of panoramic practices in San Francisco and the Western United States, see Jennifer A. Watts and Claudia Bohn-Spector, *The Great Wide Open: Panoramic Photographs of the American West* (London: Merrell, 2001); Peter Bacon Hales and Mark Klett, *One City / Two Visions. San Francisco Panoramas, 1878 and 1990* (San Francisco: Bedford Arts, Publishers, 1990).

¹⁹⁹ Solnit, *River of Shadows*, 157-160.

²⁰⁰ Hales, *Silver Cities*, 166.

²⁰¹ Ott, *Manufacturing the Modern Patron*, 160.

Muybridge's panorama, in its three different versions, was presented to the railroad executives' families, but could also be viewed and purchased as an album in San Franciscan galleries. It reached a wide urban audience in being advertised in San Franciscan newspapers.²⁰² In its availability to a larger local public, it took on a more collective, less exclusively corporate meaning. In offering an elevated perspective of the city to the whole of the population, the panoramic view erased the means required to settle on Nob Hill and instead disseminated the visual enjoyment of the city. Here, the circulation of commissioned imagery through print culture became a means of self-identification for the local population since the panorama was published alongside a key to street names and businesses, in which citizens could map their own place (**fig. 1.3**). This envisioning of "a synthesized whole," the shaping of a collective representation, served as a rallying tool for "civic pride."²⁰³ To local newspapers, such a panoramic depiction highlighted the aesthetic features and generally photogenic character of the port city of the Pacific Ocean.²⁰⁴ Published at a time of social conflict and economic downturn, the circulation of this imagery then could be appropriated as a tool for "unity and identity" and, in this, erased the corporate leadership required to produce it. As a communal representation from an elevated viewpoint, detached from protest and strike, the image was divided from the widely criticized commissioner and came to serve a larger goal of identification.²⁰⁵ Through these strategies of communal depiction in print culture, the railroad executives initiated a more indirect way of exerting cultural influence in which photographs became important projection screens, and their makers gained local prominence.

Other examples of railroad commissions of a local photographer's work, which are less well known, but just as insightful, can be found in the Stanford portraits taken by Bradley and Rulofson in the 1860s (**fig. 1.4**).²⁰⁶ Since the latter was an active member of one of the earliest photographic associations in the city and designated as a "pioneer," the portraits of the railroad "pioneer" Stanford – as he liked to depict himself – reveal a powerful coalition of photographic and technological enterprise. Seeking "to link his accomplishments with the great democratic tradition [...] of the nation," Stanford desired to portray himself as a farmer and thereby overcome the reputation as a ruthless investor. Since he possessed "vast chunks of the California landscape," the portrayal of his persona and his business as traditionally American could insert him into a more meaningful national context.²⁰⁷ Interestingly, here, both the photographer and the investor came to aspire to community

²⁰² Harris and Sandweiss, ed., *Eadweard Muybridge and the Photographic Panorama*, 118.

²⁰³ Hales, *Silver Cities*, 152; Solnit, *River of Shadows*, 167, 170.

²⁰⁴ Solnit, *River of Shadows*, 162, 165. Solnit quotes from the *Daily Evening Bulletin* and the *Alta California* (July 1877) which praised the technical perfection and aesthetic quality of the panorama.

²⁰⁵ Hales, *Silver Cities*, 152; Solnit, *River of Shadows*, 162-170.

²⁰⁶ Ventura Mozley, "The Stanfords and Photography," 108. As the author mentions, the Stanford family had portraits taken by "the best studios" in the city, including also Carleton Watkins and Isaiah W. Taber.

²⁰⁷ Perry, *Pacific Arcadia*, 80-81.

representation that combined local uniqueness with national importance. The portrait collections of Bradley and Rulofson, which were widely praised by the Eastern photography magazines as we have seen, attested to this representation through their superior quality. As Rodger Birt has demonstrated in his study on photography in the urban development of San Francisco, the local photographers, in “allying themselves, whenever possible, with San Francisco’s wealthiest elite, [...] not only furthered their own careers, but also elevated the standards of photography to a new aesthetic plateau.”²⁰⁸ Given the new meanings ascribed to portraits and panoramas in the local and the national dissemination contexts, it becomes clear that the photographs’ aesthetically pleasing component was a key factor for the shaping of a community identification.

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As this examination of early practices and society-formation has demonstrated, the photographs produced in San Francisco transcended the blatantly commercial realm by internalizing a communal vision of the Californian territory and its main city. Sailor, in her study on the identity-shaping force of photography in Western American communities in the nineteenth century, acknowledges exactly these uses as crucial to regional belonging. Rather than assigning them the mere goal of “promoting place,” she grants local photographers a fundamental role in creating “views that functioned self-reflexively for the immediate public.” Given the local anchorage and the awareness of the practitioners vis-à-vis the medium’s potential, the photographers did not merely provide an “understanding of western places.”²⁰⁹ Instead, in the way they associated and articulated a territorial approach, we can detect the emergence of a distinct character attributed to the *practice*.

It is important to realize that these early decades of urban and photographic history gave way to an understanding of the community and of the medium that emerged *from* the remote West Coast setting. By realizing its remote position, detached from the financial centers and cultural institutions of the East Coast, San Francisco’s cultural scene came to rely on a particular mixture of economic sponsorship and landscape exploration to define its own character. Its institutions and communicating platforms, like the SFAA or the *Overland Monthly*, integrated exactly these particularities to infuse the local culture with an identifiable character and aesthetic. While it was attempted on numerous occasions to veil the economic anchorage of this local style, it was at the same time deemed important to bring prosperity to the region. It was in the ambition to advance the region that cultural institutions, railroad patrons, and photographers were to coalesce. To achieve this goal, a strong connection to the territory was cultivated. This landscape was made accessible through new infrastructures, endowed with ideological value in writing, and disseminated through photographs. In this process, the local photographers gradually gained an awareness of their communal function. By aligning with patrons,

²⁰⁸ Birt, “Envisioning the City,” 231.

²⁰⁹ Sailor, *Meaningful Places*, xxviii.

they could promote the city and the state – and by aligning with the new cultural institutions, they would grant a legitimate place to their profession amid the city’s young culture.

The development of local practice in San Francisco over the course of the second half of the nineteenth century reveals how the city, its numerous exchange venues, and its connection to the landscape transformed into a breeding ground for diverse uses of the medium. Most importantly, the development of a distinctively Western production and practice, characterized by its isolation and its access to unique vistas, transformed the corpora into “cultural texts.” Through the coming-of-age of San Francisco, the medium became an indispensable channel of local expression. In the combination of local images and the widely embraced territorial discourse, a distinctive practice of photography was marked out. In this practice, the photographic community came to embrace – to internalize and to “normalize” – the claims made on the landscape as uniquely Californian. The increasingly collective exertion of the practice through associations as well as the discourses shaped around the medium and the territory mutually reinforced each other in a quest for recognition. This oscillation between the demarcation of geographic uniqueness and the search for a legitimate place in a spatial-cultural configuration of the nation came to define the closing decades of the nineteenth century.

It is in this specific local context of corporate sponsorship, the emergence of a wealthy urban elite, and the striving for a more artisanal recognition of photography, that by the early 1880s, a new kind of local practitioner would appear – an amateur whose practice was animated by the surroundings of the Pacific Coast. It will be subject to examination, then, how the increasingly collective and affordable practice of photography would rely on, internalize, and perhaps modify the discourse of Western imagination. Rather than direct promotional ambition, the emerging circle of amateur practitioners cultivated a sophisticated leisure activity as the point of departure for elevating the medium. If the photographers of the mid nineteenth century coalesced with the city officials to stage a narrative of settlement on the frontier and identify themselves by its ideological value for the nation, it will be of interest in the following to trace the evolution of this Californian narrative near the close of the century. It is in this new setup that we can detect an expression of Elizabeth Edwards’ redefined conception of Anderson’s “imagined communities.” Here, collective photography organizations “cohered in part through the circulation of commonly held values and shared sets of images and styles, perceived affinities and aspirations articulated and circulated through printed media,” that resulted in “a brotherhood of photography.”²¹⁰ We need to ask, then, how these shared beliefs evolved in a geographically distant setting – and how they were expressed in its first association of amateur photographers.

²¹⁰ Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 217. The term “brotherhood of photography” is taken from Tucker, *Nature Exposed*. See also Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

Chapter 2

Toward a definition of the Californian “amateur”: the Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association, 1883-1891

As San Francisco ascended from ninth to eighth largest city of the United States between 1880 and 1900, the two decades of the close of the century saw a cultural development in the city which still did not reveal a clear distinction between commercial, entertainment-oriented and more contemplative, institutionalized spaces for art production. In its mixture of culture and capital, of increased leisure activity and facilitated access to the surrounding territory, the city became the center of diverse cultural spaces in which Californian subject matter was endorsed. While it took a world’s fair and a substantial amount of local sponsorship for the emergence of institutionalized spaces for the fine arts,¹ the practice of photography in San Francisco and in many cities in the rest of the country underwent a more rigorous process of distinction between artistic and commercial production at the same period. From the framework of the fiercely competitive photographic businesses in San Francisco and their failed attempts at unification, a new group of practitioners that sought to detach its work from the commercial realm emerged by 1883. In the same way as earlier collective organizations of professionals had attempted to forge a more dignified artisanal practice, the first amateur clubs of the 1880s deliberately defined their practice against professionalization. Through the improved access to photographic production, spurred by the manufacturing of dry plates, the amateur became the new model photographer. The novel access to manufactured photographic equipment as well as the unprecedented amount of leisure time gave way to a new kind of “amateur” practitioner who, as the term’s etymological roots designate, embraced the medium “for the love of it.” In this period, the combination of increased access, technological innovation, and social development played into search for an “identity for photographic art,”² which was provided by collective amateur organizations. In San Francisco, this development would be embodied by two clubs whose organizational principles reveal the constant tension between commercial and cultural practices.

The following chapter argues that the search for a purposeful photographic practice beyond the professional realm coincided, in the San Franciscan context, with the search for a local cultural identity beyond a purely commercial boosterism. This development, in which the possibilities of defining photographic art and characterizing local distinctiveness were explored, is exemplified in

¹ Issel and Cherny, *San Francisco, 1865-1932*, 23-24, 111. With a population of more than 300,000 by the close of the decade, the city had conceived its first museum (today’s M.H. de Young Memorial Museum, named after the *San Francisco Chronicle* owner and businessman Michael Henry de Young) after the Midwinter Fair of 1894. The Palace of Fine Arts, constructed for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco in 1915, underwent a similar development and served as incentive to found a more permanent art museum (see Part IV).

² Sternberger, *Between Amateur and Aesthete*, 112.

two camera clubs: the Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association (PCAPA), formed in 1883 and disbanded in 1891, due to a conflict over the professional practice, out of which resulted in 1890 – with quasi identical membership – the California Camera Club (CCC). From an examination of the first organization and its relationship to the latter, we can understand how the searches for artistic legitimacy of the medium and cultural legitimacy of the region overlapped and became intertwined, at times mutually reinforcing each other.

At the heart of the discussion of this second chapter will be the figure of the amateur who “argued that artistic exploration and development were at odds with the demands of the commercial market.”³ The discourse of an honorable amateur practice in California drew on the earlier negotiated definition of local art, as championed by the SFAA in the 1870s, which was deeply rooted in the exploration and experience of the landscape. It will be of interest to examine how these discourses reshaped the definition of photographic practice and allowed it to unfold its full potential in order to produce the desired superior pictures. During these two decades, then, the rhetoric on California’s distinctiveness was refined and mobilized for infusing the local collective practice of photography with more artistic – and institutional – vigor. The term “amateur” and its genealogy will be subject to close examination in order to reveal the ideological implications of the practice, as well as the claims on the local landscape made by practitioners. The encoded values and beliefs of the amateur label and the strict definition of the practice need to be looked at in great detail, especially in the San Franciscan context, where image-production could seldom be dissociated from its economic encapsulation. A photographic practice which envisaged the landscape as main vehicle in asserting its local as well as its artistic legitimacy needed to circulate and draw on a number of supports to make its ambition known. Through the lens of these specific local factors outlined in the previous chapter, it will be argued that the San Franciscan amateur, who pleaded to be free from financial constraints and uncorrupted by “popular taste,”⁴ eventually made a substantial contribution to the popularization of the Californian landscape. From the perspective of strictly applied amateur principles by the PCAPA and more loosely defined club activity by the CCC, the evolution of a new kind of local practitioner and his (as well as her) newly negotiated discourse of Californian leisure will be examined.

A close study of the photographers’ activities seeks to shed new light on the ambiguous status of amateur practice, how it operated both within the city and out in the Californian territory, and how it would use the “Westering” discourse of the preceding decades. Through the combination of collectively organized practice and support from local institutions, the visual and cultural appropriation of the landscape that had started in the mid-century would gain new dynamics. Looking at photographic production from a collective perspective allows us, then, to retrace the evolution of

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 113.

the “vision-makers” of the West,⁵ from individual practitioners like Fardon or Watkins, commercial firms like Bradley and Rulofson, and early professional associations like the Photographic Art Society of the Pacific, to the amateur who was to benefit from these local foundations set up over the course of the three preceding decades. In this context, the strong financial support and patronage of the railroad network comes into play once again and will be considered a persistently powerful agent in the photographers’ circles. Therefore, it needs to be examined how the urban amateur used this sponsoring network in order to realize his dedicated practice.

Rather than examining the clubs of the 1880s and 1890s merely as hitherto unexplored groups of Pictorialist photographers, this chapter on the PCAPA opts for a contextualization of collective practice in the specific San Franciscan context, that was marked by isolation from other clubs and a desire to make the local territory and culture known to the nation at large. The analysis therefore does not emphasize so much a formalist approach of the photographic work in the Pictorialist vein, but rather seeks to focus on the articulation of collective discourses, activities in and around San Francisco, their coverage in the local press, as well as the strategic dissemination of material. Local aesthetics will be examined inasmuch as they furnish an understanding of how the definition of amateur photography was used a vehicle to mark out a distinctively Californian artistic practice.

2.1 *The ideal of the “amateur” and the emergence of a leisure practice*

Reminiscing about his photographic work in the 1880s, Archibald J. Treat wrote to his friend Howard C. Tibbitts in 1936:

I taught you photography. Afterwards you became the photographer of the Southern Pacific, and thereafter you taught me. Many times we bummed the studios and watched Wm. [William] Keith and others, particularly their compositions. The result was we found that the only way to make real good photography was to study the masters.⁶

Among the early members of the PCAPA, employee of the Central Pacific Railroad and assistant to Stanford’s secretary, Archibald J. Treat was an emblematic figure in the early amateur organizations in San Francisco (**fig. 2.1**). Treat’s writings, alongside his friend Tibbitts’s commissions for the railroad company, can be taken as a point of departure for examining the ambiguous “amateur” designation adopted by local photographers and their desired representation as Californian practitioners. The short extract from his letter hints at the intersecting paths of local photographers, artists, and the railroad company based in the city. It equally reveals the internalization of an artistic canon in which the “masters” did not originate in port cities of the Golden Age, but were accessible

⁵ Goetzmann and Goetzmann, *The West of the Imagination*, xvii.

⁶ Archibald J. Treat to Howard C. Tibbitts, January 20, 1936, 5-6 (Archibald J. Treat Papers, 1883-1961 (SC0511, Folder 1), Stanford University, Libraries, Department of Special Collections and University Archives).

local figures based in their very own Pacific Coast harbor, like William Keith or Thomas Hill, whose works Treat also collected.⁷ Identified as “an ardent and accomplished amateur photographer” by Stanford Museum curator Anita Ventura Mozley, Treat’s integral output – or that which remains – needs to be taken into account in order to understand what being an “amateur” in San Francisco entailed. Since he was part of Stanford’s network while the latter resided in Washington as Senator of California, Treat was requested to document the progress made on the construction site of the future Stanford University in Palo Alto from 1887.⁸

As much as being an amateur implied the advancement of the photographic art divided from professionalism, the local conditions of aspiring amateur photographers in San Francisco reveal a less clear-cut distinction. Treat’s activities in the city – where he saw Muybridge’s (Stanford-sponsored) motion studies, where he married the daughter of painter, SFAA member, and Academy of Science founder Edward Bosqui, and where he became a member of the first amateur photographic society – reveal the ambiguity of a non-commercial photographic practice in a cultural scene marked by corporate sponsorship.⁹ In discussing the seemingly rigid definition of the term “amateur,” we therefore need to pay close attention to its diverging local interpretations and the importance of this designation in theory as opposed to its actual, rather lax, implementation over the years. The use of the amateur label has to be understood as part of a sociocultural development which granted more time and money expenditure to the practice of photography. It can be seen as part of what Sailor termed “the grassroots struggle for civic distinctiveness that was taking place all over the growing West.”¹⁰ If this “civic” ambition was performed by practitioners of the local community, the amateurs indeed become important agents in the shaping of a meaningful community representation.

As illustrated in the preceding chapter, the late 1870s saw a downturn in local photographic businesses, notably with the bankruptcy of the firms Bradley and Rulofson as well as Lawrence and Houseworth. As members of the early photographic associations of these years, both had opted for a regulation of competition and image-marketing in the city. In adopting the label of “art” associations, they sought to detach the practice of photography from its fiercely competitive local marketplace. The emergence of amateur photography in the United States and in Europe must equally be

⁷ Biographical information on Treat is taken from the Archibald J. Treat Papers (MS1877) and Correspondence (MS2170) at the California Historical Society (CHS), San Francisco. Further information is also to be found in a letter, Archibald J. Treat to his sister Eleanor Treat, April 27, 1906, 3 (Treat Correspondence (Box 1), California Historical Society). Here, Treat mentions the art works stored at his home as well as his collection of photographic negatives stored in San Francisco, which were all destroyed in the earthquake and fire (see Part III).

⁸ Mozley, “The Stanfords and Photography,” 107. The photographs (300 mounted prints and one panoramic view) and further information can be consulted via “Archibald J. Treat Photograph Collection, 1887-1891,” Stanford University, Libraries, Department of Special Collections and University Archives, accessed July 20, 2017, <https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/4085062>.

⁹ Treat mentions in the letter to Tibbitts that he had seen “the first projection of the pictures made by Muybridge” for Stanford in the gallery of the SFAA. See Treat to Tibbitts, 2. For further information on Edward Bosqui, see Hughes, *Artists in California, 1786-1940*, Vol. 1, 129.

¹⁰ Sailor, *Meaningful Places*, 162.

considered from this perspective. As remarked by Elizabeth Edwards in her study on amateur societies in Great Britain between 1885 and 1914, the movement of Pictorialism – of seeking recognition of photography among the fine arts – “developed, in part, in the context of an increasingly extensive commercial practice that was seen as debasing the values of the medium.”¹¹ A foretaste of this negotiation of ethical standards for the practice can be found in the aforementioned statements of the photographic “art” societies in San Francisco which repelled producers of “cheap pictures.”

The struggle with the commercial dimension had been a widespread phenomenon among photographers from the mid nineteenth century, as Christian Joschke has likewise observed in his sociohistorical analysis of amateur photography in the German Empire under Wilhelm II. As a backlash, early amateur associations attempted to redefine the practice of photography in more socially relevant terms, for example by inserting it in a network of scientific, cultural, and historical organizations emerging around the same period.¹² The characterization of the practice as collective and as contributing to “the science and art of photography,” as stated by the Photographic Art Society of the Pacific in 1875, was further legitimized in the 1880s through its detachment from any kind of commercial goal. Through this dedication to art and science out of personal interest, a new “class” of practitioners developed. In the strict distinction “between the educated and aesthetically attuned gentleman and the artisanal mechanical operator,” the former would seek companionship rather than financial gain.¹³ The societies which formed all over Europe and the United States in this period gathered for the sake of collective improvement and exchange. In their congenial agenda, the clubs took on a specific *modus operandi* – a performative function as a group. Through organization principles that united diverse interests related to the photographic medium, be it scientific study or aesthetic composition, a “new form of social consolidation” was achieved.¹⁴

If the formation of amateur clubs was related to the socioeconomic development of the late nineteenth century, the membership must be examined through the time and money expenditure at hand to consecrate to photographic equipment and improvement. The practitioners indeed represent “a wealthy leisure class,” which was, however, in the United States less clearly distinguished as an “upper class” as for example in Great Britain.¹⁵ Considered a democratizing phenomenon of representation, photography had been integrated in American society from early on through its association with both technology and political development.¹⁶ In examining the activities and the membership of the first amateur association in San Francisco, the PCAPA, the practices of resident

¹¹ Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 85.

¹² Joschke, *Les Yeux de la Nation*, 91-119.

¹³ Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 85.

¹⁴ Translated from Joschke, *Les Yeux de la Nation*, 93. The term “[r]ituals of the exchange” is taken from Tucker, *Nature Exposed*, 55.

¹⁵ Sternberger, *Between Amateur and Aesthete*, xv-xvi.

¹⁶ Brunet, *La Naissance de l’Idée de Photographie*, 207-209.

photographers and their sociocultural understandings of the medium provide an important point of departure. Yet, this communal practice was first and foremost marked by a wealthy, exclusively male strand of society – including bankers, real estate managers, lawyers, and doctors – who were “agent[s] [...] of a more powerful [...] and industrialized culture.”¹⁷ Their application of the medium to the local surroundings and their ties to the businesses in the city therefore cannot be considered trivial leisure activities. Instead, the ties to urban elites, civic organizations, and scientific institutions must be illuminated, as recently demonstrated in Christian Joschke’s expansive study, to bring to the fore photography’s multiple stakes in and its dynamic input to self-definitions of turn-of-the-century societies.¹⁸ In the San Franciscan case, the specific cultural context that had developed since the 1860s provides us with numerous angles from which to analyze the medium’s ramifications. The local combination of culture and capital had reinforced the formation of a “business elite,” consisting of the aforementioned professions,¹⁹ many of whom had the means to engage in such a leisure activity. Relying on the work and connections of preceding photographers and associations, the members were aware of the dominant “Westering” discourses in these circles. The claims made on the Western territory thus have to be further explored by taking amateur photographers as active agents and clubs as collectively operating organizations with shared ambitions.

Although relegated to the fringes of photographic histories, the practices and discourses of amateur organizations point to the appropriation of the medium for sociocultural communication. As argued by various authors, among whom Elizabeth Edwards, the narrow focus on amateur photography through the Pictorialist label of the Photo-Secession in New York “has not only suppressed the recognition of other strands of practice, it has tended to overlook the way the work was disseminated to create a community of photographic values.”²⁰ An examination of the corpus produced in California between 1880 and 1900 shows the extent to which shared sets of beliefs informed the communal practices and represent a rich counter-model to the still-prevalent “master narratives” of individual photographers.²¹ In embracing the material output of amateur clubs in its social, cultural, and economic dimensions, such a study seeks to “challenge the traditional view of simple authorship,”²² which is an oftentimes problematic notion in photographic history and even more so in a collectively articulated club activity. As stressed in the preceding chapter, a combined analysis of textual and visual sources of this period allows us to embed the photographs in their historical framework. Such an analysis considers text and image together when “used to author

¹⁷ Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the Dock*, xxix-xxx.

¹⁸ See Joschke, *Les Yeux de la Nation*.

¹⁹ Issel and Cherny, *San Francisco, 1865-1932*, 34.

²⁰ Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 90.

²¹ McCauley, “Writing Photography’s History before Newhall,” 87.

²² Glenn Willumson, “The Getty Research Institute: Materials for a New Photo-history,” *History of Photography* 22, no. 1 (1998): 32.

photographic meaning.”²³ A contextualized study, beyond the image surface and toward an examination of the objects, their uses, description, and dissemination is particularly relevant when approaching a corpus of amateur photography. Here, Michael Griffin’s definition of the research value of amateur corpora constitutes a major analytical tool:

[T]he social organization of photographic activity (with all the economic and industrial influences that entails), the patterns of aesthetic form which arise or become established out of that activity, and the ideological concomitants embedded in the process, all become inseparable parts of the significance of photographic work.²⁴

This focus on the social dimension of the practice and its incorporation of contemporaneous beliefs can reveal photography’s function articulated within the community. The study of a corpus of amateur activity, through its multifaceted sociocultural character, responds to the repeated plea for “[a] true intellectual history of photography,” implying “a history of practices and the ideas that inform them.”²⁵ As elaborated by François Brunet, such an examination of the shifting understandings of photography draws its conceptual riches from Foucault’s notion of “discursive formation,” which in this case addresses “a field of practices, discursive and reflexive, but also technical and visual.” The beliefs and activities forged through the technological development and subsequent spreading of the medium provide a starting point for a close examination of its sociocultural and political function.²⁶ At the heart of this discussion is thus the formulation of a history of meaning-making through a collective photography practice. As such, it seeks to work toward a more diversified conception of what photographic practice entailed. It implies “thinking materially” about the images, that is, considering the output of amateur corpora as “objects in a historically marked time,” and through their handling by a group as “exchange objects” with a social function.²⁷

If the production of amateur clubs – including photographs, albums, correspondence, and magazines – generated a panoply of objects and itineraries, we need to understand out of which context they emerged and how the collective amateur label was used. In general, over the course of the twentieth century, the term “amateur” has become obfuscated by being used for a wide range of practitioners of leisure activities who cannot be unified by a shared set of standards or beliefs. The cloudiness of the term, alongside its increased designation as an ordinary, playful activity – to which the history of photography has equally contributed²⁸ – can be revised through a precise examination

²³ Ibid., 33.

²⁴ Michael Scott Griffin, “Amateur Photography and Pictorial Aesthetics: Influences of Organization and Industry on Cultural Production” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1987), 8-9.

²⁵ Alan Trachtenberg, introduction to *Classic Essays on Photography*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven: Leete’s Island Books, 1980), vii-viii.

²⁶ Translated from Brunet, *La Naissance de l’Idée de Photographie*, 17-22.

²⁷ Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, introduction to *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images*, 1-13.

²⁸ Two recent publications have defined the term “amateur” through a snapshot aesthetic. The increasing accessibility of the medium around the turn of the century is analyzed here as a playful, seemingly accidental and anonymous activity

of organizational structures of amateur associations. As Griffin proposes, an insight into “the social organization of photographic pursuits” reveals a more complex array of beliefs attached to a collectively organized amateur practice.²⁹ The ambiguity in defining the term is a more widespread phenomenon, which also concerns sociologists like Robert Stebbins, who has confirmed: the study of amateur activity reveals “one of the most complicated and neglected facets of modern leisure.”³⁰ His examination of leisure pursuit – necessarily evoking a professional counterpart – implies that an amateur distinguishes himself through a more in-depth cultivation of expertise and know-how, as well as an awareness of the history and expressions of his practice. In short, the amateur – through his personal and financially unrestrained exertion of the activity – has developed a greater awareness of the usefulness, stylistic expressions, and historic antecedents of his chosen practice. In “criticiz[ing] the professionals for overemphasizing technique and stressing superficialities in lieu of meaning or profound work,” the amateur develops a new approach and a new application of the practice.³¹ Accordingly, a more conscious approach to the practice of photography would imply a detachment from its technicality and an embrace of its potential for artistic expression and scientific exploration.

Being an amateur then becomes a meaningful label “when employed to describe those who pursue photography as an avocation for the “love of it,” rather than employed aimlessly to refer to any and all non-professional photographers.”³² Through this more complex definition, a second distinction is made among the amateurs – between those who are dedicated and those who practice casually. The former would be defined by his consecration of time and money as well as his alliance with likeminded practitioners. The collective dimension of the practice, even in absence of a viewing public, is a key element here as it reinforces the sense of purposeful exchange activity.³³ As Thorstein Veblen noted in his *Theory of the Leisure Class* published in 1899, the exchange within congenial social structures generates the desired response:

So much of the honourable life of leisure as is not spent in the sight of spectators can serve the purposes of reputability only in so far as it leaves a tangible, visible result that can be put in evidence and can be measured and compared with products of the same class exhibited by competing aspirants for repute.³⁴

without granting much attention to the serious endeavors of amateur organizations of the same period. Amateur production, despite its complex historical and archival traceability, is rather considered an “authentic” expression of “folk art.” See Levine and Snyder, eds. *Snapshot Chronicles: Inventing the American Photo Album*; Sarah Greenough et al., eds., *The Art of the American Snapshot, 1888-1978*. For a discussion of the deficiencies in photographic history with regard to amateurs, see François Brunet, “La photographie, éternelle aspirante à l’art,” in *De l’artification: Enquêtes sur le passage à l’art*, eds. Nathalie Heinich and Roberta Shapiro (Paris: Éditions de l’École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2012), 36-40.

²⁹ Griffin, “Amateur Photography and Pictorial Aesthetics,” 70-76.

³⁰ Robert A. Stebbins, *Amateurs, Professionals, and Serious Leisure* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), xii.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

³² Griffin, “Amateur Photography and Pictorial Aesthetics,” 80.

³³ Stebbins, *Amateurs, Professionals, and Serious Leisure*, 41.

³⁴ Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class. An Economic Study of Institutions* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd. (1899), 1924), 49.

If the practice of amateur photography constitutes, as argued above, the aspiration of a group to distinguish itself, the “tangible, visible result[s]” and “products,” like photographic prints and written exchanges, need to be examined with regard to their dissemination among likeminded groups. In making the accomplishments of the practice visible, they reveal the group’s definition of photography. Furthermore, as this development is about the demarcation of a specific class which sees its refraining from commercialization as an indicator of its wealth and “social standing,” the need for exerting a purposeful leisure activity becomes more pressing.³⁵ In combining “recreation and conviviality”³⁶ – a thoughtful study of the medium within a social framework – photography becomes a socially and culturally informed practice. Especially through national exchange and dissemination, the shared aspiration to legitimacy would be put forward. In the American context, this development tied in with the broader social stratification of the late nineteenth century, when “a new gospel of therapeutic release” was put forward by writers and scientists. Accessible only to the upper middle classes, mostly living in big cities, this precise form of demarcated leisure and consumption constituted a new set of tools to assert power and privilege.³⁷

It is through this definition of the amateur as a consciously devoted practitioner, based in a legitimizing exchange network – ratified by a host of other practitioners, that we must understand Treat’s opening statement of an essay written for the PCAPA in 1887. It would be published in the *Philadelphia Photographer* the same year:

[W]hoever applies knowledge for the purpose of producing a result that is beautiful and which is the creation of something that did not before exist[,] except in the mind of the designer, is an artist in the Fine Arts. If the photographer succeeds in doing this[,] he is an artist, providing the technical treatment of his conception is in accordance with the established rules of art. The relation of photography to the fine arts should not be measured so much by the method employed as by the result obtained.³⁸

The application of the fine arts to the practice of photography and the insistence on the “result” served to further “divorce photography from its supposed mechanicity.”³⁹ In an attempt to overcome the inherently photographic qualities of reproducibility and technicality, amateur photographers sought to create artistic effects through prints on specially treated papers.⁴⁰ Treat himself argued against “the slavish adherence to the silver print on albuminized paper,” especially used for commercial printing, since its shiny surface would eliminate the desired “feeling of space beyond the surface of the

³⁵ Ibid., 41.

³⁶ Ibid., 76.

³⁷ Richard Wightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears, introduction to *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980*, eds. Richard Wightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), xi-xii.

³⁸ Archibald J. Treat, “Fine Art and Photography,” 1 (Archibald J. Treat Papers, CHS).

³⁹ Sternberger, *Between Amateur and Aesthete*, 35.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 33-43.

paper.”⁴¹ This division was to be even more so applied to portraiture, which “is a slave to the demands of a captious public. Only when it breaks loose from its influence does it show that it can be made in art.”⁴² Embedded in the context of the highly competitive San Franciscan marketplace, Treat’s statement on portraiture production can be understood as a reaction to the massive marketization of images in the city since the mid-nineteenth century. The mechanical dimension of the medium which furthered its commodification was rejected by Pictorialist amateur photographers who insisted on craftsmanship and individual experience. In defining “thought, selection, and inspiration” as main objectives for the practice, they sought to unlock the “creative potential of photography.” The engagement with the medium would thus become “a morally, spiritually, and intellectually uplifting force,” an approach which tied in with the intellectual pursuit of a leisure activity.⁴³ In turning photography into a “vehicle for personal expression” and searching for a “painterly quality,” as expressed by Treat, amateur photographers of the 1880s based their works on writings by Henry Peach Robinson (1869) and later Peter Henry Emerson (1889). Even though depicted as opposing approaches in either embracing or rejecting the manipulation of the photographic negative and print, both inspired the movement of Pictorialism through “a belief in the expressive potential of the photograph as a thing of beauty and value.” The insistence on “object making” and a “hand-crafted” practice became longstanding aesthetic categories, forged within the realm of amateur circles.⁴⁴

As much as the mechanical character of the camera had to be veiled and the search for the pictorial was encouraged, amateur circles could only form on such a broad basis in the 1880s thanks to the advancement of photographic technologies and supply markets. The gelatin dry process, which replaced the burdensome collodion negative process in which negatives had to be prepared in dark rooms on site, increased flexibility and daylight exposure of the negative in less than one second. Through its easy handling and aptness to out-of-doors work, the process became “the most popular form of negative in use from 1880 to turn of the century,” and in this changed the nature of photographic practice.⁴⁵ Through this popularization and accessibility, the photographic industry underwent a substantial change, orienting itself toward the demands of growing numbers of practitioners. As various historians, among whom Reese Jenkins and Michael Griffin, have acknowledged, it was this change in technology which had widespread repercussions on the social history of the medium. In making photography available to larger parts of society and diversifying

⁴¹ Treat, “Fine Art and Photography,” 3-4. Further information on albumen prints, see Kennel, *In the Darkroom*, 9-11.

⁴² Treat, “Fine Art and Photography,” 5.

⁴³ Sarah Greenough, “‘Of Charming Glens, Graceful Glades, and Frowning Cliffs’: The Economic Incentives, Social Inducements, and Aesthetic Issues of American Pictorial Photography,” in *Photography in Nineteenth-century America*, 264-265.

⁴⁴ Alison Nordström and David Wooters, “Crafting the Art of the Photograph,” in *Truth Beauty: Pictorialism and the Photograph as Art, 1845-1945*, ed. Thomas Padon (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery and Douglas & McIntyre, 2008), 33-48.

⁴⁵ Kennel, *In the Darkroom*, 45.

the offer, the emerging photo industry contributed to the social stratification of photographic practice.⁴⁶ Even though the introduction of flexible film in 1887 and the subsequent marketization of the Kodak camera commonly mark the onset of amateur photography, the dry plate preceded this development and “prompted the late nineteenth century surge of serious amateur activity.” Both supports, gelatin dry plate negatives as well as roll film, were inventions initially developed by amateurs, but not exclusively patented, and thus rapidly adopted by the industry. This development reveals not only the practitioners’ experimental and inventive potential, but also points to the impact of photographic markets eager to appeal to new practitioners.⁴⁷

Due to this close interrelation of practice and market, an examination of amateur photography must take into account the economic aspects of such a popularization. Even though the amateur label implied a division between the commercial and the leisure realm, the advancement of photographic technology and the diversification in supply for “object making” must be considered driving forces in the development of the practice. From this perspective, the search for distinctiveness – essential to the amateur label – becomes more complex. The numerous applications of the medium, as envisaged by photographic societies, therefore require an examination not only from a sociocultural or civic point of view, but also call for a commercial evaluation, especially when applied to the new ideas about photographic practice that were to be spelled out within the San Franciscan scene.

2.2 Amateurism in San Francisco versus the local marketplace

One of the earliest appearances of the Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association can be found in the San Francisco-based *Daily Alta California* newspaper of November 1885. The article’s lengthy elaborations on the appeal of amateur photography to San Franciscans would be reprinted in the New York-based *Photographic Times and American Photographer*:

In California, where an almost infinite variety of scenery is presented and where the atmosphere is particularly favorable to obtaining the best results, enthusiasm for the pursuit runs high, and the Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association, organized on the 5th of March 1883, comprises over thirty well-known gentlemen, several of whom are men of prominence in their various professions and commercial pursuits. The rules prohibit any member from selling a picture under pain of expulsion, which places them on the best terms with professionals, who are thus protected from being brought into competition with men who follow the calling for mere amusement. [...] The excellence of the work produced by the Association is attributable, first, to the unusual purity of the California atmosphere, and second, to the perfect shutters attached to the majority of the cameras.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Griffin, “Amateur Photography and Pictorial Aesthetics,” 105-112; Greenough, “Of Charming Glens,” 259; Brunet, *La Naissance de l’Idée de Photographie*, 227-233; for an extensive discussion, see Reese V. Jenkins, *Images and Enterprise: Technology and the American Photographic Industry, 1839-1925* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975).

⁴⁷ Griffin, “Amateur Photography and Pictorial Aesthetics,” 83-90.

⁴⁸ “Taking Pictures. Some Account of the Amateur Photographers,” *Daily Alta California*, November 23, 1885, 2. See also, W.B. Tyler, “The Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association,” *The Photographic Times and American Photographer* 15 (1885): 692.

The insistence on the pursuit of photography as a leisure activity carried out by locally renowned practitioners corresponds to the earlier mentioned social characteristics of the urban amateur. In highlighting their privileged standing within the city and their mastery of the medium through a direct connection to the local environment, the article reiterated the earlier formulated characterization of the Californian landscape as inspiring to artistic endeavors. Here, the contact with the landscape through a recreational pursuit was used as a hallmark of high quality. The production of sophisticated work constituted a main endeavor for the rapidly developing amateur societies in the United States during the 1880s. As analyzed by Sarah Greenough, the societies were defined by “similar organizational structures, shared goals, and a fraternal nature.” In this, they “formed a tight network with frequent and timely communication,” thus “foster[ed] a sense of unity and fraternity” through a shared agenda.⁴⁹ This kind of camaraderie was not merely developed through a new kind of “bourgeois photographic activity,” which could afford the latest photographic gadgets, but just as much through “[i]nformal social interaction” in the shape of outings or soirées in club rooms.⁵⁰

If, as suggested by numerous historians, the combination of social entertainment and photographic practice had a longstanding impact on Pictorialism as the preferred style of amateur societies,⁵¹ it can be equally argued that such a blend of social and practical exchanges consolidated communal self-identification. In other words, if California was a place where a unified local narrative was needed, it must be asked how this quest was pursued by a group of practitioners who were united by the ambition to establish Californian photography among the arts. The early statement on the PCAPA, in its reference to the state’s landscape, may be considered an extension of the “Westerling” discourse adopted by commercial practitioners and art associations from early on. In the framework of this continued discursive practice, the proximity to regional vistas and to urban sponsorship must be surveyed in order to grasp the development of a San Franciscan amateur discourse.

As mentioned earlier, the decade of the 1880s – before the appearance of the roll film camera in 1888 – saw a rapid increase in amateur societies due to the dry plate commercialization. This series of technical developments in the medium worked in tandem with an increasingly industrialized social life, with more time to spend outside the workplace, with the family, and traveling.⁵² This framework of expanded leisure time and appealing market offers played into the establishment of amateur

⁴⁹ Greenough, “Of Charming Glens,” 268.

⁵⁰ Griffin, “Amateur Photography and Pictorial Aesthetics,” 114.

⁵¹ See Greenough, “Of Charming Glens,” 268-269; several studies have confirmed the longevity of Pictorialism, see Christian A. Peterson, *After the Photo-Secession: American Pictorial Photography, 1910-1955* (Minneapolis and New York: The Minneapolis Institute of Art and W.W. Norton & Company, 1997); Griffin’s thesis (1987) examines Pictorialism as the adopted style of amateur societies from the 1890s to the 1960s. He grounds his argument on the sociological dimension of the organizations and the impact of the photographic industry in developing a collectively embraced style; Nordström and Wooters (2008) identify Pictorialism and its designation as a craft through amateur societies as a key “philosophy” to the practice of photography in general.

⁵² Davis, *An American Century*, 15-20.

societies, which, in the U.S., approached twenty in count by mid-decade and seventy by the close of the decade. The great majority of these groups were founded along the East Coast, while others also gathered in the Midwest. The Boston Society of Amateur Photographers, formed in 1882, constituted the only society based exclusively on non-professional membership which preceded the PCAPA – New York and Chicago followed in 1884.⁵³ *The Photographic Times and American Photographer* of 1885 counted fourteen societies (with membership ranking from ten to 85), all of which “[were] clubs in high class,” that is, with annual dues between \$5 and \$25, club room facilities, and regular meetings. In this ranking, the PCAPA was the only association West of the Mississippi and listed 30 members.⁵⁴ In the accompanying article, the magazine adopted a reconciliatory discourse addressed to amateurs and professionals. The latter, recognized as “business artist,” would have to deal with “routine duties” while the amateur “pushes into new fields to experiment successfully.” In having invented the dry plate and new developing methods, amateurs had made “discoveries [...] of value to all photographers.”⁵⁵ Due to this fruitful collaboration in terms of photographic advancement, many reached out to and “happily welcomed the few professionals who cared to join,” as Keith Davis has pointed out.⁵⁶ In its more restrictive organizational structure, the PCAPA allowed professionals to join as honorary members. As such, they could assist meetings and participate in exhibitions, provided that none of the produced work be commercialized.⁵⁷

From the material that remains in San Franciscan archives and other historical collections, an overview of the activities organized by the PCAPA in the latter part of the 1880s can be provided. Even though such an examination cannot aspire to exhaustiveness and can furnish only a sketch of the actual bulk of production, it nonetheless allows us to reconstruct the local anchorage of the organization and its connection to the national amateur scene.⁵⁸ Except for one issue of a bulletin called *The Pacific Coast Amateur Photographer* (1887), the PCAPA is not known to have had its own magazine publication.⁵⁹ Between 1883 and 1891, it therefore relied on its corresponding secretaries to send reports from monthly meetings in San Francisco to renowned magazines of the East Coast, such as *Anthony's Photographic Bulletin* or the *American Amateur Photographer*. Although far from being regularly distributed, these reports – alongside press coverage in San Francisco – grant an

⁵³ Ibid., 43; Griffin, “Amateur Photography and Pictorial Aesthetics,” 107; the number of societies varies in these sources.

⁵⁴ “Amateurs with the Camera,” *The Photographic Times and American Photographer* 15 (1885): 507.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Davis, *An American Century*, 43.

⁵⁷ “Amateur Photography,” *San Francisco Call*, March 8, 1883, 3.

⁵⁸ As in the case of the California Camera Club, there is no existing archive on the PCAPA. Several historical societies in San Francisco as well as individual Californian collectors have a sparse amount of material. Again, the Palmquist Collection (with entries for individual photographers as well as group organizations) provides a maximum of relevant source material, most of which is being used here.

⁵⁹ The front page of the bulletin is to be found in the Palmquist Collection (Box 212); no other copies were found in the consulted archives. It is not listed either in Mader’s comprehensive list of American photographic journals of the nineteenth century.

insight into the organizational structures and activities. On a local scale, the members held monthly meetings in their San Franciscan club rooms, which were first located on Pine Street (not far from the SFAA), and in 1886 relocated on Merchant Street. Described in a monthly report, these new headquarters boasted of “a general reception and meeting room, connecting by folding doors with a second room, which has a twelve foot screen for showing lantern slides, and off of this room a large and well-fitted-up dark room.” The quarters were equally equipped with “a large reading table covered with all of the current literature of the day on photographic matters, and on the walls pictures, all photographic work that pure artistic sense and feelings.”⁶⁰ Through their comfortable location in the heart of the city, the members’ reports published in East Coast magazines oftentimes reached out to traveling photographers and “extend[ed] a cordial invitation to all amateurs visiting California to come and see us.”⁶¹ In an address to the members in 1888, Archibald J. Treat (by then president of the PCAPA), referred to the room location as “not excelled, or even equalled [sic], by any of the many photographic societies of this country or Europe.”⁶² Practically impossible to verify on a comparative basis, the statement and its wording echoed the superlative rhetoric used to describe San Francisco’s aptness to photographic practice.

As a means to equip the headquarters, the PCAPA cultivated close bonds with photographic suppliers in the city, like Samuel C. Partridge, who was also a honorary member and acted on prize committees of annual exhibitions. As the son of a daguerreotypist, Partridge had set up one of the largest supplies on the West Coast that traded “in all goods pertaining to photography and the magic lantern.” His ads circulated in the local photographic press until the mid 1890s⁶³ and by then included the label “Pacific Coast headquarters for Kodak camera.”⁶⁴ While the “association camera” of the PCAPA which members could borrow was kept at his store, Partridge himself made regular demonstrations of Eastman products at the meetings. In 1885, the same year of the founding of the Eastman Dry Plate & Film Company, which advertised the first “American film,” Partridge showed the Eastman roll holder at a meeting – “elicit[ing] much praise from the members.”⁶⁵ By 1887, the Eastman Company had its own agent who gave lectures at the PCAPA, using the club rooms for direct application of new apparatus. These events generally “called forth many inquiries and much

⁶⁰ Sidney M. Smith, “The Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association,” *The Photographic Times and American Photographer* 16 (1886): 645.

⁶¹ W.B. Tyler, “The Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association,” *The Philadelphia Photographer* 22 (1885): 192.

⁶² Archibald J. Treat, “Third Annual Exhibition of the PCAPA, Address of the President at the gathering evenings, Dec. 10th & 11th, 1888,” 1 (Archibald J. Treat Papers, CHS).

⁶³ Especially in the *Pacific Coast Photographer* (1892-1894).

⁶⁴ See Mautz, *Biographies of Western Photographers*, 130; Advertisement cited from Samuel C. Partridge (1864-1900), Palmquist Collection (Box 473).

⁶⁵ W.B. Tyler, “The Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association,” *The Photographic Times and American Photographer* 15 (1885): 603; for a detailed account of Eastman’s development in the 1880s, see Brunet, *La Naissance de l’Idée de Photographie*, 229-232.

admiration,” and thus fed into the amateurs’ need for newly developed, sophisticated appliances.⁶⁶ Unsurprisingly then, by 1890, the local press praised the “pleasant, comfortable and attractive” headquarters of the association with “some of the finest cameras, lenses and drop shadows known.”⁶⁷

The two main photographic activities undertaken by the Association were the exhibitions held from 1886 to 1891, and contributions to the American Lantern Slide Interchange. This analysis will treat both aspects, focusing on the first annual exhibition of 1886 and the lantern slide set “Glimpses of California” of 1890, to illustrate the ambitions of the Association in both local and national dissemination. An attempt will be made to balance the scarcity of photographic material with the abundance of textual sources on these events. In the case of the annual exhibitions, the rarity of photographic prints that can be unmistakably assigned to participating photographers will be balanced with the widely publicized writings on the event. Shifting from the motif of Pictorialist aesthetics to the motivations of the photographers, such an analysis grants space to the shared ideas and aspirations of the participants as well as to the reactions of the public. In this methodological move from the image to its surrounding “complex,” as suggested by Elizabeth Edwards, the focus will be set on photography’s sociocultural functions within the group.⁶⁸

Among the series of exhibitions mounted by amateur photographers in the 1880s, the Boston Society was the first to show its works in 1883. Followed by New York in 1885, San Francisco in 1886, and the joint exhibitions of the Boston, New York and Philadelphia clubs between 1887 and 1894, these years witnessed vague attempts at an institutionalization of amateur practice through collectively staged exhibitions. Given the rather opaque stance taken vis-à-vis professional photographers, ranging from strict exclusion to honorary membership, the exhibitions included a profusion of photographic prints, numbering between 700 and 1,100 in the case of Boston and San Francisco.⁶⁹ The members of the PCAPA held their first public exhibitions at the Mechanics’ Fairs in San Francisco in 1883 and 1884, where they were compensated with silver medals and diplomas, and received praise in the catalog for their “marine views, which are highly creditable for their artistic treatment and finish.”⁷⁰ Seeking more exclusive institutional support within the city, the Association organized its own annual exhibition (the first in a series of five) in April 1886 at the rooms of the San Francisco Art Association. The then PCAPA member, director of the California School of Design and locally renowned painter, Virgil Williams, was instrumental in ensuring the location for the upcoming

⁶⁶ Mr. H.S. Bellsmith of Eastman & Co. visited the PCAPA at least once a year in the late 1880s, see monthly reports of PCAPA, for example Sidney M. Smith, “The Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association,” *American Journal of Photography* (1887): 25-26.

⁶⁷ “Amateur Art,” *San Francisco Call*, April 3, 1890, 3.

⁶⁸ Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 27.

⁶⁹ Davis, *An American Century*, 46; Greenough ““Of Charming Glens,”” 273.

⁷⁰ *Report of the Nineteenth Industrial Exposition of the Mechanics’ Institute of the City of San Francisco, August 5 to September 6, 1884* (San Francisco: P.J. Thomas, Printer, 1885), 121.

years.⁷¹ The institutional support from the SFAA and the move away from the popular Mechanics' Institute, where photography had been shown alongside mechanical inventions since the 1860s, shows the admission of the Association to the more privileged cultural venues of the city. Like the Photographic Art Society of the Pacific in 1875, the PCAPA sought an institutional setting to heighten the artistic merit of their works.

A three-page account of the exhibition – which had been free of charge and open to the public from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. for five days in early April 1886 – circulated from San Francisco to New York and was reprinted in *Anthony's Photographic Bulletin* the same month. In the article, the corresponding secretary insisted on the institutional framework of the exhibition. It furnished “favorable circumstances” for showing the photographs in a large room with eleven sky lights and an adjacent lecture hall with 800 seats for lantern slide shows. The exhibition included works by 26 members, adding up to a total of 1,100 prints, some of which were explicitly praised in the review. A series of images which was described in great detail were views of Chile, taken by club member William Letts Oliver, who had traveled there in the 1860s before coming to California in 1868 to work in the mining industry. In the works of this period, he “used the collodion process, making his own albumenized paper, collodion, and in fact almost everything else.” Two of the mentioned views *La cordillera, Chili [sic], 18,350 feet above the level of the sea* (**fig. 2.2**) and *Coral de Carretas, Chili [sic]* (**fig. 2.3**) constitute some of the rare examples which can be attributed to this author with certainty. As opposed to the dry plate process of the 1880s, the creation of these views required the mastery of the wet collodion process under difficult circumstances. The review thus concluded that “for delicacy, detail and atmospheric effects, these prints cannot be excelled to-day.” Also mentioned as “most noticeable” were “two copies of paintings made with a cigar box for camera and burning glass for lens.” The creation of these copied works (**fig. 2.4**) reveals the inventiveness and craftsmanship with which the medium was approached by members of the PCAPA from early on. Another series of works in the exhibition qualified as “uniformly excellent” were by Oliver’s friend W.H. Lowden who had “a large and fine collection of cloud negatives” showing “great skill and taste.”⁷² The Oliver collection, including a great number of views by Lowden, also holds a dozen of such cloud studies made in Oakland. While they cannot be definitely attributed to Lowden, they do provide a glimpse of the work in which the amateurs were involved at the time, experimenting notably with short exposure times in an outdoor setting (**fig. 2.5**).⁷³

⁷¹ W.B. Tyler, “The Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association,” *The Photographic Times and American Photographer* 15 (1885): 459-460.

⁷² W.B. Tyler, “Exhibition of the Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association,” *Anthony's Photographic Bulletin* 17 (1886): 268-270.

⁷³ See “Finding Aid to the Oliver Family Photograph Collections, circa 1880-circa 1920s,” Online Archive of California, accessed July 16, 2017, <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/ft0q2n99r1/>. For further information on William Letts Oliver, see Alvaro Jara, *Chile en 1860. William L. Oliver, un precursor de la fotografia* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Universitaria, 1973). The images in the Oliver Collection at the Bancroft Library constitute, to my knowledge,

The mounted and captioned views included here furnish intimate detail on how at least a few of the 1,100 works in the exhibition were conceived. An additional series of views, showing the interior of the SFAA during the April 1886 exhibition, further illuminates the setup (**fig. 2.6, fig. 2.7, fig. 2.8**). Mixing prints with serial views and cut-out collages, the walls of the exhibition room were densely dressed. In the center of the room, there was an arrangement of six folding cameras on tripods next to a bicycle with an attached camera. This voluminous display reveals the full panoply of the PCAPA's practice, especially focused on an outdoor practice with a great number of maritime and landscape views. While such grandiose exhibitions with large numbers of prints were contested at the time, they allowed the members of the Association to stage their practice not only through photographic works but also through a performance of related objects, like tripods and bicycles. The exhibition was thus transformed into an immersive space that depicted the experience and conception of the practice.⁷⁴ From this perspective, the bicycle can be seen as a crucial addition. Even though not explicitly mentioned by the Association, it would become a regular vehicle for collective outings in these years. Exposed at the center of the room, the bicycle with a small folding camera attached to its handlebar indicated the ties of photographic practice to the rural surroundings in the vicinity, as well as the appeal of recreational leisure activity. The supply market responded to this development in the late 1880s in advertising outdoor equipment for amateurs. An example of such popular pocket cameras – often sold as a “pricy outfit” with holders for 3¼ " x 4¼ " glass plates, a bike attachment and bag – could be the one exposed at the center of the exhibition room.⁷⁵

While the Association had announced some three hundred invitations for the opening of the exhibition, the final report estimated the week's attendance at eight to ten thousand people. Despite the impossibility of proper verification of these numbers, it does seem that the exhibition drew large audiences. This success was due to the increasing popularity of the SFAA's events since the 1870s and the active support by painter and teacher Virgil Williams who, according to the members, “add[ed] a new bulwark to the art side of photography.”⁷⁶ A review by an attendant, reprinted in the

the only extant documentation of PCAPA exhibition works. Despite being held at the SFAA, the institution did not issue catalogs of photography exhibitions in the 1880s. The annual events are not included in the SFAA exhibition record either. The Oliver Collection includes a large number of views which could have been made in the framework of PCAPA outings, yet there is no clear documentation of this. Due to the scarcity of identifiable photographic material, the reliance on printed exhibition reports is therefore essential. For further documentation of early exhibitions held in San Francisco, see Ellen Haltemann, *Exhibition Record of the San Francisco Art Association, 1872-1915, Mechanics' Institute 1857-1899, California State Agricultural Society, 1856-1902* (Los Angeles: Dustin Publications, 2000).

⁷⁴ For further discussion of exhibition strategies at the time, see Olivier Lugon, “‘Kodakoration’ : Photographie et scénographie d'exposition autour de 1900,” *Études Photographiques* 16 (2005): 187-192.

⁷⁵ The American Optical Company and Scovill were among the manufacturers of cyclist cameras, see for example “Mignon Bicyclists' Camera by the American Optical Company; c. 1886,” *Collector's Weekly*, accessed August 10, 2017, <http://www.collectorsweekly.com/stories/94699-mignon-bicyclists-camera-by-the-ameri>. See also *How to Make Photographs and a Descriptive Price List* (New York: The Scovill & Adams Company, 1890), 39.

⁷⁶ W.B. Tyler, “The Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association,” *The Photographic Times and American Photographer* 16 (1886): 175; W.B. Tyler, “Exhibition,” 270; local newspapers estimated attendance for the first night of the exhibition at about 450, see “Amateur Photographers,” *Daily Alta California*, April 7, 1886, 8.

local press, reveals the particular receptivity to the amateurs' works by the community:

[...] one lingers longest over landscapes, dear and familiar to every Californian, of rounded hills dotted with clumps of live oaks, pierced with streams which are fringed with sycamore and alder, over views of the bold Russian river scenery and clear pictures of deep chaparral covered canyons, which seem the sides of our giant snow sprinkled Sierras.⁷⁷

The identification of local scenery in aesthetic rendering, calling forth a poetic response and a sense of belonging, echoes Sailor's argument of the appeal of local views for local publics. The celebration of collectively identifiable subject matter and the particular response of the public became more marked over the course of the four successive annual exhibitions until 1891.

On the occasion of the third annual exhibition in 1888, president Treat reflected on the progress made by the Association which was especially due to "the interchange of ideas that comes from a union of interests."⁷⁸ These unified efforts were also more widely praised by the local press which covered the exhibition in great detail. Paying attention to "artistic conception and excellence of finish," reports in the *Daily Alta California* listed the entire range of printing processes to be studied at the exhibition, expecting the public to appreciate the values of silver printing, plain salted paper or gelatin-bromides in much the same manner as earlier professional associations demanded locals to make out a "good" photograph. Furthermore, the report declared the receptions held at the PCAPA rooms "a decided success artistically and socially" due to the large audience attendance, underlining the importance of informal exchanges with the local public. Throughout the detailed coverage, the relevance of the local practice was stressed, finishing with the affirmation that "[i]n California climatic conditions, beauty of landscape and general picturesqueness of scenery all greatly favor the work of the camera."⁷⁹

While Treat and his associates constantly reached out to new members (the number of participants had risen to 70 by 1888), they also strengthened their ties to the local public at large. This connection was established not only through annual exhibitions, but also through more regular lantern slide lectures at the headquarters. Within amateur associations, lantern slide shows allowed to develop "collective image criticism." Since the lantern projected images onto a large screen, the visual experience was collectively and simultaneously experienced by the members. This constituted an advantage for providing immediate critique on the part of all members on technical and aesthetic aspects of the photographic work. When conceived in the shape of a set of views made by one society, lantern slide series were a valuable tool to assess the progress made by other societies.⁸⁰ In its

⁷⁷ Anonymous letter dated April 13, 1886, copy in Palmquist Collection (Box 212).

⁷⁸ Treat, "Third Annual Exhibition of the PCAPA," 1.

⁷⁹ "Caught by the Camera," *Daily Alta California*, December 11, 1888, 8; "The Amateur Photographers," *Daily Alta California*, December 12, 1888, 1.

⁸⁰ Jens Ruchatz, *Licht und Wahrheit: Eine Mediumsgeschichte der Fotografischen Projektion* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2003), 272-282.

ambition to reach out to other amateur circles, the PCAPA subscribed to the American Lantern Slide Interchange, an exchange network launched by the Society of Amateur Photographers of New York in 1885.⁸¹ Participation in the Interchange implied the collective preparation of a slide set which would be mailed to other clubs in the country, accompanied by a lecture to be read, and a short evaluation by the viewing clubs, oftentimes published in the *American Amateur Photographer*. As this mode of projection preceded the halftone process, it presented a useful means to circulate works on a national level and to consolidate exchange among Pictorialist societies.⁸²

Instead of furnishing verbal coverage in the shape of monthly reports, the members could thus assemble their collective material accomplishments. In the framework of camera club exchange, they constituted valuable tools to forge a characteristic local practice. In this, the combined format of text and image was particularly fruitful: Even if members did not assist the staging of their lectures in other cities, they were still in charge of the dissemination process by furnishing carefully orchestrated sequences that merged entertainment and instruction. Sets often included detailed typescripts that reproduced not only the text, but also specified when to switch to the next frame and where to pause. These exact guidelines allowed for an almost identical staging of the narrative in numerous locations which the contributing photographers themselves would not have reached otherwise.⁸³ With regard to content, the circulated sets often reproduced points of interest and, in this, served local as well as nation-wide promotion. Reinforcing both “civic pride and congenial club rivalry,”⁸⁴ they were promising instruments in the national network of aspiring photographers.

With regard to the particular context of the American West and its thriving image-production, Martha Sandweiss has argued that lantern slide lectures, in their “blend” of “art and literary narrative,” had a profound impact on “public perceptions of the West for more than half a century.”⁸⁵ Especially for the geographically isolated Californian photographers, the sets served as a tool to formulate a local narrative and style. Through the choice of camera club venues throughout the country, it would be ensured that the visual narrative was performed in an aesthetically sensitive environment. By circulating the set through the Interchange, local photographers could reach broader audiences while still ensuring the purposeful application of their narrative, that is, its display in a venue that advocated photography as an art form. If the circulation of these sets within club circles then contributed to the creation of a unified Pictorialist style, it similarly represented an attractive event within local

⁸¹ Davis, *An American Century*, 43.

⁸² Greenough, “‘Of Charming Glens’,” 270-271; for a recent discussion of the popularity of lantern slide lectures in camera clubs, see Nathalie Boulouch, “Figurez-vous un écran... : La photographie projetée autour de 1900,” in *Diapositive: Histoire de la Photographie Projetée*, eds. Anne Lacoste et al. (Lausanne and Paris: Musée de l'Elysée and Les Éditions Noir sur Blanc, 2017), 162-175.

⁸³ See Robert P. Spindler, “Windows to the American Past: Lantern Slides as Historic Evidence,” in *Art History Through the Camera's Lens*, ed. Helene E. Roberts (Philadelphia: Gordon and Breach Publishers, 1995), 133, 136-139, 143.

⁸⁴ Greenough, “‘Of Charming Glens’,” 271.

⁸⁵ Martha A. Sandweiss, “Views and Reviews: Western Art and Western History,” 196.

communities through the collective experience of large-scale imagery and the celebration of well-known locations.

An example of such a collectively elaborated visual narrative can be found in the PCAPA's Interchange submission "Glimpses of California."⁸⁶ Produced between 1889 and 1890, it displayed the fruits of the promoted outdoor agenda and the regular "field days" undertaken by members (**fig. 2.9**). As the result of outings to notable locations in and around San Francisco, the sequence of 100 images constituted a collective effort to produce representative views of the amateurs' work in the state. Since the projection of these sets had become highly popular in the later years of the 1880s, the preparation of new sets was regularly mentioned in local newspapers. "Glimpses of California" was conceived as a lecture accompanied by a typescript, in this case covering the state's landscape, its flora and fauna, agriculture and mining businesses, views of San Francisco's Chinatown and the railroad patrons' mansions on Nob Hill, as well as several campus views from the University of California at Berkeley (UCB). The typescript indicated a list of thirteen destinations to which it was to be sent, including Boston, Washington, D.C., Rochester, Newark, Brooklyn, Syracuse, and St. Louis, remaining between two and three weeks at each.

Oliver and Lowden contributed to the set with images of the big trees and local agriculture (**fig. 2.10**, **fig. 2.11**). Produced in a period when the lumber industry was thriving, depictions of men felling of a big tree – a sequoia – implied "human mastery" of the grand Western landscape. The "audacious confrontation with venerable sequoias," as Lori Vermaas has termed these scenarios, became a symbol of a prosperous future in which the population would master the environment.⁸⁷ Notions of prosperity and masculinity were further upheld in the lecture by images of hydraulic mining (**fig. 2.12**). As the state's early industry and an economically attractive feature, the history of mining was briefly touched upon. It contrasted the early days "when fortunes were gained in a day" with more efficient technologies like hydraulic mining that allowed workers to "[tear] away thousands of tons of material daily."⁸⁸ The figure that loomed large in this historical portrayal was the miner – or the pioneer. As San Francisco's "unofficial city symbol," he constituted "the most ubiquitous image" in the cultural environment of the late nineteenth century. While not all locals were ancestors of the generation of 1849, they would still identify with "the pioneer" as he embodied the

⁸⁶ "Glimpses of California. By the Members of the Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association," Oliver Family Photograph Collection, (BANC 1960.010 Ser. 2 :2115--PIC), the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. The set of images cannot be consulted in a coherent archival format but is dispersed over at least two pictorial collections. While the Oliver Collection holds the original typescript as well as some ten slides, a collection of lantern slides of the California Camera Club (held by the Los Angeles Public Library) has some other fifteen slides which are identifiable as part of the PCAPA set.

⁸⁷ Lori Vermaas, *Sequoia: The Heralded Tree in American Art and Culture* (Washington: Smithsonian Books, 2003), 97-99. See also Figueiredo Couto, "Du Monumentalised à l'Écologie," 243-246.

⁸⁸ "Glimpses of California. By the Members of the Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association," 14-16.

entrepreneurial, self-reliant spirit of the city and the promise of prosperity.⁸⁹ To portray the tradition of pioneering enterprise, the lecture also showed the railroad patrons' mansions on Nob Hill. It pointed out especially Leland Stanford's residence which housed an art collection at an estimated worth of three million dollars.⁹⁰ Again, here, the coalition of economic prowess and artistic appreciation worked in tandem to showcase a refined local culture.

The sequence shifted back and forth between allusions to the bygone pioneer days and images of scientific invention and progress. As a narrative stream, these representations provided a dense overview of the state's past and its possible futures. Oliver contributed to the glorifying technological part of the set through a series of images taken at UCB's Lick Observatory in San Jose. The site was introduced through biographical detail concerning James Lick, who had died in 1876 and was considered the richest man of the state at the time. Praising his dedication to the local community and the instruction of the sciences, the members specified that Lick had donated half a million dollar to the Society of California Pioneers before his death. The Observatory was then introduced through an image that showed its position atop Mount Hamilton (**fig. 2.13**). The members suggested that during sunset, the Observatory "look[ed] like some ancient castle." Its interior housed what was at the time the largest telescope in the world – a fact that was emphasized in the lecture (**fig. 2.14**). Eager to insert themselves into this historical and yet progressive institution, the members recounted their collaboration with the staff of the Observatory on the occasion of a solar eclipse. On the day of the eclipse late in 1888, they formed an excursion party equipped with "30 cameras in two rows, with photographers, assistants, recorders and assistants."⁹¹ As President of the PCAPA, Treat was most proud of this collaboration. His correspondence includes a speech given at the Association in which he underlined "the services which amateurs may render to science" and encouraged members to participate in such excursions (**fig. 2.15**). This form of collaboration was reinforced by invitations made to professors of the Observatory and the UCB to give lectures on astronomy and photography, which were accessible to the public.⁹²

Reports by other clubs in the *American Amateur Photographer* briefly described the set as "one of the best series" in the Interchange,⁹³ and the response by local publics in Eastern cities gathered from newspapers was even more enthusiastic. In Washington, D.C., for instance, the lecture was

⁸⁹ Ron Robin, *Signs of Change: Urban Iconographies in San Francisco, 1880-1915*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 11-13.

⁹⁰ "Glimpses of California. By the Members of the Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association," 39.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 27-30.

⁹² Archibald J. Treat, "Amateur Photography as an Assistant to Astronomy," 1 (Archibald J. Treat Papers, CHS); see also Archibald J. Treat, "P.C.A.P.A. Eclipse Expedition to Cloverdale, S.F., Dec. 26th, 1888" (Archibald J. Treat Papers, CHS). Regular announcements of lectures were published among others in the *Daily Alta California*, here February 8, 1889, for a lecture on by Professor E.S. Holden from the Lick Observatory.

⁹³ "The Chicago Camera Club," *American Amateur Photographer* 2 (1890): 240.

praised for the photographers' "distinct style," that was "different from the hackneyed sort."⁹⁴ This critical recognition seems to echo what Avery had envisioned in the *Overland Monthly* two decades earlier as the "privilege" of "resident artists" of California, who would "first translate the meanings that lurk in all the exquisite tints and shapes of our unhackneyed scenery [...] and to help elevate the tastes of its people."⁹⁵ The narrative produced by the resident photographers therefore responded not only to the quest of elevating photography, but more importantly served as a means to circulate sophisticated local works. This degree of sophistication would be achieved through the incorporation of local subject matter and its destined trajectory from West to East. The itinerary of these images and their reception in the East points to the appeal and promise of the Western landscape on which Californian amateurs – like their professional colleagues – could base their practice.

Both the circulation of lantern slides within the nationwide photo-club network and the textual content targeting a specific interpretation of the images then worked toward a legitimization of the Californian photographers' work. In this dissemination on a national scale, the combination of local landscape aesthetics with a narrative of pioneer advancement moved beyond the Pictorialist theme of elevating the medium. The production of aesthetically pleasing images rather constituted a new method of distributing a meaningful local narrative on a national stage. The diverse channels of communication for Pictorialist societies, notably the lantern slide lectures which reached local publics at large, provided a platform for the Californian images to perform the desired narrative of progress through which the region was to be connected to the nation. This distinctive regional aesthetic and its discourse were integrated by amateur circles first and foremost through their local ties. The engagement with local subject matter in outings, the sponsorship by San Francisco's cultural institutions, as well as the exchanges among the local public coalesced in the shaping of a distinctly Californian artistic canon.

The PCAPA contributed to this canon by staging its activities in the city's cultural venues and by showing an awareness of the historical precedents of photographic practice in the state. The main impetus in this practice was the relationship forged with the Californian landscape, through a regular and increasingly accessible out-of-doors practice. Since the dry plate process was especially adapted for taking photographs outside, the landscape became a preferred motif for amateur clubs at large. For many, the "preoccupation with evocative landscapes and sentimental scenes" constituted an integral part of the Pictorialist agenda.⁹⁶ In San Francisco, however, there had been a longstanding tradition of landscape view production, due to the local demand and commercial appeal outlined in the previous chapter. These landscape sceneries had been enriched by a discourse which resonated

⁹⁴ "A Syndicate of Photographers," *Evening Star*, October 4, 1890, 9.

⁹⁵ Avery, "Art Beginnings on the Pacific II," 119.

⁹⁶ Griffin, "Amateur Photography and Pictorial Aesthetics," 151; Greenough, "'Of Charming Glens,'" 266.

with the abundance and prosperity that the images evoked. The emergence of amateur collectives, who sought to turn these “pictures” into “views” through a painterly approach to the photographic medium,⁹⁷ then took the evocative discourse on the Californian landscape to a new, culturally conscious level.

As Treat stated in front of members during the PCAPA’s annual dinner of March 1889:

[G]entlemen, we live in a land of milk and honey, the adopted home of the orange, the olive and the vine, and the birthplace of beautiful women. As it is the acknowledged home of a generosity that is the prized inheritance of the spirit of ‘49 so it should be the home of art, which depends upon generous patronage. To the North we have the snowy mountains of Switzerland and to the South the cloudless skies of sunny Italy. Under their influence should be fostered a people of poets, of writers and of artists. Photography is a sister to the fine arts. We are engaged in the good work of lifting her from the common place and placing her upon a higher plane.⁹⁸

Like Avery, Treat envisioned the medium’s elevation to the fine arts through a deeply conscious study of the region and its artistic potential. By the same token, the comparison of the Californian landscape to Mediterranean and Alpine vistas of established European canons was used to ennoble the state as a whole. Its designation as a place which provided favorable conditions for the cultivation of any artistic endeavor then applied not only to photography. Rather, it was used as a means to shape a Californian subject matter with which practitioners could identify. Pronounced in the year of photography’s fiftieth anniversary and during the fortieth anniversary of California’s admission to the Union, the statement echoed a distinctive local event, referred to here as “the spirit of ‘49.” The Gold Rush of 1849 was taken, as we have seen, as a hallmark for defining the Western community and its pioneering ventures in territories which had been unknown to the rest of the nation. In this narrative conception, as suggested by Janet Buerger, “near-religious expectations” would become attached to the Western landscape and its inhabitants. Treat’s notion of California as an Edenic setting, “a land of milk and honey,” taps into this representation of a “new American Arcadia.” In the creation of this myth, “the participation of man as a determinant for society” was required – not only for founding settlements but also for upholding the fabricated discourse. The subsequent internalization of the myth was expressed by the local photographers in the shape of a pioneer narrative of artistic practice in the territories of the West.⁹⁹ In this mythical setting, then, the “good work” of the photographers for elevating region and medium became a noble undertaking resonating with a pioneer work ethic. This “spirit of ‘49,” as an animating principle, would trigger the practice of the photographers in the remote territory of the Pacific Coast. As the mining outposts, among which San Francisco, had been considered cultural backwaters for a long time, the continuing quest to portray it as a respectable

⁹⁷ Griffin, “Amateur Photography and Pictorial Aesthetics,” 133.

⁹⁸ Archibald J. Treat, “Annual Dinner of the P.C.A.P.A., March 8th, 1889,” 2 (Archibald J. Treat Papers, CHS).

⁹⁹ Janet E. Buerger, “Ultima Thule: American Myth, Frontier, and the Artist-Priest in Early American Photography,” *American Art* 6, no. 1 (1992): 83-87, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3109048>.

cultivated community is tangible in Treat's words.

As shown in Treat's retrospective remarks at the beginning of this chapter, the embrace of Californian "masters" was a key element in the broader search for recognition. Since Virgil Williams' membership in the PCAPA and his sponsorship of the first annual exhibition "was a revelation to most amateurs," his works were closely studied by the group.¹⁰⁰ Having traveled to the Yosemite with artists Albert Bierstadt, William Keith, and photographer Carleton Watkins on several occasions in the mid 1860s, Williams provided the amateur association with valuable insights on artistic work in the region.¹⁰¹ Alongside his close relationship with the region's foremost photographers and artists, Williams had become director of the SFAA by 1874 and was very much appreciated as a teacher. Having studied in Rome, he embodied an ideal combination of vigorous outdoor practice and academic sophistication.¹⁰² These specific elements of his career and style could further enrich the Mediterranean vista of the state that not only photographers and artists, but also writers and boosters had sought to emphasize since the mid nineteenth century.¹⁰³

When the painter died in late 1886, Treat paid him homage in a PCAPA meeting. Williams had given a lecture at the PCAPA earlier that year on "composition in photography" and was praised for providing substantial support: "By his teachings and guidance we would ultimately have been able to so elevate photography that as an association we would have become renown [sic] for the excellence of the artistic work produced."¹⁰⁴ Williams' international experience and didactic approach as a teacher – which he shared with amateur photographers – was also what had made the California School of Design, according to Treat, "well known throughout this country and in the studios of the old world."¹⁰⁵ In stressing Williams' influence and aligning with his artistic legacy, the amateurs inserted themselves in the canon of art produced in California. The thus established continuity in the local art scene, through an exchange between "resident" painters and photographers, was the main argument for making photography a branch of the fine arts. The inspiration furnished by the landscape was not only stressed by photographers but subsequently endorsed by the local press, which, as we have seen, often reported in great length on the PCAPA's activities. In taking up Treat's discourse on Williams, or the artistic potential of the Pacific Coast displayed in annual exhibitions, the press

¹⁰⁰ See review of first annual exhibition, W.B. Tyler, "Exhibition," 270. Treat encouraged photographers to "follow in the wake of the masters of the brush," an idea he further elaborated in his article "Impressionism in Photography," given as a lecture before the PCAPA and published in the *American Amateur Photographer* 3 (1891): 1-7.

¹⁰¹ Williams went to Yosemite at least twice, in 1863 and 1865, see Kate Neapass Oden, "Sublime Vistas and Scenic Backdrops: Nineteenth-century Painters and Photographers at Yosemite," in *Yosemite and Sequoia: A Century of California National Parks*, eds. Richard J. Orsi et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 52-55.

¹⁰² Harvey L. Jones, "Landscape Painters of Northern California, 1870-1930," in *Impressions of California: Early Currents in Art, 1850-1930*, ed. Jean Stern (Irvine: The Irvine Museum, 1996), 55-56, 61-62.

¹⁰³ For a discussion of California as "American Mediterranean," see Starr, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915*, 365-414.

¹⁰⁴ Archibald J. Treat, "Address before the P.C.A.P.A. by Mr. A.J. Treat on the death of Mr. Virgil Williams, at the regular meeting January 4th, 1887," 3 (Archibald J. Treat Papers, CHS).

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

became a vital distribution platform for a local identification with this artistic canon.¹⁰⁶

On an organizational level, the PCAPA also made use of the local infrastructure to enrich its practice. As an example, in the first and only publication of the Association in 1887, the *Pacific Coast Amateur Photographer*, president George Tasheira indicated that dark rooms had been made available for photographers at the Hotel del Monte in Monterey.¹⁰⁷ This announcement – far from uncommon in a period of rising tourist industries – must be seen, however, in the continuity of sponsorship for culture and leisure by the corporate elites of the West Coast. The Hotel del Monte, one of the first “luxury resorts” in California, had been constructed by Charles Crocker for the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1880 and would become an exhibition venue for local artists and photographers in the early twentieth century.¹⁰⁸ By the late 1880s it had already become a major attraction and extensively covered by local photographers, among whom Watkins, Taber, and Tibbitts. Their images of the Hotel’s ostentatious interior and gardens were included in the promotional guide *Pacific Coast Souvenir* alongside views of the Yosemite and cities on the coast. Most notably, the guide started with an engraved reproduction of the 1869 ceremony of Eastern and Western railroad tracks joining at Promontory – implying that the visual journey to follow could be completed on the Western lines.¹⁰⁹

As much as the bicycle had been championed by photographers in the annual exhibition of 1886, by the late nineteenth century, it was the local railroad companies and their connection to leisure activities which dominated outings and the photographers’ experience of the landscape. The Southern Pacific, which had been absorbed by the Big Four from a former San Francisco-San Jose railway in 1868, would become a separate enterprise in 1884, managed by Collis P. Huntington and later by Leland Stanford. Taken together, the Central and Southern Pacific represented “an unrivaled western railroad empire” by the late 1880s. With its headquarters in San Francisco and entrepreneurial origins in California, it was the only company operating from West to East and, in this, took on a symbolic value.¹¹⁰ Given the involvement of the patrons in the city’s cultural scene, the symbolic worth of a Californian-born enterprise was transferred onto the sponsored events. As reflected in the promotional discourses of San Francisco’s institutions, the patrons’ involvement in the cultural life of the city, and the reduced fares for photographers touring the West in the 1870s, the railroad exerted a continued impact on social life in the city. The corporate impact on social organization made the railroad part of the “aesthetic journey” through the West.¹¹¹ The promise of access to this landscape was

¹⁰⁶ See *Daily Alta California* review of the third annual exhibition in December 1888 (“Caught by the Camera”), used also as epigraph to Part I.

¹⁰⁷ *Pacific Coast Amateur Photographer* 1, no. 1 (1887): n.p., copy in Palmquist Collection (Box 212).

¹⁰⁸ See “Hotel del Monte, Monterey,” California Views: The Pat Hathaway Photo Collection, accessed December 10, 2016, <http://caviews.com/delmonte.htm>.

¹⁰⁹ See E. McD. Johnston, *Pacific Coast Souvenir* (Oakland: E.S. Denison, 1888).

¹¹⁰ Orsi, *Sunset Limited*, 19-24.

¹¹¹ Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 19.

complemented by a growing leisure agenda that amateur photographers were eager to explore.

In these cultural and corporate endeavors, the “conscious display of philanthropy,” as explained in the previous chapter, remained an important part of the patrons’ agenda.¹¹² The sponsoring of learning institutions, such as Mark Hopkins’ mansion given to the UCB as an art institute in 1893, or the construction of Stanford University in the 1880s, represent occasions in which local photographers – also ‘amateurs’ according to PCAPA standards – became an active part of the promotional machinery. To pick up an example given at the beginning of this chapter: While it is not clear whether Treat’s photographic reports on the construction of the Stanford campus in Palo Alto circulated within amateur circles or beyond, they do illustrate the continued connection between investors and photographers, be they professional or amateur. Importantly, the series of views produced in 1886 (the year that Treat joined the PCAPA), include a panorama of the future site of the university (**fig 2.16**). The mapped-out territory, whose horizontal reach offered a glimpse of what the future campus would become, was just as appealing to its commissioner as the panorama taken on Nob Hill a decade earlier. The sight of an uninhabited landscape on the outskirts of Santa Clara Valley was particularly appreciated by Stanford, as Treat remembered in the later correspondence with his friend Tibbitts. The patron acknowledged the panorama as a confirmation of his preferred emplacement for the future campus by stating: “Let us follow the old padres; they always picked a plateau so that they could enlarge their buildings.”¹¹³

The architectural style of the university buildings was inspired by the Franciscan missions of California, erected between 1769 and 1833 as part of the Spanish conquest. By the late nineteenth century, the Stanford couple became interested in preserving these structures. Their choice of emplacement for the campus echoed the “padres” strategies.¹¹⁴ When the campus was constructed, they furthermore expressed a “desire for permanence, solidity, and the weight of history,” which would reinforce the institution’s standing.¹¹⁵ Treat’s panorama anticipated such permanent historical grandeur. The idea of populating the vacant landscape with these architectural structures spurred the patron’s ambition to combine natural vistas with progressive civilization. Peter Hales, in an analysis of construction site panoramas, has characterized such images as an efficient method “to invest the everyday work of construction.” They could communicate “cultural import by setting [the future building] within the context of grand [...] public works of the past.”¹¹⁶ This collaboration between Treat, Stanford, and his architects, points to the important role of local photographers in producing images which envisioned a promising future for the region. These images then also provided a

¹¹² Ibid., 145.

¹¹³ Leland Stanford quoted in Treat to Tibbitts, 5.

¹¹⁴ Osborne, *Museum Builders in the West*, 62. For the history and re-appreciation of missions in California and their attraction to local photographers, see Part II.

¹¹⁵ Ott, *Manufacturing the Modern Patron*, 233.

¹¹⁶ Hales, *Silver Cities*, 224.

possibility to insert the local geography in an historical tradition, be it the “spirit” of the Gold Rush or the legacy of Spanish missionaries.

As these numerous examples of local production, reception, and dissemination show, the Californian amateurs walked a thin line between the search for artistic recognition and the increasingly visual machinery of promotion and investment. Even though the collective production and exhibition of local views had a strong identity-shaping function for the community, as we have seen, its content was easily adaptable to commercial formats. At the same time, it appealed to photographers, local citizens, and investors in their history-making potential. In this process, the distinction between amateur and professional became more complicated by the close of the decade. On a technical level, the apparition of the first Kodak roll film camera in 1888, alongside an industry driven by the famous slogan “You push the button, we do the rest,” generated a surge of “ordinary” amateurs. The subsequent blurring of boundaries between dedicated and ordinary practitioners as well as the attractive marketization of photography put the carefully demarcated social position of amateur societies to the test,¹¹⁷ eventually bringing about the end of the PCAPA in late 1891.

In a period when the amateur supply market was rapidly developing, especially through Eastman Kodak, and advertisement started to target women as active practitioners, claims for female membership were made in the national photographic press.¹¹⁸ Highly alert to these announcements and not insensitive to calls for participation, the directors of the PCAPA sensed a need to reevaluate their conditions of membership for professional and female photographers by late 1889. While the former would not be accepted as full members until the very end, “lady members” were allowed to join by the spring of 1890 and some twenty would be added to the rollcall within a year.¹¹⁹ It is probable that this decision was not unanimously embraced, but also made out of necessity with regard to the rapid changes occurring within the photographic scene of San Francisco.

It is established, however, that by March 5, 1890 – exactly seven years after the PCAPA’s incorporation – a new collective association of photographers appeared in the city: The California Camera Club (CCC) was founded by George W. Reed, former PCAPA vice-president under Treat. This organization deliberately included professional *and* female practitioners, as well as beginners willing to take up photography. Under Reed’s initiative to impose “no restriction upon the members as to the disposition of their work,” the Club reached out to professionals and counted Treat’s friend

¹¹⁷ Brunet, *La Naissance de l’Idée de Photographie*, 214.

¹¹⁸ See for example the widely cited essay, Catherine Weed Barnes, “Why Ladies should be admitted to Membership in Photographic Societies,” *American Amateur Photographer* 1 (1889): 223-224.

¹¹⁹ The discussion on changes in the PCAPA’s constitution can be traced in the monthly reports, see A.J. Treat, “The Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association,” *Anthony’s Photographic Bulletin* 20 (1889): 408. By April 1890, the *San Francisco Call* reported on the work of female members of the PCAPA, judging the decision to include them as “a move in the right direction,” see “Camera Art,” *San Francisco Call*, April 8, 1890, 2. See also, Peter E. Palmquist, “Women Photographers in Nineteenth-Century California (USA) – An Overview,” *Photoresearcher* 2 (1991): 16.

and Southern Pacific photographer Howard C. Tibbitts among its earliest members.¹²⁰ In the first nation-wide announcement of the Club's foundation in the *American Amateur Photographer*, mention was made of the preparation of an illustrated lecture entitled "In and About San Francisco" – an engagement that points to the continuation of a territorial approach.¹²¹ As opposed to the PCAPA, however, the CCC would be able to substantially increase the production of such views through the extension of its membership to local professionals. Although Reed was never a professional, he had been excluded from the PCAPA for selling one of his photographs of the Golden Gate as a photogravure ("copied by Goupil of Paris") and as an engraving which "had an extensive sale" (**fig 2.17**).¹²² When exhibited at the third annual exhibition of the PCAPA in 1888, Reed's marine views, comparable to the one over which the dispute began, had been praised by the local press as "most excellent" in "handling cloud and water effects."¹²³ After having served in the National Guard in his early adulthood, Reed had set up "a large business" as a custom-house broker, which gave him the necessary time and money to practice photography.¹²⁴ The locations covered in a private album by Reed of the late 1880s reveal his comfortable situation, with regular jaunts to the Hotel del Monte in Monterey (**fig 2.18**). Despite his access to the well-equipped rooms of the PCAPA, Reed had his own private dark room – a "corner" of which is shown in the album (**fig. 2.19**). He was known among his photographic comrades for being "interested in photographic chemistry and tak[ing] special pleasure in the making of lantern slides" – a dedication which becomes tangible in the depicted equipment.¹²⁵

While Reed's resignation and the subsequent foundation of the California Camera Club did not lead to the end of the PCAPA, the appearance of a second, more broadly oriented photographic society was problematic to the existence of the strictly organized amateur Association. When the latter eventually decided to disband in November 1891, it was remembered for its "artistic excellence" and Treat was explicitly praised by the local press for his dedication ("Probably no man did more for the association than Archie Treat"). However, it was also assumed that the organizational principles "regarding the sale of prints[,] was too old-fashioned," and that due to the exclusion of professionals "little new material was coming into the society."¹²⁶ Treat publicly responded to the criticism labeled at the strict organizational principles:

¹²⁰ "The California Camera Club," *American Amateur Photographer* 2 (1890): 201.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² "George W. Reed," *Pacific Coast Photographer* 1, no. 2 (1892): 25. See also Wilson, "Northern California: The Heart of the Storm," 5. I am deeply thankful to Dennis Reed, co-editor with Wilson of *Pictorialism in California* (1994), for sharing his personal photograph collection with me and allowing me to use and reproduce the information retrieved from his archive.

¹²³ "Caught by the Camera," 8.

¹²⁴ "George W. Reed," 24-25.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ "Amateur Photography: The Collapse of the Pacific Association," *Monterey Wave*, November 14, 1891, n.p., copy from Palmquist Collection (Box 212).

There were no printing houses where one could have prints made by the hundred; no place entirely devoted to the development of plates. There were no [K]odaks, but, strangely enough, there was a great deal of individual skill, for the amateur was able to perform each of the various operations necessary to the making of a perfect photograph. [...] [I]t was held that it was beneath the dignity of the gentlemen who composed it to sell their work; that it was not fair to compete with those who depended on their art for a livelihood [sic]. Was this high standard one of the faults? The association lived up to its pretensions, materially aided to advance photography, and during the many years of its existence never had a quarrel among its members.¹²⁷

The insistence on the inventiveness of the members echoes his earlier mentioned discourse on Californian photographers inheriting the “spirit of ‘49.” It resonates with the distant position of the members from other photographic networks which was turned into an advantage for exploring the medium and its possibilities. Despite his statement on the absence of disputes within the Association, Treat’s emphasis on the detachment from commercial goals as a guarantee for sophisticated production implicitly reveals what had been the cause of a major quarrel with Reed. This “noble” character of the practice, detached from blatant commercialism, had been outlined already by the professional associations of 1866 and 1875. They had considered it a necessity so as to not “bring the profession of Photography into public disgrace.”¹²⁸ For the amateurs, who consolidated their social position through the pursuit of a dedicated leisure practice and sought to elevate the medium, this non-commercial commitment was an indispensable standard. Yet, since the PCAPA had always been respectful vis-à-vis the professionals of the city, Treat and other former members of the PCAPA decided to show equal consideration for the CCC – which many joined after the definite disbanding of the Association in late 1891.¹²⁹

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Since the majority of the Association joined the more loosely organized Club after 1891, the definition of the “amateur” label demands reevaluation. It is certain that by early 1890, the amateur designation had come under scrutiny due to the wave of ordinary practitioners attracted by easily manageable Kodak products. If we measure the PCAPA’s dedication by the formerly laid out criteria for amateur practice – that is, a zealous effort in perfecting the works, the rejection of professional contracts, and a profound knowledge of the history of the practice, – it can be stated that the Association remained loyal to its principles until the very end. Identified as “skillful workers and learned in the history and detail of photography,”¹³⁰ the members indeed manifested historical

¹²⁷ Archibald J. Treat, “Some Facts Regarding the Pacific Association,” *Monterey Wave*, November 16, 1891, n.p., copy in Palmquist Collection (Box 212).

¹²⁸ See *Constitution of the San Francisco Photographic Artists’ Association*, 16.

¹²⁹ “The California Camera Club,” *American Amateur Photographer* 4 (1892): 79, announces forty members of former PCAPA joining the CCC. According to Treat’s statement in the *Monterey Wave*, the PCAPA had some sixty members before disbanding in late 1891.

¹³⁰ “Amateur Photography: The Collapse of the Pacific Association,” n.p.

sensibilities concerning the development of the medium in the state. As part of their appreciation of the pioneering “spirit,” they had even organized a special lecture by their oldest member, daguerreotypist George D. Dornin. He showed the daguerreotype process and “gave some very interesting reminiscences of photography in the mining camps in the early days of California.”¹³¹

The interest in the history of the medium and its application in the local context was maintained until the PCAPA disbanded. As a last act of appreciation for the history of photographic practice in the region, the members donated a daguerreotype panorama of San Francisco of the early 1850s to the Society of California Pioneers. While the maker of the daguerreotype series remained anonymous and its subsequent uses in the Society’s collection are unknown, it is clear that it had been stored in the PCAPA’s rooms. At the moment of disbanding, it was considered “more suitably placed” in the Society of California Pioneers “than anywhere else,” since the institution preserved documents relating to the early history of the state (**fig. 2.20, fig. 2.21**).¹³² The purposeful contribution of a photographic object to a local collection reveals the photographers’ strivings as a social organization. Much like the historical institution which sought to formulate a “collectively remembered past” and to shape “an “idealized pioneer history,” the photographers were sensitive to the creation of a “shared” local memory.¹³³ Not only through their lectures, exhibitions, and speeches, but also through their archival residue did they attempt to leave an imprint on the community and its visual history.

If, for amateur photographers of the 1880s, it was considered essential to shape “a medium with a history” in order to “provide a sense of maturity,”¹³⁴ as with any fine art practice, the PCAPA’s archival donation as well as its preoccupation with anterior photographic processes contributed to this establishment of a historicized practice of photography. As Elizabeth Edwards has underlined, amateur practice formulated “historical imagination and historical desire [...] through the values of photography itself,”¹³⁵ in this case by attributing the medium with truthfulness and using it as a vehicle to formulate both a mythological history of settlement and a promising future. Through early daguerreotypes, the marketization of images, and the development of a local artistic canon, the medium had assisted in the envisioning of the community from the start. In these precedents, the amateurs found both objects and objectives to infuse their practice with a sense of maturity. Since the photographs produced in the American West had been deeply embedded in the “American historical imagination” by what was considered an “epic story of [...] settlement of the Western half of the continent,”¹³⁶ the San Franciscan photographers demonstrated a keen awareness of the history-

¹³¹ George Knight White, “The Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association,” *Anthony’s Photographic Bulletin* 21 (1890): 601. For further information on Dornin see Palmquist and Kailbourn, *Pioneer Photographers*, 205-207.

¹³² George Knight White, letter to the Society of California Pioneers, November 30, 1891 (California Historical Society).

¹³³ For information on pioneer societies throughout the West, see Clyde A. Milner II., “The View from Wisdom: Four Layers of History and Regional Identity,” in *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America’s Western Past*, 213-215.

¹³⁴ Greenough, ““Of Charming Glens,”” 259.

¹³⁵ Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 79-80.

¹³⁶ Sandweiss, *Print the Legend*, 13.

making process in which they were involved. Photography – in serving as a tool to represent the community and to inscribe the region into national history – then became a larger community activity in the quest for legitimacy. The organization of the more inclusive California Camera Club that shed a strict amateur/professional distinction, spurred this search for recognition in reaching out to both photographic as well as public stages of distribution. Since, according to newspapers, the Californian surroundings “favor[ed] the work of the camera,”¹³⁷ a more diversified group of practitioners from the CCC would set out to rearticulate the characteristics of this local style.

¹³⁷ “Caught by the Camera,” 8.

Chapter 3

The California Camera Club: the onset of a collective territorial approach, 1890-1900

The last two decades of the nineteenth century have oftentimes been defined as a period in which the division between professionals, serious amateurs, and ordinary photographers became more stratified, especially due to the apparition of the first Kodak roll film camera in 1888. According to this understanding, two seemingly opposed kinds of non-professional photographers would emerge, being either ordinary amateurs – playfully exploring the outdoors and recording the family – or dedicated amateurs – operating within increasingly select club circles, culminating in the foundation of Stieglitz’s Photo-Secession in 1902.¹ When examining the specific context out which the California Camera Club emerged, it turns out that such a rigid distinction does not do justice to the riches and heterogeneity of the material produced in the first decade of its existence. Since the Club had defined its membership as all-embracing from the start, addressing professionals and welcoming beginners, its collective output resists the imposed classification of “professional,” “amateur,” “ordinary,” or even “Pictorialist.” Such an inclusive club model was far from exceptional during this period in the United States, as remarked by Keith Davis, who defined exclusive amateur associations as “unusual.”² Reed’s biographical sketch, published in the first magazine of the Club, *The Pacific Coast Photographer* (1892-1894), reveals that he had likewise struggled with this distinction when resigning from the PCAPA: “He was not a professional and the Amateur Association had decided that he was not an amateur.” After breaching the rules of the Association, he “[felt] lonely” and thus set out to form a new group of practitioners. Interestingly, the article declared his views of Californian scenery as the works that granted him the “first rank as a photographer, whether amateur or professional.”³ The collective practice of the California Camera Club must then be analyzed through this inclusive, locally anchored definition which in turns calls for a broader analytical approach.⁴ By transcending a formal analysis of Pictorialist aesthetics, we can work toward a sociocultural examination of photographic uses.

When considered from a historical perspective, the development of the medium in the late

¹ See Peter C. Bunnell, *A Photographic Vision: Pictorial Photography, 1889-1923* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, Inc., 1980); Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography from 1839 to the Present, completely revised an enlarged edition* (New York and Boston: The Museum of Modern Art and Little, Brown & Company, 1982); Janet E. Buerger, *The Last Decade: The Emergence of Art Photography in the 1890s* (Rochester: George Eastman House, 1984); Sternberger, *Between Amateur and Aesthete*; Clément Chéroux, “Le jeu des amateurs : l’expert et l’usager (1880-1910),” in *L’art de la photographie : des origines à nos jours*, eds. André Gunthert and Michel Poivert, 2nd ed. (Paris: Citadelles & Mazenod, 2016), 256-273. For criticism of this distinction, see Anne McCauley, “En dehors de l’art : La découverte de la photographie populaire, 1890-1936,” trans. Mathilde Leduc-Grimaldi, *Études Photographiques* 16 (2005): 50-73.

² Davis, *An American Century*, 43.

³ “George W. Reed,” 25.

⁴ For the first and only scholarly examination of the Club that takes these diverse involvements into account, see the introductory essay to the 1977 exhibition: Mann, ed., *California Pictorialism*, 7-29.

nineteenth century concerns less its legitimation as an art form, but rather a change in its cultural perception and social uses when being made accessible to larger parts of society. As François Brunet has demonstrated, the introduction of the Kodak reshaped the “social being of photography” and, in this, followed a commercial rather than an aesthetically uplifting agenda.⁵ At the same time, between 1889 and 1909, the industrial production of photographic supply increased at an annual growth of eleven percent, targeting ever-growing sections of the population and even exceeding professional demands.⁶ Although often portrayed as despised and ridiculed by “serious amateurs” for their popular slogan and mass-marketization, Eastman Kodak products were just as appealing and useful to dedicated amateur clubs – as the PCAPA’s regular receptions of Eastman’s agents show.⁷ By the 1890s, the amateurs’ mark of distinctiveness from ordinary “Kodakers” was thus less based on the apparatus than on a search for social demarcation, achieved through what Anne McCauley termed “artificial distinctions of taste and culture.”⁸ She derives this demarcation of differences from Veblen’s *Theory of the Leisure Class* in which such practices were designated as “conspicuous consumption,” that is, “a means of reputability to the gentleman of leisure.”⁹ Indeed, the purchase of photographic apparatus required a substantial amount of money – be it only the first Kodak kit which, on average, cost a month’s salary – and consequently the necessary time to devote to this hobby.¹⁰ According to Veblen, in order for this sophisticated consumption to perform its “opulence,” a group of like-minded practitioners was needed, collectively offering “valuable presents and expensive feasts and entertainments.” Through the increasing “needs of recreation and conviviality” in the late nineteenth century,¹¹ the congenial agenda of camera clubs proved a breeding ground for this kind of social demarcation through lectures and outings, with the camera as a useful, appropriating technology at hand.

With regard to the decade of the 1890s, it is through this lens of social demarcation – of class and privilege – that the persistence of the collective amateur designation within the California Camera Club needs to be understood. Although professional members were just as highly regarded, Club publications still oftentimes referred to members as amateurs. As much as the Pictorialist style included the perfecting of an artisanal approach to the medium, the amateur label corresponded to the practitioners’ need for collective identification as a community – as already envisioned by the PCAPA. It therefore should be considered less as a definition of the actual practice, but rather as a title with symbolic value – an “amateur ideology,” in the words of Keith Davis.¹² The symbolic

⁵ Translated from Brunet, *La Naissance de l’Idée de Photographie*, 233-238.

⁶ Griffin, “Amateur Photography and Pictorial Aesthetics,” 108-109.

⁷ Brunet, *La Naissance de l’Idée de Photographie*, 258-259.

⁸ Translated from McCauley, “En dehors de l’art,” 53.

⁹ Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, 75.

¹⁰ Brunet, *La Naissance de l’Idée de Photographie*, 236.

¹¹ Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, 75-76.

¹² Davis, *An American Century*, 37.

meaning of amateur practice reinforced the identity-shaping function of photography in California where, due to the geographic distance, a collective designation helped the community connect to a national network. The label also allowed the Club members to pursue the path of a Californian artistic canon, laid out by the PCAPA, without denigrating the medium through participation in commercial promotion. As has been remarked by Madelyn Moeller in her examination of female photographers in the nineteenth century, the amateur label was persistently used, even by “those with the most recognizable names,” such as Catherine Weed Barnes, in order to designate commitment and identify as “a lover of photography.”¹³ This shared identification as enthusiasts of the medium – whether commercial or professional – then served a two-fold goal in the Californian context: first, through the cultivation of an engaged practice, the amateur label functioned as a vehicle in attributing an “identity for photographic art,”¹⁴ and, in this case, one inspired by its local roots. Second, the search for new meaning and application of the medium as art, science, and history was expressed in the productions generated as a group. These texts and images then formulated “a localised sense of identity,” which attributed the practice specific functions.¹⁵

In doing away with a strict distinction between amateur and professional membership, the California Camera Club was able to considerably augment its photographic output. It came to attract a large and more diverse membership than the preceding Association. Subsequently, the Club sought to inscribe itself into a localized practice of art and identify as a group with a shared theme. Through the increased accessibility of photographic practice, and the establishment of regular platforms for exchange – in a local magazine, meetings, and public lectures – the members actively forged a group style. This chapter’s examination of the emergence of such a collectively embraced style must take into consideration the earlier discussed notion of an intellectual history of photography. As Barbara Rosenblum has demonstrated in her sociological analysis of photographic styles, “ideas about photography” are worth considering in that “they comprise a perceptual screen through which visual imagery is interpreted, organized, and created.” The produced images and their accompanying rhetoric are then “socially constructed” to the extent that they integrate a shared definition of photography by a particular group. Members of the Club, accordingly, must be seen as “carrier[s] of an acquired vision, which is partly determined by social structure”¹⁶ – the structure in this case being the network of photographers searching for legitimacy. In order to define a more precise style, the choice of the name California Camera Club – with a seemingly exclusive focus on the state rather

¹³ Madelyn Moeller, “Ladies of Leisure: Domestic Photography in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Hard at Play: Leisure in America, 1840-1940*, ed. Kathryn Grover (Amherst and Rochester: The University of Massachusetts Press and the Strong Museum, 1992), 156-157.

¹⁴ Sternberger, *Between Amateur and Aesthete*, 112.

¹⁵ Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 124.

¹⁶ Barbara Rosenblum, *Photographers at Work: A Sociology of Photographic Styles* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1978), 6, 19, 112.

than the Pacific Coast as a whole – can be seen as part of this identity-building agenda. Furthermore, the repetitive pronunciation of the consonant K in the Club’s name had a catchy resonance with conspicuous brand names like the Kodak. Even though the firm did not explicitly use the word ‘camera’ in its slogans, its advertisement strategy was to change “the social definition of photography,” and in this, the relationship to the camera.¹⁷ The Club jumped on a comparable bandwagon in formulating its practice as representative of a Western state and its population. Since the Club did not distinguish between amateur and professional, it also did away with the exclusivist “amateur” or “art” designation used by former societies.

This chapter then seeks to analyze the Club’s output in its first decade of existence and, as such, takes into account the emergence of a collective style spurred by the search for cultural and regional recognition. An attempt at precision in terms of designation and biography of the photographers – whether amateur or professional – will be made throughout the discussion, with the goal to draw a more complex picture of how the practice oscillated between the respectable image of amateurism and the utility of commercial dissemination. Collectively, the group will be referred to as the Club, as photographers or as practitioners – terms perhaps more neutral than the sweeping “amateur” label. An examination of the various productions of the Club members will be proposed in order to trace local expressions and national manifestations of the practice. A broad range of images and discourses produced in this ten-year chronology will be looked at, including an agenda of urban activities, the publication of the magazine *Pacific Coast Photographer*, the participation in the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition and the subsequent San Francisco Midwinter Fair of 1894, as well as a photographic documentation project of the University of California at Berkeley.

3.1 *The formative years: an outdoor agenda and the first Club publication*

The first announcement of the California Camera Club in the *San Francisco Call* of April 1890 indicated as its goal “to form a social, scientific and art center for photographers.”¹⁸ While its incorporators were male amateurs and professionals (Reed and Tibbitts among them), the constitution and by-laws of the Club, clearly set a more extrovert tone in nominating “[a]ny person, eighteen years of age or over, who is interested in photography, [...] eligible to membership.” Active membership was granted to men and women, and the latter could equally become associates as wives of active members. With an initiation fee of \$10 and annual dues of \$12 (totaling more than \$500 in today’s money – not to count the equipment), membership in the Club implied the degree of comfort and repute which Veblen had envisioned at the time.¹⁹ The *San Francisco Chronicle* remarked:

¹⁷ Translated from Brunet, *La Naissance de l’Idée de Photographie*, 243.

¹⁸ “California Camera Club,” *San Francisco Call*, April 6, 1890, 6.

¹⁹ *Constitution and By-laws of the California Camera Club* (San Francisco: (no publisher identified), 1896), 10-20, original from California Historical Society, copy in Palmquist Collection (Box 213).

They are men and women who have lots of money and a power to satisfy a hobby however expensive. They are young people who take great enjoyment in amateur photography and indulge themselves in the fad, whatever it costs. They are business men, merchants, lawyers, physicians – indeed, almost everybody who represents anything in the city.²⁰

Regardless of the professional photographic membership, the article listed members of local repute, like *Chronicle* founder Michael H. de Young as well as honorary members, such as the astronomers Barnard and Burnham of the Lick Observatory. In this privileged yet more inclusive setup, the shift of photographic societies in the late nineteenth century “from technician cliques to arenas for debating the art and science of photographic practice” becomes apparent. While photographic apparatus and evaluation of results remained major themes, the social exchange aspect of the practice – alongside the negotiation of a collectively embraced aesthetic – became just as important.²¹

The convivial dimension of the Club as well as its membership numbers were considerably augmented by the inclusion of female photographers and wives of members. This new form of organization turned the Club into a social entertainment venue which embraced a dynamic approach to its local setting. By 1892, the CCC had some 400 members, 250 of whom were subscribers, that is, attendants of monthly lectures rather than active practitioners. However, more than one hundred of these subscribers were female. Among the 163 active and associate members, 23 were women, and male members expressed the explicit wish to have a female representative on the board (which did not happen). These numbers would also be advertised in brochures distributed at monthly lectures, inciting women to join (**fig. 3.1**). The Club’s female membership accounted for some 14%, which represents almost the double of the total estimate of women’s participation in American camera clubs at the time.²² It is difficult to trace the exact numbers of practitioners and employees in photographic businesses, yet research by Peter Palmquist has shown that there was “at least a 10% female workforce” in California before 1901, generating a list of some 850 names.²³ Given this broad participation and the increased practice by women in the 1890s, the numbers of the California Camera Club are representative of this development. On a national level, promoters of female photography like Catherine Weed Barnes – the first female editor of the *American Amateur Photographer* – fought the “uneven reception of women’s entry” to clubs and sought to detach female practice from the prescribed themes of Victorian family life.²⁴

In California, where an active engagement with the local landscape had been a leitmotif of professional and amateur practice from early on, an out-of-doors practice by women required “grand

²⁰ “The Camera in California,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 24, 1893, 9.

²¹ Griffin, “Amateur Photography and Pictorial Aesthetics,” 92.

²² “Annual Meeting Notes,” *Pacific Coast Photographer* 1, no. 3 (1892): 51. For a total of 90 American photo clubs in 1893, female membership is estimated at 7.6%. See Margaret Denny, “Catherine Weed Barnes Ward: Advocate for Victorian Women Photographers,” *History of Photography* 36, no. 2 (2012): 160.

²³ Palmquist, *Shadowcatchers*, v-vi.

²⁴ Denny, “Catherine Weed Barnes Ward,” 157-160.

physical stamina,” especially before the apparition of the dry plate. However, examples of photographers like Eliza Withington – who had a studio in the Sierra Nevada, photographing mountain and mining scenes – reflect how the deeply localized discourse was integrated into the female outdoor practice.²⁵ Published in the *Philadelphia Photographer* of 1876, her essay “How a woman makes landscape photographs” described the cumbersome wet-collodion process she used during an eight-week trip through the Sierras. Without the possibility to join male associations like the Photographic Art Society of the Pacific founded at the time, Withington relied on photographic literature from the East and turned the geographic isolation of California – as well as her own isolated position as a female photographer – into an advantage for embarking on a lone journey “seeking health and negatives of our mountain scenery, mines, quartz mills, etc.”²⁶

As the PCAPA had initiated this collective territorial practice, the large membership of the CCC pursued this goal in a more structured manner. The Club anchored in its constitution an outing committee (alongside an exhibition and a lantern committee), which planned monthly trips as well as an annual outing financed by the organization’s funds.²⁷ These excursions were announced in local newspapers, often taking place in the vicinities of San Francisco or in the Yosemite, and attempted “to promote more interest in outdoor photography.” The photographs taken during these trips were supposed to enrich the Club’s corpus, making it a veritable inventory of Californian scenery “and thus start the nucleus of a very valuable as well as historical collection.”²⁸ In order to infuse the local work with more dynamism, “an active cycling annex” was added to the Club in the mid 1890s, continuing what the PCAPA had exposed in its exhibition rooms in 1886 as a recreational leisure practice. Cycling outings were supposed to add to the Club’s corpus of “the finest California scenic views” which “[were to be] sent around the world to other camera clubs,” and confirm “a universally recognized fact” that California would be “without doubt the paradise of the photographer.”²⁹

While the views disseminated through the Interchange will be subject to discussion in the following pages, an understanding of this dynamic engagement with the surroundings is key to the creation of local belonging among the photographers. Even though historians like Sternberger dismiss “the gadget-wielding, recreational amateur (who was likely to own a brand new bicycle and tennis racket as well),” as a materialistic expression of photography detached from any artistic aspiration, this kind of collective practice out in nature constituted an integral part of the aesthetic agenda of the

²⁵ Glenda Riley, *Women and Nature: Saving the “Wild” West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 85-86. Hales, *Silver Cities*, 107-108.

²⁶ Eliza Withington, “How a Woman Makes Landscape Photographs,” reprinted in Palmquist, *Shadowcatchers*, 241. Originally published in the *Philadelphia Photographer* 13 (1876): 357-360.

²⁷ *Constitution and By-laws*, 19-20.

²⁸ “A Summer Programme,” *San Francisco Call*, April 3, 1892, 9.

²⁹ “The Wheelmen,” *San Francisco Call*, June 29, 1895, 8; “Amateur Photographers,” *San Francisco Call*, April 20, 1895, 8.

Club.³⁰ As a majority of camera clubs of the period undertook outings as key events of their activities – tying in with the “civic pride” touch of circulating lantern slide sets – it can be argued that the Californian practitioners cultivated a particular attachment to the environment and its recent history. It was, indeed, common for recreational and artistic associations in California to intensely engage with the surrounding territory, tapping into the numerous possibilities offered by mountain, sea, and forest scenery, as earlier suggested by Avery.

This “aesthetic in lifestyle” had been embraced early on by associations like the Bohemian Club which united “artists, actors, essayists, writers of books, poets and dramatic authors.” It was founded in 1872, in the same period as the SFAA, and its membership included well-known figures of the time, like Mark Twain or Bret Harte of the *Overland Monthly*, local artists like Edward Bosqui, Virgil Williams, and William Keith, Berkeley professor Joseph LeConte, naturalist John Muir, or businessman and later mayor James D. Phelan. During the mid 1880s, the Bohemians appointed “Photographers to the Club,” one of whom was William Letts Oliver of the PCAPA. He was praised for his work “in the line of artistic photography” and in documenting summer outings. These events were especially appreciated among members, as they implied an annual meeting in the redwood forests North of San Francisco. As such, this group made the landscape part of its contemplative, congenial experience.³¹ To further the “distinctly Californian relationship to the outdoor,” the Sierra Club was founded in 1892, during the same period as the CCC. Its leader, John Muir, sought to preserve local ecology and cooperated with university professors like Stanford president David Starr Jordan.³² While the agenda of the Sierra Club and its relation to the CCC will be subject to discussion in the second and the fourth part of this thesis, it is important to situate the dynamic out-of-doors practice of the photographers within this setup of recreational, artistic, and preservationist activity that was rooted in the Californian landscape and cultivated in San Franciscan society from early on.

In the case of the CCC, it was deemed necessary to put on display the fruits of the collectively improved out-of-doors photography in the Club’s headquarters in the Academy of Science Building in San Francisco. By the time the Club moved into its rooms in early 1891, the Academy had already been well established among the city’s learned institutions, having staged several exhibitions by the SFAA and offering exchanges among scientists and artists (**fig. 3.2**). The CCC’s space in the building included “a large meeting-room, and also dark, printing, and enlarging rooms,” which were available

³⁰ Sternberger, *Between Amateur and Aesthete*, 107.

³¹ Starr, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915*, 239-246; information on photographers retrieved from Robert H. Fletcher, *The Annals of the Bohemian Club*, Vol. 1 (San Francisco: Press of the Hicks-Judd Co., 1898-1909), 15-22, 246-247. The Oliver Family Photograph Collection at the Bancroft Library includes correspondence with the Bohemian Club, but no photographs related to outings. A few less well known members of the CCC like Sanford Robinson also belonged to the Bohemian Club, yet no direct exchanges between the two clubs could be established. Neither the *Pacific Coast Photographer* nor *Camera Craft* commented on Bohemian Club matters.

³² Starr, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915*, 189-191.

to members of the Club and visitors of other camera clubs.³³ A floor plan, published in the *San Francisco Chronicle* alongside a meticulous description of its equipment, shows the accommodations available to San Franciscan photographers (**fig. 3.3**). The meeting room included a library with photographic magazines and books, counting more than 200 volumes, while the walls were decorated with prints by members. In the rooms, members met “to discuss photography in every element from the most simple features to the most complex.” The available apparatus was praised for being the “most modern of improvements.”³⁴ It was mentioned that the Club had spent “[o]ver \$1,600” to furnish the rooms in 1891, and two years later “own[ed] something over \$3,000 worth of property.”³⁵

These prestigious appliances and their display in a locally renowned institution played into the display of respectability which was pursued by the photographers as part of their “amateur” designation. The building’s architecture, organized on five floors around an oval atrium exposing archeological specimens, embodied the sophistication of a learned institution. The members sought to insert themselves in this setting by exposing their portraits “in an honored place in the rooms of the Academy of Science’s building.”³⁶ An example of such a public display can be seen in the cabinet card produced by professional photographer and member Theodore Marceau (**fig. 3.4**). It showed eleven portraits of the Club’s board of directors assembled in an ornate white frame, exposed on an easel with a pompon-adorned fabric veil. This *mise-en-scène*, showcasing the board of directors as a rather select circle, performed the desired purpose of the Club to become “a social, scientific and art center,” surrounded by other learned societies housed in the Academy of Science Building. In its cabinet card format, it could be distributed on a larger scale and kept as a precious representation of the Club. Its maker, Theodore Marceau, who also operated studios in Cincinnati and Indianapolis, and later in Los Angeles, had his San Franciscan business on 826 Market Street just across from the Academy which was located at number 819.³⁷

Through its cooperation with professional photographers, the Club had the opportunity to explore new apparatus and inventions in its rooms which also featured a studio. An article in the Club’s magazine on the testing of a new flash light for studio portraiture reveals a rare interior view before the destruction of the Academy building by the earthquake and fire of 1906. The Williams Flash Light Apparatus, which was used “for diffusing flash in studio portrait work,” came at a cost of \$75. It was tested by members in early 1893, the year it was patented by its inventor Sylvester Marcellus Williams (**fig. 3.5**). Having worked for Bradley and Rulofson in the 1860s, and the ever-growing business of Isaiah W. Taber in the 1870s, Williams was a renowned figure in the San

³³ Walter Sprange, *The Blue Book of Amateur Photographers 1893: The New Photographic Club Directory*. American Societies (London and Beach Bluffs: W. Sprange, 1893), 43.

³⁴ “Camera Clubrooms,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 19, 1894, 10.

³⁵ “California Camera Club,” *San Francisco Call*, March 9, 1892, 1; “The Camera in California,” 9.

³⁶ “The Camera in California,” 9.

³⁷ Mautz, *Biographies of Western Photographers*, 122.

Franciscan photographic scene.³⁸ Such collaborations with professionals added to the prestigious accommodations available to the members when working in the headquarters.

Despite the institutional support, exchanges within the Club and its general membership could not be defined as exclusively amateur. While the label would be used throughout the Club's first two decades as a vehicle of respectability, the blurry distinction of categories became subject to mockery. Alongside the biographical portrait of George W. Reed which disclosed the struggle with these artificial distinctions, the label was discussed in the first issue of the Club's magazine *Pacific Coast Photographer*. In it, founding member Sanford Robinson suggested an absurd range of distinctions between "the *Amateur-Amateur*, the *Amateur*, the *Professional-Amateur*, the *Amateur-Professional* and [...] the *Professional*," and considered the question of definition an "abstruse subject not generally understood." The article also traced a short history of photographic processes over a period of fifty years which the author described as dating "from the days of Daguerre to the days of Taber."³⁹ A railroad chief engineer and member of the Bohemian Club, Robinson had come to California in the early 1870s and witnessed the rise of photography in the city's cultural venues, especially of firms like Taber's.⁴⁰

This formulation of a narrative of photographic advancement – starting with Daguerre in France and continuing with Taber's Californian works – points to the desire to not only reshape photographic history from an American perspective, but especially highlight its Californian input. Taber, who had perfected his profitable business by the 1890s, was probably sought out by Robinson not for his commercial aggressiveness but for his celebration of Californian subject matter in photography. Through his numerous portfolios of the state and the Pacific Coast, Taber had cultivated a strong historical interest which covered pioneer endeavors in both photography and in local settlement. His collection included re-photographed daguerreotypes and ambrotypes of the state's early years as well as an ongoing oral history project of "biographical narratives of forty-eight California pioneers."⁴¹ This regionalist reformulation of photographic progress ties in with what Anthony Lee termed "the story of photography as both a history of technical refinement and heroic biography." It constitutes an essential part of the medium's art-historical conceptualization.⁴² In the search for local inventiveness and pioneering practitioners, these two elements became key to forge a Californian canon. Through the lens of the historically cultivated practitioners who search for

³⁸ See "A New Flash Light," *Pacific Coast Photographer* 1, no. 12 (1893): 215-217; see also Palmquist and Kailbourn, *Pioneer Photographers*, 595.

³⁹ Sanford Robinson, "What to write," *Pacific Coast Photographer* 1, no. 1 (1892): 9.

⁴⁰ "Sanford Robinson," *Pacific Coast Photographer* 1, no. 3 (1892): 47-48.

⁴¹ Kurutz, introduction to *Taber: A Photographic Legacy*, 11-12. For Taber's project, see "Biographical narratives of forty-eight California pioneers dictated to I.W. Taber," (BANC MSS C-D 5062, Vol. 1-3), the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. See also Part II of this thesis.

⁴² Anthony W. Lee, "American Histories of Photography," *American Art* 21, no. 3 (2007): 4, <https://doi.org/10.1086/526476>.

expressions of local identity, a “heroic biography” implied the creation of a photographic narrative in their own geographical region. Despite their rather timid character, these early attempts at historic reformulation represent the onset of search for local legitimacy in the history of the medium which would become more pronounced by the early 1900s.

While the visual production of Californian subject matter through outings, well-equipped rooms, and institutional connections in the city ensured a crucial material support, the verbal formulation of this practice proved just as essential. It found its first manifestation in the Club magazine *Pacific Coast Photographer* that appeared monthly between February 1892 and January 1894 (**fig. 3.6**). The cover indicated the magazine was “devoted to photography as an art.” Apart from the adorned title taking up the upper third and a short article index in the lower right quarter, the cover prominently featured a male photographer using a folding camera. The lens created beams of light, filtering three motifs: a sailboat, cliffs along the shore, and a long-haired girl in a dress. While such imagery can be generally counted among the desired motifs of Pictorialism, it equally echoed the Club’s emergence from a dispute over marine views as well as Treat’s celebration of California as “a land of milk and honey [...] and the birthplace of beautiful girls.”⁴³ To connect this depiction of the model Pacific Coast photographer on the cover with the history of the medium, as done by Robinson, the well-known woodcut portrait of Daguerre – which had illustrated the cover of the *Daguerreian Journal* (1850-1851) – was used. The laurel-adorned portrait figured next to a banner reading “Daguerre” as well as a flaring iron vessel and bottle recipient hinting at the labor-intensive process. The dedication of the magazine to “photography as an art” and the illustration of historic processes of the medium were to extend the “amateur ideology.”

Within the pages of the magazine, the monthly “Club News” section was decorated with a comparable illustration, showing a tripod, camera, and shoulder bag used for outdoor practice (**fig. 3.7**). Several photographic prints trickle down from the tripod, sketching a marine view, a mountain scenery and a running horse (perhaps reminiscent of Muybridge’s motion studies). To the right of the tripod, a disproportionately large lens reflects a California grizzly marching on railroad tracks set against a rising sun. The combination of the bear (not yet officially adopted state symbol), the state’s infrastructure, its scenery and climate, points to the prevalence of the local geography in the Club’s practice. The adoption of these elements also corresponded to the broader promotional vocabulary of the state “in which mechanization and nature were positively aligned.”⁴⁴ In the case of the Club, the use of modern apparatus, transportation, and a heightened sensitivity to the immediate surroundings would become the hallmark of the practice.

⁴³ The promoted feminine ideal of “the Western girl” would become another means of demarcating the Pacific West, also for photographers. See “The Typical Western Beauty,” portfolio with contributions by Arnold Genthe, Laura Adams Armer, and Edward S. Curtis, *Camera Craft* 4, no. 2 (1901): 69-76.

⁴⁴ Perry, *Pacific Arcadia*, 71.

The territories selected and goals defined in the Club's agenda needed an equivalent vocabulary to unfold their full potential. In this context, the publication of Club reports and announcements in local newspapers became a useful tool to make the practice known – and to align it with the communal vocabulary. With regard to the newspapers of the American West, it has been argued that this form of printed media was steeped in promotional rhetoric from the start. The construction of “a ritualized language” in circulating newspapers, and in magazines like the *Overland Monthly*, helped writers and boosters mark out forms of “regional distinctiveness.”⁴⁵ In the same wording, the local press announced Reed's formation of the Club as “an incident strikingly [sic] distinctive of the city and State.” By founding a large community of photographers and shedding the rigid standards of the former Association, Reed had demonstrated an independent and self-reliant choice that was considered typical of the community.⁴⁶ The Club tapped into this communal pioneer rhetoric from the start. Drawing on the frequently used associations with a character forged in the conditions of frontier life, the photographers would be independent in their works and thus become representative of the state. “[T]he want of a local journal” was therefore supposed to make “the amateur and the professional independent,” not only of the predominantly Eastern scene of photographic literature, but also “of the rest of the world.”⁴⁷ The editors' specific demand to the local readership to contribute to the magazine with prints and articles implied a more inclusive outlook on the practice than preceding organizations. Therefore, the collective attachment to the practice would be forged “in building up a paper which will belong to the photographer, be he professional or amateur.” This kind of communal platform of exchange would then become “representative of the Pacific Coast” in bringing together a variety of photographic practices.⁴⁸

Inasmuch as the magazine was supposed to represent the community of practitioners, its mission within the broader region was also clearly defined. Elaborating on the state's “advantages over the older and less favored States,” an opening article in the first issue highlighted “the wild and varied scenery” which “can be reached by the minimum consumption of time.” Due to this proximity and generous offer of subject matter, Californian photographers would have “no excuse for inferior results.” Their mission was to collectively improve photography in the out-of-doors in the attempt “to do [...] justice to these ever-varying scenes.” In acknowledging that the experience of the Californian landscape had inspired many literary accounts, the magazine deemed it necessary for local photographers to follow this appreciative path and rally increased awareness for photographic possibilities available “within a day's journey” from San Francisco. Since the region provided “beautiful marine views” and “exquisite cloud and fog effects,” it offered numerous advantages for

⁴⁵ Limerick, “Making the Most of Words: Verbal Activity and Western America,” 178-180.

⁴⁶ “The Camera in California,” 9.

⁴⁷ Burnham, “California for the Photographer,” 4.

⁴⁸ Editorial, *Pacific Coast Photographer* 1, no. 1 (1892): 10.

the Pictorialist photographer.⁴⁹

Interestingly, this attempt at a mission statement was followed by an article by Archibald J. Treat – by then prolific contributor and member of the CCC. As the first issue of the magazine coincided with the late winter season, Treat advised San Franciscan photographers (collectively referred to throughout the article as “amateurs”) to take advantage of the Bay Area’s peculiar rainy climate in order to experiment in the out-of-doors. The mild winters in the region would represent another advantageous working condition for local photographers. Reminding the readership of “the old amateur association,” Treat stated that “the best of the hundreds of pictures shown at the exhibitions” had been made in these conditions. The excellence which Treat and his earlier associates had aimed for was to be continued by the Club. Yet, its members had to cultivate a keen awareness of the local surroundings in order to heighten the aesthetic value of the works.⁵⁰ The coastal climate, the region’s “wild” attractions, as well as its comparable newness served as catalysts of an “inherently geographic” picture production. Again, the isolation from other states and the locals’ immediate access to these vistas were taken as advantages in the process of developing an autonomous practice.

Even though the Club sought “independence” from the photographic societies and literature of the East, its quest for becoming “representative” of the West needed an audience to recognize, acknowledge, and approve these pursuits. As the showcasing of uniqueness became more strongly pronounced, avenues for local and national dissemination were also more thoroughly explored. In fact, the constant comparison to the Eastern states as well as the formulation of a local style in superlatives envisioned the Californian practice within a parallel national setup. In order for the nationalization of the practice to reach a collective character, strong local support was needed. The Club’s outdoor agenda with regular excursions and a bicycle annex became instrumental in this distribution on a local level. To make their work available to the city’s viewing public, the members held monthly print exhibitions in their rooms and lectures at the Metropolitan Temple in San Francisco (**fig. 3.8**). The involvement of the public was explicitly desired in order to gain approval and to instruct the viewers on artistic achievements. While earlier professional associations had already made the attempt to inform the public on their craftsmanship, the CCC equally needed this public acknowledgment for an aesthetic appreciation of their work. Since “the photographic craze,” as the members themselves termed it, had dominated popular ideas of the medium for too long, they considered it their task to refine the public’s judgment capacity – one of the reasons why the Club wanted its work “constantly kept before the public notice.”⁵¹

As has been acknowledged in the history of photography in the late nineteenth century, a great

⁴⁹ Burnham, “California for the Photographer,” 3-4.

⁵⁰ Archibald J. Treat, “Winter Work with the Camera,” *Pacific Coast Photographer* 1, no. 1 (1892): 4-5.

⁵¹ “Trimnings,” *Pacific Coast Photographer* 1, no. 1 (1892): 11.

number of camera clubs used the medium “as a means to bring culture to a broader audience.”⁵² While the practices, exhibition strategies, and societal ramifications of collective camera work have been examined in great detail in the European context,⁵³ it is still largely unknown how American photographic societies operated within the complex urban tissue of their time. As in the European case, it can be stated that clubs like the CCC did not function along the lines of exclusive avant-garde associations like the Linked Ring or the Photo-Secession, which are used as standard references in the history of the medium for the period of the 1890s. Instead, camera clubs tended to closely integrate their work in the public space by instructing the public, rendering it sensitive to aesthetic appreciation, and by reaching out to other scientific societies and institutions. As such, the urban population was familiarized with a photographic aesthetic and a discourse that could forge communal consensus, also in times of conflict or catastrophe.⁵⁴

In the Californian case, the imagery that was publicly circulated served as proof of the region’s unique features. By mid-decade, attendance at monthly lectures in the Metropolitan Temple was estimated as ranging “from 700 to 1,500 people.”⁵⁵ Much like in the above mentioned European context, it was considered an efficient means for attracting large spectatorship by infusing local exhibitions with a charitable character, for example through the donation of profits made from lectures to local children’s asylums or to victims of catastrophes. The mixture of charitable work with aesthetic enjoyment then “popularize[d] [the Club] with the mass of the people,” as the *American Amateur Photographer* acknowledged.⁵⁶ To the taste of these large crowds, according to firsthand accounts, the views of the city and the state, “from the days of ‘49 to the present time,” appeared as most sought after.⁵⁷ By representing itself as not only a socially useful but also as a culturally valuable organ, the Club integrated its agenda in the city and at the same time contributed to the shaping of a local identity.

Due to the destruction of both the Metropolitan Temple and the rooms in the Academy of Science Building in 1906, as well as the absence of any exhaustive archive on the Club, it appears problematic – speculative at most – to make a statement on the entire material shown in the print exhibitions or the lantern slide lectures during the Club’s first decade. In this case, again, the written material far outweighs the visual, which is why an attempt will be made here to assemble textual sources and photographic works representative of the larger chronological period of the 1890s. Since the first magazine was only published for two years, a survey of newspaper coverage of the entire

⁵² Greenough, “Of Charming Glens,” 269.

⁵³ See Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*; Joschke, *Les Yeux de la Nation*.

⁵⁴ See especially Joschke, *Les Yeux de la Nation*, 164-184, 216-232.

⁵⁵ “Amateur Photography,” *San Francisco Call*, March 24, 1896, 10.

⁵⁶ “The California Camera Club,” *American Amateur Photographer* 4 (1892): 41. A donation of some \$130 was made to Japan after the Mino-Owari Earthquake of October 1891, see “California Camera Club,” *San Francisco Call*, March 9, 1892, 1.

⁵⁷ “Camera Club’s Exhibition,” *San Francisco Call*, July 25, 1895, 5.

decade discloses more substantial information on the activities. Both the *Chronicle* and the *Call* regularly reported on the members' agenda and treated much of the Club's Californian subject matter as a source of civic pride. Since the information on print exhibitions is limited to listings of names in newspapers and no comprehensive catalogs or images are available, it is not possible at this point to draw a more complete account of the exhibition activities in the 1890s, as has been carried out in the previous chapter on the PCAPA.⁵⁸ An attempt will be made, however, to reconstruct the first sets of slides submitted to the American Lantern Slide Interchange by the CCC.

Among the first lantern set exhibited to the local public and later reused for circulation through the Interchange was a lecture on the Yosemite Valley (**fig. 3.9**). Even though only the title image can be definitely attributed to the set, a large collection of CCC lantern slides held at the Los Angeles Public Library can complete the picture, as it provides a glimpse of what these excursions looked like.⁵⁹ A slide from the mid 1890s shows "a part of the Club Annex" with some twenty well-dressed men and women next to bicycles, some carrying photographic equipment (**fig. 3.10**). Another image, dated probably later given the slide's design, shows another group of twenty photographers standing on the shores of Mirror Lake in the Yosemite (**fig. 3.11**). The documentation of outings as a congenial activity, in a recreational local setting, was a key element to identify as part of the Club. These group portraits would become more elaborate by the 1900s, when the outing agenda was more extensively documented and railroad companies offered favorable conditions for traveling Club photographers – as will be shown in the second part of this thesis.

What is essential to this analysis, however, is the reception of the photographers' work by the local public. While the Yosemite had been turned into a tourist destination from the 1860s onward and came to provide trails for tourists to cross parts of the Valley on foot, it was still difficult to reach by train in the 1890s. As a week-long hotel stay necessitated time and means, the influx of tourists in this period mainly consisted of a wealthy clientele unaccustomed to the uncomfortable traveling conditions. It was only during the following decade that much larger numbers of visitors were drawn to the Valley.⁶⁰ Even though the Valley was situated within a comparably short distance from San Francisco, the larger publics attending the CCC lectures would rather visit it as armchair travelers. As the Club had access to the Yosemite as a group, it sought to provide the local and national

⁵⁸ Christian A. Peterson's thesis includes probably the most extensive chronology of camera club exhibitions in the U.S. for the period. While the author listed the PCAPA's print exhibitions of the 1880s, the CCC is completely absent from the record of the 1890s; see Christian A. Peterson, "A History of Exhibitions of Photography in America, 1887-1917" (unpublished Master thesis, Syracuse University, 1982), 150-171.

⁵⁹ A selection of slides for the period between 1880 and 1920 is kept in the Lantern Slide Collection of the California Camera Club at the Los Angeles Public Library. The Joseph Gensoul Collection of Lantern Slides of California, Mexico, Alaska, and Indians of the Southwest also contains several Club slides for this period (see (BANC PIC 19xx.094--LAN), the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley).

⁶⁰ Figueiredo Couto, "Du Monumentalisme à l'Écologie," 449-455; Anne F. Hyde, "From Stagecoach to Packard Twin Six: Yosemite and the Changing Face of Tourism, 1880-1930," in *Yosemite and Sequoia: A Century of California National Parks*, 69-74.

audiences with “a fair representation of the work of the whole club not of only a few of its members.” Therefore, affiliates were urged to participate in these excursions and contribute to slide sets.⁶¹

Mixing geographical data with tourist information, the “imaginary trip” depicted in the Club’s Yosemite lecture was introduced by James Mason Hutchings, the pioneer of tourism in the Valley and founder of *Hutchings’ Illustrated California Magazine*, which had reproduced the first stereographic views of the Yosemite in 1860. The *Chronicle* described this lecture, when it was first shown in February 1891, as “gratifying to the local pride of every Californian” while being “portrayed in a style and on a scale that has never before been attempted.”⁶² The original viewing context of these slides differs substantially from the researcher’s handling of the slides today. The lectures were entertainment events, mixing educative and touristic content with poetry and music, thereby generating popular spectacles which drew large local crowds. The monumental scale of the images was increased by the grand spaces they were shown in and thereby created a collective, conversational atmosphere. Today, the visual experience of the slides is much more restrained, as it requires not only delicate handling but also spatiotemporal imagination. When placed as precious glass plates on a lightbox, the momentum of the original experience can only be faintly imagined. Since the screen, sound, and public are missing, the *mise-en-scène* of the narrative is strikingly absent from today’s experience. As complex historical objects that have undergone numerous trajectories, lantern slides would necessitate much closer inquiry.⁶³

It is exactly the spectacular staging of a Californian narrative – and its subsequent dissemination – that was essential to the viewing experience of local publics. Since the lecture stressed Yosemite’s “discovery” by the Mariposa Battalion in 1851 and the first tourists’ visit in 1855, it secured the Valley as part of the victorious history of settlement in the region. Leaving out the Mariposa War between the indigenous inhabitants of the Valley and the miner militia, the lecture played into the myth of a vacant land awaiting American settlement.⁶⁴ The monumentality of the landscape, further magnified on the screen, spurred the dimension of local pride. Made by a local club for the local public, the lecture contributed to the internalization of an origin story in which the territory was appropriated and made accessible for settlement, leisure, and aesthetic contemplation. When circulated to publics across the country, the carefully selected subject matter would instruct national audiences on the specificities of the region, and as a second step, turn the local discourse into

⁶¹ See George W. Reed, “To the Members of the California Camera Club,” *Pacific Coast Photographer* 1, no. 12 (1893): 225; see also W.J. Street, “Outings,” *Pacific Coast Photographer* 1, no. 3 (1892): 45-46, with recommendations for easily accessible Bay Area venues.

⁶² “Yosemite Valley, by the California Camera Club,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 27, 1891, 5.

⁶³ See Spindler, “Windows to the American Past: Lantern Slides as Historic Evidence,” 140.

⁶⁴ For a broader discussion of Native American life in California before 1848, see Ramón A. Gutiérrez and Richard J. Orsi, eds., *Contested Eden: California Before the Gold Rush* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). For the Club photographers’ treatment of Native American life and history, see Part II.

a much broader, “internalized” patriotism.⁶⁵

As the *Chronicle* described the lecture as “a joy forever [held] in the club’s archives,”⁶⁶ it would be reused by members for other lantern sets. In their contribution to the American Lantern Slide Interchange for the season of 1892/93, the list of images – which is the only traceable document of the set – hints at the narrative of pioneers and prosperity that was to be performed on large screens in front of Eastern audiences. It included one hundred images, many of which treated the Bay Area, its learned institutions such as the recently constructed Stanford University or the Lick Observatory, marine views, “cloud effects,” agriculture and railroad infrastructure, notably the Southern Pacific terminus at Oakland, views of Coloma “where gold was first discovered,” as well as the Yosemite.⁶⁷ A view of the Valley which was part of this lantern set was reproduced in the *Pacific Coast Photographer* in late 1892 (**fig. 3.12**). The same year, the set traveled to Brooklyn where it was shown at the camera club and received the superlative praise by the public it had searched for:

No finer selection of slides has been exhibited at the East this season. They were remarkable for the clearness and depth of perspective, a quality due entirely to the remarkable clearness of the California atmosphere. In pictures of mountain scenery — and there were quite a number of them shown — the lines of distant mountain tops were clearly and definitely defined. This would be almost impossible in any picture taken this side of the Alleghenies, except under very unusual atmospheric conditions.⁶⁸

The praise by Eastern societies – for mountain scenery, as in Mudge’s contribution – tied in with the regional distinction through landscape views which the Club pursued. Judging the group photos of the set as “particularly striking,” the viewing public took the practitioners’ outdoor performance as an identity-building element.⁶⁹ The popularity of the Californian views within the American Lantern Slide Interchange, as well as its high ranking in the regular evaluations in the Eastern magazines, point to the utility of these circulating views to the Club. The dissemination of views on various supports and to diverse publics, that is, in the magazine destined to the local photographer community and in lantern slide sets for San Franciscan viewers and Eastern societies, allowed the Club to formulate the desired narrative of the territory and of its practice. By the close of the decade, the *American Amateur Photographer* criticized many of the Club’s slides for their quality and finish, yet recognized that the members “seem on the whole to make more use of the lantern than other clubs, especially in the getting up of large and successful entertainments.”⁷⁰

While the public lectures in San Francisco played an essential role to gather support and forge

⁶⁵ For a comparable process, see Joschke, *Les Yeux de la Nation*, 309-317.

⁶⁶ “Yosemite Valley, by the California Camera Club,” 5.

⁶⁷ See “List of slides contributed to the American League Interchange. By the California Camera Club,” copy from California Historical Society, in Palmquist Collection (Box 213).

⁶⁸ “Walks about the city,” *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 28, 1892, 8.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ “The California Camera Club,” *American Amateur Photographer* 10 (1898): 316-317.

a communal adherence to the Club, their circulation within the Interchange targeted national audiences and an appreciation of Californian practice through its subject matter. In extending its rhetoric of independence from the East to “the rest of the world,” the Club also desired an interchange with European camera clubs to disseminate its sets. They were considered “one of the most artistic and general means of showing people in other states what California is like.”⁷¹ With regard to the international reach of the Club, it can be stated that few prints and lectures eventually circulated beyond the U.S. In 1893, several members contributed to the internationally renowned exhibition of amateur photographers in Hamburg, which assembled some 6,000 images by over 400 photographers from ten different countries.⁷² Even if these contributions did not exclusively showcase Californian views but also included Pictorialist genre scenes, they were targeted by the Club to heighten the international dimension of its practice. In return, this international reach of Californian photographers was used by the local press to promote the superiority of works produced by San Franciscans.

These local, national, and international outlooks – motivated by a set of shared ideals – were combined in 1893 when Chicago celebrated the World’s Columbian Exposition, parts of which would be rebuilt in San Francisco as the Midwinter Fair the following year. The staging of a national event in which representation and recognition played a major role constituted an unprecedented opportunity of display for photographers all over the United States. For Californians at large, the two fairs represented a key moment for the insertion of a Western narrative of progress into national history. What needs to be examined, then, is the Club’s exposure to the elaboration of this narrative at the fairs and how the photographers – in their search for national recognition – would embed their local practice in this configuration.

3.2 Chicago 1893: the Californian response to an historical fable of the American West

In its celebration of the four hundredth anniversary of Christopher Columbus’ travels to the Americas, the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago staged an origin story of “discovery” which proved highly useful to the conceptualization of the American nation. Held between May and October 1893, the White City – a Neoclassical fairground conceived for the occasion – drew some 27 million visitors from all over the world. The fair promoted a utopian vision of progress and unity, through the establishment of a “symbolic universe” in which each nation had “an opportunity to reaffirm [its] collective national identity” by showcasing technologies and cultural goods. The experience of this

⁷¹ “City Prize Winners,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 9, 1893, 9.

⁷² See Christian Joschke, “La photographie, la ville et ses notables : Hambourg 1893,” *Études Photographiques* 17 (2005): 136-157. Two members of the Club, A.G. McFarland (then vice-president) and Miss M.H. Philips received prizes at the Hamburg exhibition, the latter for her portraits of children, one of which was reproduced as an engraving in “Lantern and Lens,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 18, 1893, 10. See also “City Prize Winners” mentioning McFarland’s reception of a diploma at the exhibition.

large-scale entertainment event targeted the internalization of a narrative that legitimized cultural and political domination as well as expansionism.⁷³ Numerous side events of the Chicago Exposition, like the meeting of the American Historical Association or the auxiliary congress of the Photographers' Association of America, provided stages where an ideal representation – of national history or the progress of a medium – could be collectively envisioned.

Given this ideologically charged framework, Frederick Jackson Turner's address on "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" at Chicago must be seen as a decisive input to the negotiation of an American geographic identity that underwent reformulation in this period. While Turner declared the frontier closed, the fairgrounds offered scenarios of progress and expansionism beyond this border. In this context, the West as part of the national geography and ideology was infused with new vigor and would become the territory from which an American future for the twentieth century could be formulated.⁷⁴ The promotion of this narrative provided an ideal point of departure for the articulation of a Californian discourse of recognition and legitimization, which was especially sought after by the state's organizers of the fair. The following analysis proposes to connect these regional ambitions with the photographers' conceptions of both the fair in Chicago and its follow-up in San Francisco. Despite the Club's distance from the White City and its quasi absence from the fairgrounds, its membership was exposed to and involved in the emergence of a newly invigorated Californian narrative. The early participation in this endeavor is reflected in the Club's connection to the fair commissioner for California, Charles B. Turrill, who had been and would remain instrumental in the promotion and historical appreciation of the state. The following discussion of the fair's sociohistorical conceptualization through Turner and the event's treatment of the medium will be enriched by an analysis of the Californian fair contribution.

Turner's "frontier thesis," continuously referred to as instrumental to the characterization of the United States in a period of growing nationalism, reflects "how geography plays in Americans' imagination of themselves."⁷⁵ As outlined in the first chapter, the living conditions on the edge of an expanding territory and the constant exposure to new challenges were designed as elements that forged an American identity of individualism, autonomy, and democracy. These individualist, masculine traits were fed by the Gold Rush and its myth of self-reliance and fulfillment, and therefore took on, as we have seen, the shape of a history of Californian pioneers. Tying in with the surrender of Native Americans to American territorial seizure, Turner's ideas tapped into what Theodore Roosevelt had termed the "Western conquest," that is, "a providential mission for a newly forged race

⁷³ Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 2-4.

⁷⁴ Sarah J. Moore, *Empire on Display: San Francisco's Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), 11-17.

⁷⁵ Jacobson, *Place and Belonging*, 96. See Harold P. Simonson, ed., *Frederick Jackson Turner: The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1963).

of white fighters and settlers.” This American civilization used politics, economy, technology, and infrastructure to populate the territories and create national coherence. The overlapping development of the historical profession and a growing nationalist self-definition in the late nineteenth century is reflected in this “invention of [a] cultural myth,” rooted in settlement of the American West.⁷⁶

With the closure of the frontier and the entirety of the territory seized, new imaginary and real frontiers were sought – for example, in an expansion beyond the Pacific. While this imperial vision was to manifest itself more virulently with the onset of Spanish-American War and Roosevelt’s presidency after 1901, the frontier experience could also be reenacted through the challenges imposed by industrialization, urbanization, and immigration – all of which constituted immediate realities for the American public in 1893.⁷⁷ Despite its highly fabricated, homogenizing outlook, historians have acknowledged the ideological importance of Turner’s thesis to his contemporaries. It carried out a legitimizing function for cultural dominance and pushed aggressive political and economic agendas.⁷⁸ In its imaginative function, the frontier thesis extended the fable of the communities forged by the Gold Rush and ornamented the geographies envisioned for such scenarios, as succinctly stated by Alan Trachtenberg: “Land and minerals served economic and ideological purposes, the two merging into a single complex image of the West: a temporal site of the route from past to future, and the spatial site for revitalizing national energies.”⁷⁹

With the conceptualization of Western geography in a national framework, it will be important to understand how the fair and its contributors tapped into this ideology through the celebration of progress, invention, and improvement. On the whole, the exposed products were intended to promote the desired representation of its exhibitors, be they in the shape of pavilions, performances, or manufactured objects. If these objects served as vehicles for promotion and elevation, the photographic medium contributed not only to their “truthful” showcasing, but became in itself a promoter of its excellency. While still engaged in the search for artistic legitimization, members of the Photographers’ Association of America held their annual convention in proximity to the fair and envisioned a comparable promotional logic. The Association had planned a one-week congress and in its run-up sent out calls for participation in order to assemble a representative display which could compete with those of other countries.⁸⁰ The congress itself united some two hundred photographers of international renown, among whom Catherine Weed Barnes and Léon Vidal, to read papers and

⁷⁶ Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America*, 13-15.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 15; Nash, *Creating the West*, 6-20, 56.

⁷⁸ Simonson, *Frederick Jackson Turner*, 16-21; Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America*, 13-17; Nash, *Creating the West*, 20-35.

⁷⁹ Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America*, 17.

⁸⁰ Julie K. Brown, *Contesting Images: Photography and the World’s Columbian Exposition* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1994), 10-14. One of such calls for participation was published in the *Pacific Coast Photographer*, see Frank I. Place, “Photographers’ Association of America,” *Pacific Coast Photographer* 1, no. 5 (1892): 86.

exchange on latest improvements. The California Camera Club had its representative share through its honorary member E.E. Barnard, from the Lick Observatory, who gave a lecture on “Astro-Photography,” drawing on the rich exchanges established between scientific and photographic societies in San Francisco since the late 1880s.⁸¹ Since the fair was to serve as a vehicle for local and national pride, it had been equally planned by several societies to set up an amateur exhibition which, as a combined effort, “would arouse the interest of visitors, both foreign and native, in the artistic natural features of our country.”⁸² The celebration of local landscapes – produced through leisure practice – was supposed to merge with an aesthetic enjoyment of the nation’s varied geographies. Such a representation tied in with the entertainment program of the fair whose “leisured contemplation of commercial and cultural progress brought Americans together in harmony and national pride.”⁸³

However ambitious the program and participation envisioned by camera clubs beforehand, the various organizational restrictions of the fair eventually barred much of the club work from the grounds. As Julie K. Brown describes in her survey on photographic displays at the Chicago fair, professional works had the strongest share in the exhibitions. By the time amateurs could apply for room in the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building in February 1893, the available space had already been occupied entirely by professionals – which partly accounts for the absence of members of the California Camera Club. An international, comparative assemblage of photographic works was not possible either since “the photographs were split up among the various national displays.” However, commercial dealers were strongly represented, most notably Eastman Kodak, which had a booth advertising both photographic supply and works made in a competition for the fair.⁸⁴ The company had likewise secured its impact on photography produced at the event by cooperating with fair officials who demonstrated “persistent reluctance to encourage independent photographic practice.” In fearing the commercialization of amateur images, the organizers had hired a professional photographer, Charles D. Arnold, to cover the fair in its entirety and thus establish a monopoly on manufactured imagery of the event. Eastman Kodak capitalized on the officials’ conception by bringing out a “Kolumbian Kodak” with 200 images on roll film which did not interfere with the restrictions set by officials: Visiting photographers were allowed to bring neither cameras exceeding a 4" x 5" format, nor tripods, and had to rely on the Eastman Kodak darkroom on the fair grounds. In addition to paying a \$2 daily fee, they were to register with their equipment at the Department of Photography.⁸⁵ Such policies ensured the production of noncompetitive snapshot imagery and tapped

⁸¹ “World’s Congress Auxiliary,” *Pacific Coast Photographer* 2, no. 4 (1893): 302.

⁸² Robert E.M. Bain, “Amateur Photography at the World’s Fair,” *Pacific Coast Photographer* 1, no. 3 (1892): 53.

⁸³ Cocks, *Doing the Town*, 129.

⁸⁴ Brown, *Contesting Images*, 19-27.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 94-96.

into the commercialization strategies of Eastman, which – again – showed that the company targeted a responsive mass market much more than an elevation of the medium itself. The fairgrounds were thus managed like a private corporation space in which an agenda of “social control” dominated interactions.⁸⁶ The established monopoly was met with harsh criticism from amateur societies, including members of the CCC, who signed a petition in the summer of 1892 and published articles denouncing the strategies adopted by the fair’s officials. They turned the protest into an American undertaking of securing the “free” practice of the medium.⁸⁷

Through the restrictive public coverage and the official imagery produced by Arnold, the White City could put forward most efficiently its “visual rhetoric” of Neoclassicist architecture, large-scale entertainment, and cultural instruction. In its conception as “part urban space, part architecture, part performance, part museum, part imaginary composite,” the official photographs ensured the construction of each of these components and hence controlled the public perception and memory of the event. In ensuring that the Kodak roll film imagery could in no way compete with Arnold’s mammoth plate views adorned as platinum prints, the officials still commanded the “grand-style” architecture.⁸⁸ This kind of visual control of experience and memory, described by Eric Gordon as “possessive spectatorship,” is symptomatic of the larger phenomenon of photography in the urban space in the period of the late nineteenth century. The city became a commercialized, representational space – “a space of total vision” – which its camera-carrying inhabitants could access and explore. Through the rise of tourism, “a windowed perspective on the urban landscape” was developed, with an explicit demarcation of the most notable features. The White City, in its conceptual lay-out of access and participation played into this illusion of visual possession.⁸⁹ It constituted the onset of “a packageable and consumable manner of looking at cities” which was to respond to the viewers’ increasing demands of visually remembering and materially possessing. This version of an “imageable city,” in Kevin Lynch’s terms, had to distinguish itself through its features and “would invite the eye.”⁹⁰

The participants in the Chicago fair responded to this growth of packaged tourism, visual legibility, and photographic accessibility by making extensive use of the medium in state displays. Championing the ‘truthful’ character of photographic depiction, the organizers sought out images which performed illustrative, validating, as well as aesthetic functions. The following analysis of the

⁸⁶ Hales, *Silver Cities*, 243-244.

⁸⁷ By that time, Alfred Stieglitz had become member of the editorial staff of the *American Amateur Photographer* and represented one of the most outspoken opponents, see Hales, *Silver Cities*, 257-258; Brown, *Contesting Images*, 94. See also “Photography at the World’s Fair,” *Pacific Coast Photographer* 1, no 2. (1892): 26-27.

⁸⁸ Hales, *Silver Cities*, 213-219, 246-255.

⁸⁹ Eric Gordon, *The Urban Spectator: American Concept-cities from Kodak to Google* (Hanover: Dartmouth College Press, 2010), 3-17; Cocks, *Doing the Town*, 161-162.

⁹⁰ Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1960), 10; M. Christine Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1994), 298-303.

packaged regional performance envisioned for the California State Building at Chicago reveals this mobilization of photographic material.

The choice of Charles B. Turrill as state commissioner for the 1893 fair embodies not only the desire for a historically rich display but also the importance of a commercially appealing depiction of the state. Turrill had been involved in Californian civic life from the 1870s, be it in San Francisco's Academy of Science or the San Diego Chamber of Commerce. He was also an employee of the Southern Pacific Passenger Department in the 1880s when its tourist management experienced a massive upturn.⁹¹ Declaring California his "greatest hobby," Turrill cultivated a strong collecting interest in anything related to the state from the 1870s onward, resulting in a substantial "collection of Californiana" by the early twentieth century. As the first biographer of Carleton Watkins and manager of the photographic firm Turrill & Miller in the early 1900s, he also came into contact with the CCC. In addition, his prolific writings on California earned him the position of state commissioner in the 1884 New Orleans World Cotton Centennial Exposition. In an address at the event, he declared California "an empire," due to its natural resources, scientific achievements, and artistic inspiration – a rhetoric which struck a responsive chord with both his railroad employers and his acquaintances at societies like the CCC. His collection, which was later acquired by the Society of California Pioneers, reflects a deep-seated historical interest, as do his tourist guides and fair catalogs.⁹²

While the 1880s saw a population upturn in San Francisco, the city still lacked cultural institutions. Due to the meager means of state sponsorship for cultural events, parts of the urban scene as well as the state's representation at world's fairs, like the one in Chicago, were substantially funded by the Southern Pacific Company. Strategies "for fashioning a more favorable image for the state, expanding markets for products, and attracting visitors and settlers" constituted goals largely in line with the company's agenda.⁹³ In addition to these aspects, the fabricated narrative of Californian history since the Gold Rush catered to each by attributing a unique character to the state, its landscape, and people. Apart from boosting the local economy, it was the required participation of local groups – like photographers – in this endeavor which led to a popularization of the celebrated discourse on California and its advantages. The creation of a coherent state display which formulated a history of the community allowed participants to actively contribute to and identify with this narrative. Through the combination of Turrill's historical interest and the Southern Pacific's promotional goals, the imagination of a Californian community took on a new shape and was augmented by the striving for

⁹¹ Orsi, *Sunset Limited*, 137-138.

⁹² Information on Turrill retrieved from Thomas Weston Fels, ed., *Documenting Eden: The Wine Country Photographs of Turrill & Miller* (San Francisco: The Society of California Pioneers, 2005). His writings on California include *California Notes* (San Francisco: Edward Bosqui & Co., 1876), and *Catalogs of the Products of California exhibited by the Southern Pacific Company at the North, Central and South American Exposition New Orleans* (New Orleans: Press of W.B. Stansbury & Co., 1886) which includes his address at the California Building. For a discussion of his involvement in promotion and in the Club, see Parts II and III.

⁹³ Orsi, *Sunset Limited*, 139-142.

an idiosyncratic regional canon, be it historical or aesthetic. In his position as manager of California's preliminary world's fair exhibition, Turrill organized a San Franciscan "dress rehearsal" which assembled all the material to be shown at Chicago in the rooms of the Mechanics' Institute in early 1893. His correspondence with the participants as well as the exhibition itself point to the ambitions mentioned above as well as his awareness of local photography's importance for such displays.

Even though the world's fairs held around the turn of the century took on a more commercial character, the "promotion of home industry," as staged in Mechanics' Fairs since the 1860s, still remained an important component.⁹⁴ Especially for the conceptualization of a Californian canon of culture and history, local craftsmanship continued to play a key role. In the display of Californian objects, which included manufactured goods and inventions, agriculture and food products, as well as infrastructural development, the photographic medium was mobilized to lend authenticity. The *Pacific Coast Photographer* appreciated that the organizers "officially recogniz[ed] the value of photography as a means of conveying knowledge" in pointing to the assemblage of costly albums with views of local scenery, architecture, institutions, and agriculture for the counties of Los Angeles and San Bernardino to be presented at the fair.⁹⁵ Exactly this was the request made by Turrill when corresponding with county officials to whom he described the wish to assemble "complete series of photographs, illustrating the different resources[,] industries, and scenery of the respective Counties." These were to "be framed in uniform style, and will thus show in the clearest manner, [their] attractive features, scenic and industrial."⁹⁶

The importance attached to a coherent and visually appealing exhibition of photographs becomes likewise tangible in Turrill's request to the secretary of the California Camera Club, Thomas P. Andrews, whom he asked for a "photographic display" to be shown at Chicago. As Turrill put it: "I am particularly desirous that your society should do some work in that direction, which I believe will redound to its credit and to the advancement of photography."⁹⁷ The eventual absence of any such display of Club work in the catalog of the San Franciscan Mechanics' Fair – for reasons unknown since the secretary's answers are not in the correspondence – reveals again the difficulties of setting up collective displays at the Chicago Fair. As has been remarked in several studies, the majority of the illustrative works shown in the different state buildings was produced by amateurs and camera clubs. Yet, for a large part, they remained uncredited, which makes it even more challenging to evaluate the photographers' contributions on the displays.⁹⁸ In the Californian case, the prevalence of professional works also manifested itself in the preliminary show at the Mechanics' Institute in early

⁹⁴ Haydu, *Citizen Employers*, 185-189.

⁹⁵ J.E.B., "California Photography," *Pacific Coast Photographer* 2, no. 1 (1893): 236.

⁹⁶ Charles B. Turrill to Irwin C. Stump, Esq., June 16, 1892, 3 (Charles B. Turrill Papers, Box 1, Folder 3, Letter no. 138 (BANC MSS C-B 545), the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley).

⁹⁷ Charles B. Turrill to T.P. Andrews, April 27, 1892 (Turrill Papers, Box 1, Folder 3, Letter no. 4).

⁹⁸ Hales, *Silver Cities*, 213-214; Peterson, "A History of Exhibitions of Photography in America, 1887-1917," 99-101.

1893. Apart from a set of landscape views by an associate amateur member of the California Camera Club – listed as “individual photographer (amateur)” – the works destined for Chicago were exclusively professional, including portraits by CCC professional member Theodore Marceau as well as a George Steckel of Los Angeles who exposed “the most artistic pieces of workmanship,” earning him four silver medals.⁹⁹ These professionals would become household names in Los Angeles photography by the late 1890s and contribute to booster publications for Southern California.¹⁰⁰ Both the *Pacific Coast Photographer*’s brief reference to the show at the Mechanics’ Institute and the catalog’s absence of reference to Club affiliation are elements which corroborate the impression that the members did not submit a collectively produced corpus to the San Franciscan preliminary exhibit.

Despite the Club’s effective absence from the fairgrounds, the members’ correspondence with Charles B. Turrill reveals the general interest in the cultivation of a Californian artistic canon. While local photography was relegated to the fringes of professionalism, the paintings to be shown at Chicago were the ones made in the region, that is, the kind of “purely Californian” art which Club members also took as an inspiration. In writing to James D. Phelan, businessman and later mayor of San Francisco, Turrill defined the fair as “an excellent opportunity for making a purely historical art exhibition,” which would include paintings by living and deceased artists of the state. In these displays, Turrill searched for unity and coherence in shaping a canon of local art which was supposed to become “the best display of California art ever gathered together,” that is, one that had to be acknowledged as such.¹⁰¹ The final report of the California state commission after the Chicago fair identified exactly this display as “a great surprise to Eastern visitors.” Assembling loans from local collectors as well as the recently established Mark Hopkins Institute of Art where the SFAA was housed, the exhibition featured ninety oil paintings of Californian artists, including William Keith and Virgil Williams, as well as Yosemite views (**fig. 3.13**). The corridors of the exhibition included watercolors, etchings, and photographs, and most notably 48 views of California scenery by geological survey photographer William Henry Jackson. The display was supposed to serve as:

a valuable object-lesson to visitors, demonstrating to doubting ones that California possesses all the elements of refinement and culture enjoyed by the older States in the Union, notwithstanding the fact that the State is comparatively new and hitherto known chiefly for her material products.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ *Report of the Twenty-seventh Industrial Exposition of the Mechanics’ Institute and Preliminary World’s Fair Exhibit of California, January 10 to February 18, 1893* (San Francisco: Mechanics’ Institute, 1893), 94-95; J.E.B. “He surprised the north,” *Pacific Coast Photographer* 2, no. 3 (1893): 281. The Club’s associate amateur member was R.R. Bulmore of New Amador, whose work is not mentioned in the magazine. The Bancroft Library holds one set of Bulmore’s “Views of New Almaden and New Almaden Quicksilver Mines,” dated ca. 1870-1885.

¹⁰⁰ See Moure, *Loners, Mavericks and Dreamers. Art in Los Angeles Before 1900*, 92.

¹⁰¹ Charles B. Turrill to Jas. D. Phelan, April 27, 1892, 1-2 (Turrill Papers, Box 1, Folder 3, Letter no. 7).

¹⁰² *Final Report of the California World’s Fair Commission* (Sacramento: State Office, A.J. Johnston, Supt. State Printing, 1894), 53-55. Other photographs, like the ones by George Steckel, were shown in the Department of Liberal Arts, see *Final Report*, 125.

The wording of this evaluation again echoes Avery's striving for a sophisticated Californian culture. Yet, it was augmented by a material dimension in referring to the objects as vehicles for instruction and legitimization. The "lessons" derived from these "objects" were to serve the recognition process in showcasing and validating the state's cultural worth. In order to achieve this legitimizing impression, coherency in the visual display – as desired by Turrill – was key, since it enriched the continuity of the nation's history in Californian territories. If, as stated by Trachtenberg, the Western territories and their resources had become the stage for envisioning a coherent national narrative,¹⁰³ the Californian pavilion did not only have to showcase its regional attractions, but just as much expose its relevance for the nation. Turrill developed this double ambition in a circulatory to other fair contributors for the San Franciscan "dress rehearsal." Stressing from the start the importance of proving "that we do not live in a wild, uncultivated country, but that civilization, and all that it implies has 'jumped over,'" he again identified the main stakes for Californian exhibitors. To compensate the absence of physical structures of American history, Turrill drew – like the Californian photographers – on the state's climatic features to elevate its history. These conditions would forge "a civilization, of letters and art, far greater than those in their sunniest days, made Greece and Rome famous."¹⁰⁴ This myth-making discourse on an "American Mediterranean," embodied by California, would take on even stronger symbolic dimensions by the early twentieth century.¹⁰⁵

Another element to add continuity to his endeavor was found in the state pavilion's architectural conception which – like the campus of Stanford University – imitated the style of Franciscan missions. In representing a "new stylistic approach to the Spanish traditions of the American Pacific Coast," the California pavilion constituted the onset of "a 'Pacific' architectural style," which became a means of identification for upcoming fairs (**fig. 3.14**).¹⁰⁶ The architectural conception, according to Turrill, would mirror "the structures [that] these early and earnest explorers have left as mementoes [sic] of their energy and their labors."¹⁰⁷ This re-appropriation of contested mission spaces turned them into architecturally pleasing and historically meaningful elements. They guided the elaboration of a narrative of exploration (rather than exploitation) and pioneering settlement (rather than conquest and conversion). Pushing this continuity even further, Turrill referred to the alleged origin story of the American continent and marked out California's pivotal role in it. As he states: "we, as Californians, have a greater interest in the success of an exposition, celebrating the advent into this country of a navigator sent out by Spain, than have many states."¹⁰⁸ The Spanish presence in the state's history and its architectural remnants became useful elements that not only

¹⁰³ Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America*, 17.

¹⁰⁴ Charles B. Turrill, "Preliminary World's Fair Exhibit of California," 1-2 (Turrill Papers, Box 1, Folder 3).

¹⁰⁵ Starr, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915*, 365-414; see also Part III.

¹⁰⁶ Esau, *Images of the Pacific Rim*, 229-230.

¹⁰⁷ Charles B. Turrill, "Preliminary World's Fair Exhibit of California," 2.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

attributed a cultural and historical interest to the region, but also to made it an indispensable part of the national history articulated at Chicago.

Turrill's ambition to exhibit the history of the pioneers and the representation of a harmonious past and present tied in with the frontier thesis' attempt of "Americanization" of the West. The appropriation of the territory – the "wilderness" – was made possible through the transformation of the landscape by means of technology and settlement. The experience of life in these Western territories hence "combine[d] both frontier mysticism and executive know-how," as suggested by Harold Simonson.¹⁰⁹ Exactly these two elements were also sought out by Turrill, who requested a Southern Pacific exhibit with "photographs of scenery on its lines" and "of many of its engines, etc.,"¹¹⁰ thereby pointing to the landscape which was made accessible through modern technology. The epitome of this display of local inventiveness and aesthetic enjoyment was to be achieved in a "specific scenic exhibit" of the Yosemite. Going beyond photographic depiction, it had to be conceived as "a reproduction" with "an actual stream of water," artificial rocks and trees. Although the display did not materialize, it would have been "arranged to call special attention to one of California's grandest scenic attractions" and, as such, reflects Mitchell's notion of the landscape as both "commodity" and "cultural symbol."¹¹¹ By drawing on the state's rich natural scenery, the use big trees was to furthermore "[confirm] the equation of abundance with empire."¹¹²

While it appears that only two members of the Club actually went to the fair, its impact on the conceptualization of the historical, symbolic, and aesthetic value of the state appeared more compelling than the actual visiting experience. Judging from the event's coverage in the *Pacific Coast Photographer*, the *Chronicle* and *Call*, as well as from the absence of related material in individual members' collections, the rhetoric surrounding the event far outstripped first-hand reports. In a reconciliatory style, Treat – who had attended the fair – published a closing report in the Club's magazine in which he demonstrated comprehension for the organizers' decision to ban photographic apparatus from the grounds. Yet, he still lamented the absence of a more complete photographic record, implying that Arnold's official views did not suffice to capture the experiential dimension of the event.¹¹³ By late 1893, the Club held a lantern lecture in San Francisco with views and reports from Chicago, mentioning that then-president E.P. Gray had also attended the event.¹¹⁴

What appears more important than the meager coverage is the extension of the Club's network

¹⁰⁹ Simonson, *Frederick Jackson Turner*, 9-11.

¹¹⁰ Charles B. Turrill to Mr. T.H. Goodman, April 1892 (Turrill Papers, Box 1, Folder 3, Letter no. 20).

¹¹¹ Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," 15. Letter quoted from Charles B. Turrill to California World's Fair Commission, July 13, 1892 (Turrill Papers, Box 1, Folder 3, Letter no. 238). The *Final Report of the California World's Fair Commission* makes no mention of such a scenic reproduction. The Yosemite was, however, amply represented in relief maps and art works.

¹¹² Vermaas, *Sequoia: The Heralded Tree in American Art and Culture*, 117.

¹¹³ Archibald J. Treat, "Cameras at the Fair," *Pacific Coast Photographer* 2, no. 11 (1893): 456-457.

¹¹⁴ "Lantern and Lens," 10.

to civic figures like Charles B. Turrill, who pursued an agenda similar to the members' quest for recognition. The decisive elements of this quest – combining a search for Western uniqueness and a constant comparison to the East – emerged in this decade and were fed by a search for coherence and continuity. The Californian ambition, which was according to Turrill “to perpetuate the memory of the Pioneers,” inspired this quest and renewed the historical dimension in the local practice of photography. Turrill, who demonstrated a keen awareness of the photographic medium's worth for historic preservation throughout, even wished to establish a museum of Californian history after the fair. Its core collection would consist of the objects shown at the Chicago pavilion which, on return to San Francisco, could be enriched with material held by the Society of California Pioneers.¹¹⁵ Even though this project did not materialize either, it reveals the desire for historical narration and preservation which was invigorated by the promotional efforts undertaken for Chicago.

Interestingly, from a photo-historical point of view, the Chicago Fair also incited projects for institutional preservation of the medium. At the photographers' convention that was held in close proximity to the fairgrounds, the project of an International Bureau for Photographic Survey was sketched out. Suggested by William Jerome Harrison, a British scientist and amateur photographer, the Bureau was inspired by the Warwickshire Survey that documented transformations of the landscape in a systematic manner. The proposal was received as extremely appealing, especially by the prolific photographer Léon Vidal, who would found a museum of documentary photography in Paris the year after the fair. Despite its short-lived existence of a mere decade, Vidal's museum, the survey's archival ambition, as well as the proposal of similar projects in other European countries at the time, demonstrate the keen historical awareness that was cultivated with regard to photography during the 1890s.¹¹⁶ In California, where the links between local history and the history of photography would become more concrete in the early twentieth century, the participation in an international fair triggered the need for a coherent narrative. At the close of the Chicago Fair, the anticipation of another exposition, this time in San Francisco, spurred the ambition among local photographers to contribute more actively to its grounds – and to preserve its outcome for the public.

3.3 A local fair and a local campus: the photographers' internalization of “Westering”

When parts of the Chicago fair were brought to San Francisco for the construction of the California Midwinter Fair, held in Golden Gate Park between January and July 1894, the discourses elaborated at the White City took on an assertive local character. Businessman and commissioner Michael de Young brought together a circle of influential individuals, among whom soon-to-be mayor

¹¹⁵ Charles B. Turrill, circular letter, June 23, 1892 (Turrill Papers, Box 1, Folder 3, no nb.)

¹¹⁶ Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 36-37; Éléonore Challine, *Une histoire contrariée. Le musée de photographie en France (1839-1945)* (Paris: Éditions Macula, 2017), 119-167.

James D. Phelan, to hold the first international exposition West of Chicago. Its goal, in the words of historian Barbara Berglund, was to portray “civilization’s presence on the continent’s edge.” This civilized outlook was emphasized through the labeling of San Francisco as Sunset City. As Phelan put it in his inaugural remarks at the fair: “An empire rises where the sun descends.” The impact of this empire was depicted through a variety of stylistic and historic references, including a sweeping ‘Orientalist’ architecture that would echo European imperialism and similarly express the reach beyond the Pacific. The mixture of Spanish colonial and Asian elements was complemented by a purposefully reshaped frontier narrative. Eager to shed the image of an uncultivated or perhaps even perilous backwater, the fair officials transformed the history of early San Francisco into a nationally meaningful narrative of settlement. In this process, both verbal and visual elements served to mark out the region’s distinctiveness, all the while remaining part of a coherent whole.¹¹⁷

Within the photographers’ community, the duality of regional distinctiveness and national ambition also became tangible. The desire for active contribution to this portrayal first manifested itself in the magazine. The *Pacific Coast Photographer* – which ceased publication due to financial difficulties the same month as the fair started – partly covered the run-up and granted the upcoming San Franciscan exposition more space than the then still ongoing Chicago Fair. It published an engraved view of the Mechanical Arts Building for which photographers could apply for space. The editorial next to the image underlined that the fair constituted a renewed opportunity for display since “thousands will be present who have not had the means or time to attend the Chicago fair” (**fig. 3.15**).¹¹⁸ Local photographers were encouraged to participate in the preparations of the fair and – just like the preceding Photographic Art Society of the Pacific with Rulofson as president – proposed to hold the national congress of the Photographers’ Association of America in San Francisco that year.¹¹⁹ Even though this project did not materialize since the convention would be held in St. Louis, its officials recognized the contributions of Western photographers to the “trade” of photography.¹²⁰ Rather than disseminating works, the intention of the fair was to bring large publics to California to experience the surroundings first hand. While on this occasion, again, professionals took strong possession of the photographic management, the California Camera Club was able to collectively cover and also show individual works at the fair. The following discussion proposes an examination of the works of and reactions to the official fair photographer, Isaiah W. Taber, followed by a more in-depth study of the Club’s most notable fair contribution – the documentary project of the University of California at Berkeley by Club member Oscar V. Lange.

¹¹⁷ Berglund, *Making San Francisco American*, 171-177.

¹¹⁸ Editorial, *Pacific Coast Photographer* 2, no. 10 (1893): 427.

¹¹⁹ Editorial, *Pacific Coast Photographer* 2, no. 6 (1893): 339.

¹²⁰ “The St. Louis Convention,” *American Amateur Photographer* 6 (1894): 365-368.

In order to overcome the “outrageous” decision of the Chicago officials to impose a fee and material restrictions on photographers, the *Pacific Coast Photographer* advocated in favor of ‘pure’ amateur work at the San Franciscan fair. Mobilizing the distinction between amateur and professional – which had been reconciled in the shape of the CCC – the magazine drew on this artificial division in order to stress the importance of artistic, non-commercial work.¹²¹ Given the fierce competition among San Franciscan photographers that had dominated the scene for decades, the rallying cry rapidly trailed off. By the summer of 1893, rumors of a photographic concession referred to Isaiah W. Taber, a decision which the magazine described as “the nonsensical idea of selling the photographing privilege to *one* man and allowing him to bar out all other photographers at will.”¹²² Conceived against the collective practice pursued by the Club, the decision was considered an affront to the members’ popular local position. By late 1893, however, Taber was appointed official fair photographer. The fair committee, with the latter’s consent, had decided to “[extend] more courtesies than at the Chicago fair” to amateurs, meaning that they did not pay an admission fee and were allowed to use any format up to 5” x 7” without a tripod.¹²³

About the same time as this announcement was made, the Club communicated to local newspapers its preparation of a potential exhibition in the fine arts pavilion that would include up to 1,500 prints “in readiness before the exhibition will be formally opened.”¹²⁴ This statement cannot be verified materially as the fair literature and catalogs do not mention any Club display.¹²⁵ The only direct involvement of Club members can be found in the official history of the fair, which listed the juries and prizes attributed at the various departments. Here, Club secretary T.P. Andrews served as juror in the Department of Liberal Arts, which showcased in Group 133 “instruments of precision, experiments, research and photography. Photographs.” The gold medals and diplomas of this section went to F.G. Schumacher of Los Angeles for a series of platinum prints and, of course, to Isaiah W. Taber for his “general photographic display.” No photographers were listed in the fine art display.¹²⁶ The Department of Fine Arts did include, however, works by renowned members of the SFAA and its School of Design, which had been recently affiliated with the University of California at Berkeley as the Mark Hopkins Institute of Arts. Its catalog demonstrated the persistent focus on Californian subject matter, including artists like Williams, Nahl, and Keith.¹²⁷ Importantly, the staging of this

¹²¹ Editorial, *Pacific Coast Photographer* 2, no. 7 (1893): 364.

¹²² Editorial, *Pacific Coast Photographer* 2, no. 6 (1893): 339.

¹²³ Editorial, *Pacific Coast Photographer* 2, no. 12 (1893): 472.

¹²⁴ “Camera Club Exhibit,” *San Francisco Call*, September 14, 1893, 4.

¹²⁵ There is no trace to be found on this collective display by Club members at the fair in newspapers or fair accounts. To my knowledge, there is no official itemized catalog listing the displays of each department.

¹²⁶ *The Official History of the California Midwinter International Exposition* (San Francisco: Press of H. S. Crocker, 1894), 217-218, 228-229.

¹²⁷ See John A. Stanton, *California Midwinter International Exposition, 1894. Official Catalogue: Department of Fine Arts* (San Francisco: Harvey, Whitcher & Allen, 1894).

exhibition on the fairgrounds in Golden Gate Park formed the onset of institutionalized museum culture in San Francisco. After 1895, the fine arts pavilion was transformed into the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum – named after *Chronicle* owner and fair commissioner Michael H. de Young.¹²⁸

Given Taber's prominent position in San Franciscan business and tourism as well as his large-scale production of illustrated brochures and albums, it is not surprising that his aggressive visual boosterism was chosen by fair organizers for official documentation.¹²⁹ Since the moderate scale of the California Midwinter Exposition needed a powerful visual vocabulary to attest to its representation of "the frontier as an accomplished fact," the choice of Taber was instrumental to reach large audiences. The attempt to portray San Francisco and its architecturally sophisticated fair venues as "the Paris of the West" led to the emergence of a new image of the Western United States, to which photography was to contribute. The "coming of age" of the city, implying "refinement, patronage, and culture" as in the establishment of the museum, was extended in the 1900s by the Association for Improvement and Adornment of San Francisco. This organization, of which Phelan was the most virulent supporter, would adopt the Burnham Plan to embellish the city with parks, monuments, and grand boulevards – a symbolic choice since Daniel Burnham had designed Chicago's "White City" of 1893.¹³⁰ Having met Burnham at Chicago, Phelan was likewise inspired by Haussmann's grand rebuilding of Paris and was especially desirous to apply this narrative to San Francisco, where it would play out "imperial" scenarios in architecture, boulevards, and monuments.¹³¹

In line with the ideals of social harmony and progress proclaimed at Chicago, the San Franciscan fair promoted the same visions which were metaphorically enriched by its emplacement. As Phelan stated at the opening in January 1894:

The Metropolis of the Pacific [...] holds an International Exposition of the arts, industries and sciences [...], and California as a great American state, holds up its head proudly and says for the American people; yes, we have reached the Pacific Ocean! Civilization has completed its orbit; but it will henceforth move upward instead of onward. And as that civilization, of which an international exposition is the highest exponent, has for six thousand years followed the pathway of the sun, and has come from the distant east even unto the remotest west, it is singularly appropriate that this enchanting spot where we now stand would have been called 'The Sunset City.'¹³²

The proposal of San Francisco as the ideal location for the reenactment of a millennial narrative of

¹²⁸ Issel and Cherny, *San Francisco, 1865-1932*, 111; Berglund, *Making San Francisco American*, 258. De Young's activities as short-term CCC member are unknown.

¹²⁹ Kurutz, introduction to *Taber: A Photographic Legacy*, 13-16.

¹³⁰ Gray A. Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 151-154, 180-185; Moore, *Empire on Display*, 75-79. The Burnham Plan, envisioned for 1905, was never implemented since the aftermath of the earthquake and fire of 1906 required rapid reconstruction rather than beautification, see Part III.

¹³¹ Philip J. Ethington, *The Public City: The Political Construction of Urban Life in San Francisco, 1850-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 377-387. For further information on Phelan, see also Part III.

¹³² James D. Phelan quoted in Birt, "Envisioning the City," 282.

civilization mirrored the geographic identity promoted in Turner's thesis. As an extension of the Chicago fair, the Midwinter Exposition then had to live up to the promoted history of 1893 by portraying the American West as a nationally meaningful and culturally refined place.

As remarked by Rodger Birt, the photographic realization of this narrative could draw on a long tradition of urban promotion which had started with Fardon and was made more effective through the large-scale dissemination that the recently conceived halftone printing process allowed. Taber's official fair publication, *The Monarch Souvenir*, capitalized on these newly affordable printing methods and thereby the imagery of the fair – which was accompanied by views of the Yosemite (that Taber had reused from Watkins) – could be made available to larger portions of society. Through these technological improvements, a broader reception was achieved and the reputation as a culturally refined place was bolstered (**fig. 3.16**). The circulating views essentially carried the same “utopic ideals of urban *communitas* that had been basic to San Franciscan photographers' images since the Gold Rush”¹³³

To drive home the point of what this community had achieved since its inception and what it was characterized by, the ideological repercussions of geography and minerals – as earlier mentioned by Alan Trachtenberg – were mobilized at the fair in the shape of a mineral exhibition with a mining section (**fig. 3.17**). Its highlight was a golden ball, referred to as the “Gold Monument,” which was supposed to represent “what California's total output of gold [...] would look like if it was cast into a solid globe.” While its financial worth added up to “thirteen hundred million dollars,” it was intended to spur “the visitor's imagination” in “[w]hat it represents in labor, ingenuity, endurance and pluck.”¹³⁴ The showcasing of the condensed monetary value of what could be found in the Californian soil honored the promise of prosperity in the West, upheld since the Gold Rush of 1849.

As with the Chicago fairgrounds, visitors of Sunset City experienced a packaged tour and were enticed to “consume” the promoted ideas of culture, history, and civilization.¹³⁵ Taber contributed to the package by providing amenities to have a “souvenir photograph” taken in the three-story Taber Photographic Building, which also included galleries showing his Pacific Coast works in a large variety of formats and printing processes.¹³⁶ Ads for the Taber Building also referred to “iridium photographs” – a specialty which he had falsely marketed as color photographs. In 1892, this strategy had been criticized in the pages of the *Pacific Coast Photographer* as an unprecedented and yet very

¹³³ Birt, “Envisioning the City,” 286-293; see Isaiah W. Taber, *The Monarch Souvenir of Sunset City and sunset scenes; being views of California Midwinter Fair and famous scenes in the Golden State* (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker, 1894).

¹³⁴ *Official Guide to the California Midwinter Exposition in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco* (San Francisco: G. Spaulding & Co., 1894), 77-80.

¹³⁵ Birt, “Envisioning the City,” 290.

¹³⁶ Taliesin Evans, *All about the Midwinter Fair, San Francisco, and interesting facts concerning California*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: W.B. Bancroft & Co., 1894), 167.

effective commercialization of “poor, painted plain paper prints.”¹³⁷ Confronted with Taber’s monopoly on photographic commissions and his relentless advertisement strategies, members of the California Camera Club had to rectify their earlier celebration of inventiveness in the history of the medium “from the days of Daguerre to the days of Taber.” Yet, given their relative absence from the fair grounds and the scarcity of Club works produced at the fair, it seems that Taber’s strategy of dominance proved efficient.

A number of surviving Midwinter Fair slides made by Club member H.T. Henning could have been part of the set of “twenty-two special slides” on the San Franciscan fair which the New York Society of Amateur Photographers received via the Lantern Slide Interchange in 1894. A brief evaluation of the slides in the *American Amateur Photographer* praised the variety of architectural views, especially the Japanese Tea Garden and the construction of a Forty-niner stage coach.¹³⁸ Surviving slides of the set show the various pavilions, alongside Taber’s three-story building advertising “Crystal Views of California” (**fig. 3.18**). It also included the view of a Columbus statue which served to reenact the Chicagoan narrative in the West (**fig. 3.19**). To complete this history, a gold miners’ camp was reconstructed for visitors’ immersion into the “pioneer experience” (**fig. 3.20**). The latter attraction was particularly important in the narrative conception of the fair. By showing “how the hardy California miner worked and lived” and inviting old pioneers to the camp, the site was considered one of the most authentic and historically valuable venues. It served the contemporary need to preserve the state’s foundational history and allowed both locals and visitors to reenact scenarios of communal settlement and accumulation of wealth.¹³⁹

In line with the celebration of its geographic location, a significant portion of the fairgrounds was designed in the earlier mentioned “Pacific Style,” which in this case was to connect Californian culture to Hawaiian, Japanese, and Chinese history. Not only the geography but also the populations of these countries were packaged as consumable goods in the various pavilions and performances in order to instruct the publics in an “authentic” manner (**fig 3.21**).¹⁴⁰ The depiction of foreign, “exotic” cultures within reach of the Pacific constituted another tool to demarcate Californian geography from the rest of the country and to portray the region’s minority populations as “potential colonial subjects” within an emerging empire.¹⁴¹ In the search for uniqueness, these aestheticized representations of Asian peoples and customs would become, by the 1900s, a standard strategy employed to articulate a Californian style.

¹³⁷ Editorial, *Pacific Coast Photographer* 1, no. 8 (1892): 132-133; see also Palmquist and Kailbourn, *Pioneer Photographers*, 540.

¹³⁸ “Society of Amateur Photographers,” *American Amateur Photographer* 6 (1894): 471-472. See San Francisco Lantern Slide Collection (SFP49), Box 3 (Fairs, Midwinter) at San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

¹³⁹ Berglund, *Making San Francisco American*, 193-200.

¹⁴⁰ Esau, *Images of the Pacific Rim*, 230.

¹⁴¹ Berglund, *Making San Francisco American*, 179-185.

Before the various indigenous and foreign inhabitants were turned into elements of cultural demarcation and aesthetic musing, the landscape was to remain the most prominent feature for shaping a Californian culture. In this process, the emerging learned institutions – and most notably the University of California at Berkeley – benefited from and were infused with the historicized discourse on the territory. The campus, established in 1868, had been embedded in the promotional machinery from early on, for example through the *Pacific Coast Souvenir* of 1888 which referred to it as an institution unequaled in grandeur.¹⁴² In order to illustrate how the campus became part of the national discourse of the West, the following section proposes an analysis of a photographic project on the UCB by Club member and professional photographer Oscar V. Lange. Photographing the various university departments and sections of campus around 1893, Lange displayed his works in the University of California exhibit at the Midwinter Fair the following year (**fig. 3.22**).

While much of the material shown at fairs served promotional goals, it will be argued here that Lange's project moved beyond a mere commercialization by subsequently distributing the images on numerous supports and attaching new meanings to it. The visual inventory of the campus traveled from framed exposition views, to lantern slides shown at the CCC, to prints in voluminous albums conceived for preservation at the university archives. Each reproduction context of had a specific performative function, be it promotional fair display, historical documentation, or local entertainment and instruction. The itinerant visual content was framed by a historicizing discourse, revealing what Elizabeth Edwards termed “consolidated narrative[s],” that is, the words were authenticated by the photograph's “reality effect” and merged into a narrative that targeted an insertion into national history.¹⁴³

If, according to Daniels, national identity is informed “by other forms of cultural-geographic identity, of region and locality,” Lange's photographic project of UCB and its reuses point to this negotiation of national identity through site-specific documentation. Through his visual inventory of the university, the surrounding areas, as well as the elaborated narrative on campus life, we come to understand how the production of landscape views becomes “a powerful mode of knowledge and social engagement.” It furthermore reveals the inherent connection between landscape representation and the fabrication of a historical narrative.¹⁴⁴ In the following discussion of the various platforms conceived for Lange's images, an attempt will be made to reevaluate the “amateur” designation as a distinctive mark for aesthetic, handcrafted, and historically conscious photographic production – in spite of the maker's professional background.

Lange, appearing on the San Franciscan photographic market in the mid 1880s, is part of the

¹⁴² Johnston, *Pacific Coast Souvenir*, 7.

¹⁴³ Edwards, afterword to *Photo Archives and the Idea of Nation*, 321-322.

¹⁴⁴ Daniels, *Fields of Vision*, 4, 8.

large number of Californian photographers whose output, despite its scope and diversity, is considered as “often overlooked” (**fig. 3.23**).¹⁴⁵ After working with stereograph producer Ernest W. Newth, Lange set up his own studio in the mid 1880s on Market and later on Montgomery Street, where, by 1895, he entered into business with CCC secretary and photographic supplier Thomas P. Andrews. As a professional, Lange had been an honorary member of the PCAPA and subsequently joined the CCC as active member. In both societies, he lectured extensively on photographic apparatus and printing processes.¹⁴⁶ Despite or perhaps because of his professionalism, he was considered an experienced instructor for aesthetic composition and published a series of four articles on the subject in the *Pacific Coast Photographer*. In relying on material gathered in the Club’s library and using his own “illustrations of Western scenery,” Lange encouraged fellow members to improve their practice in and through the local surroundings.¹⁴⁷

While pursuing this “amateur” vein of the practice, Lange at the same time was involved in promotional and commissioned works, for example group portraits of employees of local firms, like the Central Pacific Railroad in Sacramento (**fig. 3.24**). Due to his connection to both the Club and the professional photographers of the city, Lange was commissioned by local magazines, most notably the *Wasp*. The *Wasp Christmas Souvenir* of 1898 reproduced engravings made from Lange’s large-angle views which, in their attempt at coherence, were supposed to “show San Francisco as it really is.” The magazine included some twenty-five views and two collages, and appreciated his work as “a remarkable photographic feat.” Following the “grand style” promoted in views of the White City, the photographs had been taken on an early Sunday morning. In underlining the accessibility of the streets, details of architecture, and availability of public space, they drew on the ideal of a “Paris of the West” with elegant boulevards and a cultivated population. The captions furthermore referred to the “early days” of the city to stress the longevity of its institutions conceived in a time of instability. They also showed urban facilities like a fire insurance company – an indispensable feature of civic life in San Francisco, as already recognized in Fardon’s album made after the numerous fires during the early years of settlement. In their combination of architectural and technological advance, the photographs were mobilized to celebrate urban refinement (**fig. 3.25, fig. 3.26, fig. 3.27**).¹⁴⁸

The *Wasp* referred to Lange as a well-known photographer, especially for his UCB views, and indeed, as a local of Berkeley, he had produced some of the first photographic works on the town. In a published souvenir album of the 1880s, he mixed collages of photographs, poems, and historical accounts. In declaring “the town of Berkeley the ideal community of the Pacific Coast,” Lange

¹⁴⁵ Gary F. Kurutz, *California Pastorale: Selected Photographs, 1860-1925* (Sausalito: Windgate Press, 1997), 12.

¹⁴⁶ For business information, see Mautz, *Biographies of Western Photographers*, 118. Further biographical information retrieved from the Oscar V. Lange Papers, 1887-1913 (BANC MSS 78/133 c), the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

¹⁴⁷ O.V. Lange, “Composition,” *Pacific Coast Photographer* 1, no. 3 to no. 6 (1892); quoted here from no. 4, 65.

¹⁴⁸ *Wasp. Christmas Souvenir Edition* 40, no. 26 (1898).

referred to the university's impact on the local population and its proximity to rural areas. As the home to artists like William Keith and a meeting place for members of the Bohemian Club and the Sierra Club, Berkeley had been a championed location for outdoor artistic engagement from early on.¹⁴⁹ With his photographic project conceived for the University of California at Berkeley, Lange joined the ranks of photographers who, in the words of Peter Palmquist, had “take[n] on a distinctively Western tenor.” In their photographic depiction of “regional pride,” the landscape was mobilized both as a tool for historical narration and as a projection for future scenarios.¹⁵⁰ Lange pursued these two goals in the documentary project – by exposing it at the Midwinter Fair and by preserving its scope in three albums at the university archives. Shifting from popular entertainment to preservation to public instruction, the same series of images were reused for the lantern slide lecture “Through the University of California with a Camera” given by Lange at the CCC in the mid and late 1890s.

The three albums preserved at the Bancroft Library on Berkeley campus include some 250 images, which range from campus views of buildings, flora and fauna, to inventories of the various departments and libraries, as well as scenes of student life. The purpose statement printed on the inside of the cover recommended the framed photographs shown at the fair to “be carefully stored [...] for future exhibitions, fairs, etc.” Its duplicates were to “be deposited with the Librarian, to be mounted in portfolios, as a permanent historical record of the University in 1894,” and all departments depicted in the project should receive a duplicate.¹⁵¹ Lange's photographs in the three portfolios were identified as salted paper prints resembling photogravures with “a faux plate mark in the paper.” This process, which was used by Fardon for the *San Francisco Album* but mostly discarded after the 1860s, was re-appreciated by amateur photographers in the late nineteenth century for their “matte surface, soft appearance, and diffused details.” Lange's addition of a plate mark would insert him, as suggested by Bancroft Library pictorial archivist James Eason, in a “print-making tradition” and augment the historicity of the works.¹⁵²

In cultivating an awareness of earlier photographic processes and the history of the medium in general, Pictorialist photographers of the period appreciated the “painterly quality” of such prints. The reference to photographic antecedents and technically more demanding processes would lend their works more depth.¹⁵³ Lange, despite his professionalism, adopted the same style for the commissioned UCB works. In his numerous lectures at the PCAPA and the CCC, he further

¹⁴⁹ O.V. Lange, *Beautiful Berkeley* (San Francisco: O.V. Lange, Photo. and Publisher, 1887-1890); Ed Herny, et al., *Berkeley Bohemia: Artists and Visionaries of the Early Twentieth Century* (Layton: Gibbs Smith, Publisher, 2008), 11-66.

¹⁵⁰ Palmquist and Kailbourn, *Pioneer Photographers*, 60.

¹⁵¹ O.V. Lange, “Photographs of the University of California,” 1894 (ff 308gv 1894, vol. 1-3), the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

¹⁵² See Kennel, *In the Darkroom*, 71. James Eason (principal pictorial archivist, Bancroft Library), e-mail message to author, April 6 and May 3, 2017.

¹⁵³ Nordström and Wooters, “Crafting the Art of the Photograph,” 34.

elaborated on these processes, for example by showing prints of “views in and about San Francisco” in an 11” x 14” format on plain silver paper.¹⁵⁴ This focus on the craft of making photographs was what would turn the images into art objects – a strategy of Pictorialist photography that was inspired by the Arts & Crafts movement. The embrace of what Christian Peterson labeled “the photograph beautiful” emerged in the mid 1890s and would thrive in California in the early twentieth century. It was a style which, especially in the Berkeley community, drew on an ideal of simplicity of life in alignment with the local landscape, its resources, and individual handcraft.¹⁵⁵

The awareness of the history of the medium and of local history in general become tangible in Lange’s UCB project and its subsequent uses. It ties in with a general historical consciousness which the CCC developed from the mid 1890s and which became more marked by the beginning of the following decade. Perhaps inspired by Lange’s work, the Club announced in 1895 to “secure a collection of photographs of familiar and historic buildings and localities in this city before they disappear,” and disseminate them in the shape of albums and lantern slide sets.¹⁵⁶ While the preparation, existence, and fate of this Club collection is unknown, Lange’s UCB project provides a closer insight into the historical and preservationist ambitions of local photographers in general. Despite its promotional undertone, the conception of the project and its distribution on different platforms reveal a profound historical interest. By acknowledging the region’s isolation from the rest of the national territory as well as its comparative “newness,” Lange formulated a local history which reached into the present and toward the future. As the campus was still under construction – a project to which he contributed photographically the same way as Treat had for Stanford University in the 1880s – Lange understood that Californian history was similarly “in the making.” Like his contemporary Turrill and numerous other photographers of the time, he recognized the historical utility of photographs and their contribution to the Western narrative. This engagement becomes further palpable in Lange’s civic engagement in the city, most notably his endorsement of the Berkeley Public Library.¹⁵⁷

The images included in the fair, album, and lantern slide lecture follow the narrative of the American West conceived in the early 1890s in that their conception echoes the search for recognition

¹⁵⁴ “Amateur Photographers,” *Daily Alta California*, July 11, 1890, 1.

¹⁵⁵ Peterson, “The Photograph Beautiful, 1895-1915,” 189-232; Karen J. Weitze, “Utopian Place Making: The Built Environment in Arts and Crafts California,” in *The Arts and Crafts Movement in California: Living the Good Life*, ed. Kenneth R. Trapp (Oakland and New York: The Oakland Museum and Abbeville Press Publishers, 1993), 87. For further discussion of the Arts & Crafts scene and its relation to the California Camera Club, see Part III.

¹⁵⁶ “The California Camera Club,” *American Amateur Photographer* 7 (1895): 373.

¹⁵⁷ For an overview of the connections between historical societies and amateur photographers in the U.S., see Brunet, *La Photographie Histoire et Contre-histoire*, 148-152. The Oscar V. Lange Papers include newspaper clippings on his support of the Berkeley Public Library as well as an article mentioning a series of “jointless panoramas, made with a telescopic camera” which documented a possible extension of the UCB campus envisioned by Berkeley-based architect Bernard Maybeck. Lange also photographed the grounds of Stanford University in 1895 and 1898, resulting in two albums available at the Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University.

of a Californian culture and history. Photographs of Lange's UCB Midwinter Fair display were reproduced as glass plates in the lantern slide lecture "Through the University of California with a Camera," shown as the 79th lecture of the California Camera Club in 1896.¹⁵⁸ A later typescript of the lecture refers to this section of the Midwinter Fair as "an impressive imitation of an Ionic temple, trimmed with colors like ancient Greek architecture."¹⁵⁹ At the time, comparisons between Berkeley and Greece were carefully constructed by the university regent William Randolph Hearst. He forged the campus' "reputation as Athens of the West" by emphasizing the university's "mission to civilize." Furthermore, analogies to Greece allowed local promoters to embed the outdoor character of Californian art into a classical tradition – an aspect that would become especially important in Berkeley's art circles of the 1900s. The civilizational aspect of the display then tied in with the broader conception of an intellectual and politically powerful Californian society that would rely on its very own learning institutions.¹⁶⁰

The emplacement of the campus was key for a further elaboration of this search for civilizational continuity: with reference to a site on campus called "Founder's Rock," where apparently "the founders of the U.C. sat when they looked across the verdant undulating slope out through the Golden Gate," Lange anticipated its location as "the future Oxford of the Western Empire."¹⁶¹ The retracing of this specific location as a historic site from which the future for the region was envisioned infused the lecture with patriotic sentiment. Just as in the sweeping *mélange* of stylistic and historic allusions at the Midwinter Fair, the lecture on the Berkeley campus integrated diverse conceptions, reaching from medieval European institutions to the philosophers of ancient Greece. Since the 1890s were a period in which local historical awareness was accentuated, Lange's narrative of the local campus must be seen as part of the process of "American empire building" in the West, which the fairs largely endorsed.¹⁶² Again, the staging of this narrative – first as part of an international exposition, then as a lantern slide lecture on a screen in an ostentatious setting – anticipated the local audiences' receptiveness to and support of its content.

The Californian cultural canon that had been envisioned by the PCAPA and the Club was similarly taken up in the lecture. The walking tour of the campus included a series of photographs of the Bacon Art and Library Building, which were prominently displayed in the Midwinter Fair booth of the University (**fig. 3.28a**, **fig. 3.28b**). A photograph of the library alcoves displaying three floors

¹⁵⁸ "A College and a Camera," *San Francisco Call*, December 14, 1896, 12. The lantern slides are included in a larger collection, see "Lantern Slides of University of California Scenes," ca. 1893-1904 (UARC PIC 27E), the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. For the accompanying typescript, see O.V. Lange, "Through the University of California with a Camera," 1899 (f 308gv 1899 L274), the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

¹⁵⁹ Lange, "Through the University," 27.

¹⁶⁰ Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco*, 286-289; Starr, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915*, 379-385.

¹⁶¹ Lange, "Through the University," 8.

¹⁶² Moore, *Empire on Display*, 4.

of bookcases next to ornate balustrades invited the viewer to imagine the size of the spacious atrium. It was followed by another image taken from the upper floor of the library: to the left, it revealed large bookcases which channeled the viewer's gaze toward the softly illuminated ceiling. Here, just enough daylight penetrated through to shape a flattering contrast of wrought iron pillars against a soft white ceiling ornamentation (**fig. 3.29**, **fig. 3.30**). Declaring the library the "treasure house of the University," Lange proceeded with an inventorial note on the 75,000 volumes stored in the building, including generous donations "from many public spirited citizens" as well as alumni. As the heart piece of the campus, this repository – and Lange's description of it – identified the library as a shrine of locally produced knowledge.¹⁶³

After visiting the library, spectators caught a glimpse of the art gallery where "[t]he eye first rests upon the large canvas of Lentze [sic], the celebrated historical painting 'Washington at the Battle of Monmouth,' presented by Mrs. Mark Hopkins" (**fig. 3.31**).¹⁶⁴ As a donation from a railroad patron's family, the painting was attributed a meaningful local venue. Bringing together local sponsorship of the arts and the representation of a decisive moment during the American War of Independence, the presence of Leutze's painting in the UCB's art gallery anticipated a grand national future. The early history of the nation was used here to envision a future in the country's Westernmost expanse. The painting's historical momentum was further emphasized by two marble sculptures. As a symbolic hint to earlier civilizations, inviting the viewer to contemplate the staged narrative, they forged a link to more ancient historical scenarios.

If these displays were supposed to project the thriving local culture onto a national stage, its institutional importance had to be further illuminated. Since the inventory of the university departments and the additional coverage of the Lick Observatory celebrated scientific achievement, the local artistic scene was bolstered through the architecture of the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art. Situated on Nob Hill next to the Stanford residence, the Hopkins mansion – from whose tower Muybridge had realized his panorama in 1877 – had become accessible to students of art through an affiliation of the SFAA and the UCB, resulting in a new home of the California School of Design. The mansion, conceived in the Gothic revival style, showcased exactly the degree of historicity, refinement, and grandiosity which was needed to compete with Eastern art institutions. The monumental design of the mansion's interior and its ample space made it, according to Lange, "one of the grandest halls of its kind in the United States" (**fig. 3.32**, **fig. 3.33**).¹⁶⁵ With its emplacement upon a hill, its neo-Gothic architecture, skylights installed at a height of seven meters allowing for stark contrasts, and an atrium with an organ as central piece, the Institute embodied a temple-like

¹⁶³ Lange, "Through the University," 14-15.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

structure for the contemplation of art. As an inspiration for students, the venue would ensure the production of a sophisticated form of art through teaching and exhibitions. The catalogs produced for these occasions featured each a brief historical description which identified Hopkins as “one of California’s pioneer citizens.”¹⁶⁶

This reference to Californian pioneers which attributed historical grandeur to local institutions would be picked up anew, a few years later, by photographers of the California Camera Club – including Lange – when hosting three San Francisco Photographic Salons, between 1901 and 1903, at the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art. The affiliation of the Institute with the University of California at Berkeley as well as its integration of the School of Design provided exactly the institutional framework which the Club photographers had desired for legitimizing their work. The monumental design of the Institute allowed for a respectable form of competition with Eastern venues while at the same time portraying West Coast photographers in a dignified local setting. The “commanding [...] view of the entire city and the country for miles around,” which had appealed to Stanford and Muybridge in envisioning a prosperous future for the region, embodied the symbolic and institutional emplacement needed for Californian photographers to showcase a mature practice.¹⁶⁷

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If we are to evaluate the first decade of the Club’s existence from a photographic and a local historical point of view, Oscar V. Lange’s output forms a veritable red thread. His professional anchorage in the city, already appreciated by members of the PCAPA, was mobilized on a much more efficient scale by the rapidly growing CCC in the 1890s. Possessing a studio in the heart of the city for more than a decade, Lange was acquainted not only with a widespread network of other practitioners, but also cultivated ties to local booster organizations in San Francisco and across the Bay in Berkeley. In the framework of the Midwinter Fair, it was his photographic inventory which furnished a substantial localized input to the display. In this context, Lange, who had produced portraits of railroad workers and illustrated tourist brochures before, showcased his mastery of the Californian booster discourse *and* of the photographic medium. By the same token, the works shown at the fair demonstrated the emerging development of an idiosyncratic visual vocabulary that had been long adopted by professionals and found increasing appeal with the CCC membership.

It is through the itinerary of Lange’s project that we can trace the diverse involvements of Club photographers. Next to the targeting of promotional publishers and local commissioners, the visual inventory of the UCB had a significant value for the local learning institution itself and for the community. The keen awareness attached to the region’s recent history and the sketching of a promising future were two elements that would be explored by Club photographers from the

¹⁶⁶ *Catalog of the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art* (San Francisco: San Francisco Art Association, 1900), n.p.

¹⁶⁷ “Pacific Coast Salon a Fact,” *Camera Craft* 1, no. 5 (1900): 264-267.

foundation of the Club. It was through the anticipation of the Chicago Exposition and the collaboration with commissioner Charles B. Turrill that members became strikingly aware of their role as local photographers and as contributors to the state's representation. By combining photographs with words – for example in the UCB lecture refashioned as a walking tour on campus or an armchair travel to the Yosemite via the Interchange – members came to define their territorial practice more forcefully. In these endeavors, the establishing of a close link to the local community, as well as the outreach to national publics, served the goal of demarcating the region's distinctive feature – and as such, the display of California's cultural legitimacy. In this process, the Chicago World's Fair represented a preparatory exercise for the Midwinter Fair in San Francisco the following year, when the collectively elaborated discourse was more fiercely pronounced.

What proved essential to the Club's self-definition as an inclusive communal organization was the circulation of material on various supports. The elaboration of a local narrative, displayed for international visitors at the Midwinter Fair, orally transmitted to San Franciscan publics, and materially preserved at the university archives, benefited from distribution in diverse formats with multiple purposes. In this process, the question of a "professional" or an "amateur" production came second, as the foremost interest was the aesthetic appreciation of the landscape. Club photographers hence diversified their strategies of "do[ing] justice" to the local surroundings by perfecting their practice and expanding their communication platforms.

Conclusion

As questions of amateurism versus professionalism – and the refined use of the medium to the benefit of the city and its culture – had come to dominate San Francisco’s photographic community, the appearance of the California Camera Club at the close of the century reshuffled the cards. While earlier professional organizations constantly sought to mark out the sophistication of their works through regulation and commissions by railroad patrons, the Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association attempted to impose an “amateur” principle on local production. As the PCAPA eventually disbanded – over a struggle related to commercialization – the California Camera Club decided to embrace an inclusive strategy. Rather than supporting either professionals or amateurs, the Club recognized the versatility of local practice and struck a balance between the longstanding professional ranks and the newly emerging leisure activities in the city. In this setup, the historic precedents of photographic business in San Francisco, the medium’s commercial potential, and its increasing attractiveness to the public coalesced in a new kind of photographic activity. Combining professionalism and leisure, technicity and artistic ambition, the Club could widen its reach and improve its results through dynamic exchanges in the shape of lectures, exhibitions, and outings. Over the course of the first decade of its existence, members started to distribute their productions in a variety of places – regardless of where the amateur/professional dividing line would be drawn.

By taking up cooperation with railroad commissioners and prestigious learning institutions, Club members forged the kind of prosperous and culturally embedded practice which the photographers’ associations of the 1870s had envisioned. Through a growing interest in the history and future of the region and an awareness of the medium’s uses, the collective set out to shape a canon of Californian imagery which had been desired for a long time. The staging of this imagery in the city’s culturally refined venues corresponded to the ambition of formulating an aesthetics of the local landscape that was attractive to and celebrated by the local population. The extension of collaboration between local photographers and institutions – as in Treat’s documentation of the Stanford campus, Lange’s inventory of the University of California at Berkeley, and the CCC’s correspondence with Turrill – shows how the photographers of the late nineteenth century renewed the interest in state at large and defined it as the heart piece of their practice.

This reinvigoration of photographer-patron relations attests to the importance of the precursor period between the 1850s and 1870s. It was in this period that the structure and interactions of the local marketplace would be defined for the upcoming years. The advanced railroad infrastructure, the accessibility of the Yosemite, and the staging of exhibitions in the city’s few prestigious institutions could only become such strong anchorage points for the CCC thanks to the earlier-established relationships. Here, the combination of patrons’ means, of access via the railroad, and of the

discourses on Californian uniqueness merged into a powerful support for photographic work. Thanks to these intertwined developments of the mid-century, the PCAPA and even more the CCC could benefit from San Francisco's still rudimentary and yet indispensable cultural and economic conditions. It was through these intimate collaborations between medium and city, between patrons and public discourse, that Club members would integrate photography into the young culture of the West Coast and come to consider themselves as part of a process of Californian community creation.

As the goal of this young Western American culture was two-fold – on the one hand mapping out its uniqueness and on the other searching for recognition from the East Coast – the photographers targeted national dissemination channels. Here, the Chicago and Midwinter Fairs of the 1890s formed the point of departure of a more rigorous desire to be represented as a camera club rooted in a prosperous community on the Western edge of the continent. The fairs provided a platform to not only celebrate technological advance and artistic appeal, but also to insert local expressions of photography into an ongoing nation-building project. While the narrative of the American nation in the West urged Californian fair contributors to showcase a coherent local history, it likewise constituted a useful starting point for photographers to decorate their practice with historical weight and aesthetic potential. Through the cooperation with railroad sponsors and historically interested organizers like Charles B. Turrill, the Club became part of a network of local boosterism in which photography had played an essential role from the mid nineteenth century. In applying an “amateur ideology” of artistic study and historical consciousness to their production, Club members like Oscar V. Lange became the first practitioners whose work consciously integrated the “Westering” discourses developed since the beginnings of photographic production in San Francisco.

Since the fair contributions, the first magazine publication, as well as the staging of lectures were rather short-lived endeavors – difficult to retrace in the long-term – the Club would opt for a more institutionalized setting to showcase its work by the late 1890s. With regard to Pictorialist camera clubs of this period, it has been widely argued that many such organizations became more exclusivist in nearing the close of the decade. In order to establish the medium among the fine arts, official institutional support became a crucial tool to turn photography into a legitimate artistic practice. The attempt to “create distinct elites,” like the Linked Ring Brotherhood in London or the Photo-Secession in New York, played into this desire by designating photography as a practice exerted in small circles of skilled practitioners rather than as a weekend pastime for local populations.¹ By 1898, the Photographic Society of Philadelphia – one of the oldest clubs in the country – organized the first photographic salon supported by the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. With a jury consisting of both photographers like Alfred Stieglitz and artists like William Merritt

¹ Griffin, “Amateur Photography and Pictorial Aesthetics,” 121-124; Greenough, “Of Charming Glens,” 267; Sternberger, *Between Amateur and Aesthete*, 128-134.

Chase, the salon endorsed the “educational value” of an institutional setting by transmitting “individual artistic feeling” all the while encouraging photographers to “strive for excellence” rather than merely “reproducing.”² While the emergence of the salon system in the late nineteenth century and most notably Alfred Stieglitz’s exclusivist model of the Photo-Secession by 1902 have been considered the major elements leading to a “maturity” process of the medium in the United States, it is just as important to notice the consistent extension of the photographic market in the years between 1880 and 1920.³ This two-fold development must be seen as working in tandem, rather than as opposed forces, since one would not be possible without the other. In the corpus of the CCC, this dual dimension becomes strikingly tangible, as it integrates the symbiotic development of the quest for artistic recognition and the creation of a responsive supply market.

Countering the narrative of an increasingly restrictive practice of Pictorialist photography, the inclusive setup and large-scale organization of the California Camera Club show another form of photographic understanding. Through the rich history of the medium in the region and an ideology of landscape appropriation facilitated by the city’s institutions and infrastructural markets, the Club members demonstrated what Edwards termed “small acts of agency in the construction and legitimation of narratives of history.” In drawing on the “Westering” paradigm and visual practices developed since the 1850s, the new century saw the mobilization of both the West and the medium as tools for expressing a “historical desire.”⁴ The preceding as well as the following examination of the Club’s activities thus take into account the ideological and sociocultural ramifications of the practice in this specific setting. An analysis of the practitioners’ “historical self-consciousness” and its repercussions on the Club’s productions therefore seeks to further contribute to the formulation of an “integrated history of photography,” that is, a narrative which considers the medium’s “shifting social roles” as integral to its output.⁵ Such an examination looks at the emergence and maturation of photographic practices in San Francisco, and in California at large, as a complex sociocultural and ideological process, rather than a linear movement toward artistic recognition. It must be seen as a quest for legitimacy in which the communal conditions put in place since the 1850s constitute decisive elements for promoting not only the camera, but just as much California in the new century.

² *Catalogue of the Philadelphia Photographic Salon, October 24 to November 12, 1898* (Philadelphia, 1898).

³ Greenough, “Of Charming Glens,” 267; Griffin “Amateur Photography and Pictorial Aesthetics,” 207-208; see also Keller, “The Myth of Art Photography: A Sociological Analysis,” 268.

⁴ Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 10-12.

⁵ Anne McCauley, guest editorial, *History of Photography* 21, no. 2 (1997): 85-86.

Part II: Maturation (1900-1906)

The usefulness of the California clubs would be greatly augmented, and jointly they could do more to advance the interests of California than in their individual capacity. [...] Let these efforts be combined, and the result would portray the whole of California as has never been done before. Thus will the association of clubs assist in the material welfare of the state and Pacific Coast.

James W. Erwin, "A Pacific League of Camera Clubs," *Camera Craft* 1, no. 1 (1900): 14.

We are so far removed from the photographic centers that we have no opportunity to study the work of the best photographers, except through reproductions in the magazines, and a few of the better class of workers who have exhibited in the San Francisco Salon.

A.L. Coombs, chairman of the print committee of the California Camera Club, in a letter to Alfred Stieglitz, January 15, 1902. (The Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O'Keeffe Archive (YCAL MSS 85), Box 9, folder 201; Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University).

From its beginnings, California art has been separated from the mainstream. Physically isolated by distance and topography, California art has attained a distinct regional character. This does not imply, however, that California's artists have been uninformed of national and international aesthetic movements or trends.

Scott A. Shields, foreword to *Artists in California, 1786-1940*, Vol. 1, 3rd ed., ed. Edan Milton Hughes (Sacramento: Crocker Art Museum, 2002), 2.

That the enthusiastic devotee of the camera in his search a-field for beauty as Nature places it before us can make himself one of the most potent advertisers of a railroad and its scenic beauties is undeniable. [...] As the proposition now stands it is proposed that a reduction be granted to all photographers carrying a camera and showing a paid-up membership ticket in an established photographic society. The concession, if secured, will not only stimulate interest in photography but be productive of great good in the encouragement and upbuilding of local camera clubs.

"Reduced Railroad Fares for Photographers," *Camera Craft* 9, no. 4 (1904): 169.

Sense and sentiment enter into the plea for the preservation or restoration, so far as possible, of the old missions of California. They mark the making of history in the eighteenth century; their ruins dot the California landscape from Loreto to Sonoma; they teach, in their mute ruins, of civilization's march — therefore, practical good Sense says, save them. In western America the storied walls are few; all is new except Nature's own creations; all that tell of man, of his loves and his strivings, are the homes of the cliff dwellers and the missions; all that tell of art and architecture and suggest the poetry of life are these adobe ruins of the Franciscans — therefore, Sentiment says, save the missions.

Charles S. Aiken, "The California Missions and their Preservation," *Camera Craft* 4, no. 2 (1901): 60.

Introduction

On skimming the first issue of the monthly magazine *Camera Craft*, which appeared in May 1900 and would run for forty-two years, it becomes rapidly clear how this twentieth-century version of the “official organ of the California Camera Club” became the point of departure for a period of diversification and maturation. With articles addressing demands of amateurs and professionals, as well as extensive reports on Club activity, *Camera Craft* continued in the vein of the *Pacific Coast Photographer*. Through the broad inclusion of photography-related and state-specific readings, however, the magazine extended the objectives of its predecessor and came to provide a solid platform for Club members and other photographers to exchange and in this, to construct a sense of belonging to the local community of practitioners. While continuing the search for recognition and engaging in more sophisticated exhibition efforts, the magazine picked up the booster conversation with a more intense focus on specificities of the Californian landscape and its history. Through an intensifying collaboration of the Club with San Francisco’s cultural venues, its outreach to other clubs in the state, and reinforced promotion by the Southern Pacific, the magazine became the mouthpiece of the Californian photographer community. In the combination of large portfolios and extensive textual elaboration, the desired condition of Californian cultural legitimacy could be articulated more thoroughly. The variety of photographic, rhetorical, and communal strategies used to this end move far beyond the commonly attributed activities of Pictorialist camera clubs. With *Camera Craft* as a starting point for exchange, dissemination, and articulation of collective goals, the California Camera Club reached a new level of production in the 1900s by fully developing its local agenda. The corpus thus produced constitutes a fruitful research terrain. It allows us to revise and refine narrow conceptions of photography as Pictorialism around the turn of the century.

Instead of a focus on the medium’s ascension to institutional recognition, what is at stake here is the examination of an increasingly diversified, conscious approach to photography which used both the discourses of photography-as-art and of local promotion as tools to attain the larger goal of cultural recognition of California. By soliciting the large spectrum of reproduction and dissemination available in the early twentieth century – and by drawing on the progressively assertive discourse of a national identity forged in the American West – the practitioners’ use of the medium targeted a much broader sociocultural agenda than mere artistic institutionalization. This second part thus proposes a revision of the East Coast-centered narrative of Pictorialism and “the invention of the ‘photographer of genius,’”¹ by relying on the complex, heterogeneous and therefore much richer corpus of Club productions in the early 1900s. While this period has been identified as a time of reinforced aesthetic boundaries and a turn toward the “anti-photographic” in an attempt to veil “the camera’s inherently

¹ Allan Sekula, “On the Invention of Photographic Meaning,” *Artforum* 13 (1975): 43.

mechanical nature,”² this study considers the same period as a crucial moment of communal rallying for an insertion in the geographical and historical imagination of the nation for which the medium’s technological potential proved essential. Instead of embracing “[s]eparatism for the sake of legitimization,” as in the case of the Photo-Secession,³ the California Camera Club strove for connection and unity in order to negotiate a legitimate place for medium and region. As its anchorage in the local community and its outreach toward societies across and beyond the state constituted the Club’s main channels of communication, the intensified search for recognition had to rely on the panoply of visualization tools to make its ambition known. Therefore, as opposed to the increasingly selective New York circle, the San Franciscan photographers’ headquarters and publishing platform became the stage for an ever-more inclusive practice. Given these varying organizational and conceptual approaches, this part defines the process of maturation not as aesthetic achievement or artisanal perfection per se, but rather as a form of coming-of-age with regard to the sociocultural and historical functions of photography operating within and speaking for the community. Importantly, this second part continues the earlier mentioned conceptual framework of a “social history of photography” that investigates “the role of socially organized practices in the production of cultural forms” – a study to which congenial camera club activity appears particularly apt.⁴

The following discussion, which treats a variety of events ranging from official salons to casual outings, therefore uses the social dimension of the practice as its main analytical tool. Since this aspect of production can only be traced in written accounts, the focus on writings by members naturally imposes itself. Accordingly, this part mobilizes the written corpus in *Camera Craft* as well as the correspondence and memoirs of Club members. In the light of the absence of a coherent Club archive, it is essential to not only examine the photographic output, but to broaden the perspective by putting the visual in intimate relation with the textual material. The choice of examining a large body of texts when actually inquiring a visual medium is motivated by two conditions that have profoundly shaped the research for this thesis. On the one hand, it is *Camera Craft* which constitutes the main resource for studying the Club as it documents its main actors and occupations. On the other hand, the content of the magazine itself, moving far beyond aesthetic and technical debates, very much echoes the local flavor of the practice. As questions of communal belonging and explorations of the state’s history filled many a page, these exchanges cannot be seen as detached from the practice of photography. Instead, by looking at the variety of voices expressed in *Camera Craft*, we come to grasp the photographers’ self-understanding as Californian practitioners. A detailed analysis of the monthly issues can then provide an answer to the question of how a localized definition of

² The term “anti-photographic” was coined by Sternberger (2001). See also Davis, *An American Century*, 40.

³ Sternberger, *Between Amateur and Aesthete*, 118.

⁴ Griffin, “Amateur Photography and Pictorial Aesthetics,” 81.

photography was negotiated and consolidated.

This approach, in which the look at a photograph is complemented by a careful examination of its context, seeks to respond to the “questions about the relation of writing to context in the history of photographic literature,” as evoked by Alan Trachtenberg. If we take these textual sources as expressions of the members’ “[s]elf-definitions” which “served [...] as an adjunct to self-expression in picture-making,” they help us understand the images’ functions.⁵ Despite the central focus on the making of unique “art” objects in the history of Pictorialism, this study concentrates just as much on the photograph’s accompanying rhetoric and its circulation on more than just one material support. As this period was marked by “fragmentation and stratification in [...] practices of the medium,” due to the significant extension of market and dissemination channels, the Pictorialist discourse of photography-as-art represents only one voice in an increasingly diverse composition of opinions and conceptions of the medium.⁶ In order to grasp how these different voices coalesced or opposed each other – and how a process of maturation was stimulated – the reliance on written communication is indispensable.

Motivated by this two-fold material approach, the first chapter attempts to draw a detailed picture of the parameters of photographic practice in the early 1900s. It deals with the supportive network developed by the Club within the city, from which it reached out to other societies along the coast with the goal to establish a “Pacific League.” The forging of a link to Los Angeles and the development of a collective outlook on the entire state of California will be interrogated as a process of communal construction, reinforced by the practice of photography in remote territories. In this context, the articulation of a local history – of the medium and of the territory – were to become touchstones for the photographers’ self-identification. The desire to formulate this history unfolded more explicitly in the pages of *Camera Craft*, where the local narrative “from the days of Daguerre to the days of Taber” took on new vigor. The elaboration of a canon was part of the quest for photography as art, and yet it gained significant impetus from the omnipresent booster rhetoric on the Californian landscape. It will be of interest in this chapter, then, to examine “the cultural and ideological work” of photography⁷ in the context of a newly imagined, constantly growing community of Californian photographers. The discourse of this community could expand on the earlier established paradigm of distance as distinctiveness in developing a symbolic function of its isolated Western practice. As this development drew imaginative strength and financial means from an extensive infrastructural network, the ideological overtones of the trajectories between Northern and Southern California must be taken into account when approaching the images and texts. Again,

⁵ Alan Trachtenberg, introduction to *Multiple Views*, 3-4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

as the sources are “inherently geographic” in their conception and use, it is essential to not simply examine them as photographic objects, but rather to consider the “social and cultural processes illuminated and empowered by photography.”⁸

Both the ideological framework of an emerging Western state and the analytical approach combining text and image will be applied to the following chapter which deals with the three San Francisco Photographic Salons between 1901 and 1903. As events in which pleas for photography as art and local promotion intertwined, the salons gave way to a corpus that targeted both ambitions. This body of work – an assemblage of catalogs, prints, newspapers, and correspondence – becomes particularly relevant through its reliance on the practices of aesthetic landscape exploration elaborated in the state since the mid nineteenth century. Since the participants diverged from a strictly amateur membership, the images exposed at the salons must be seen as products stemming from or becoming useful to the local promotion machinery. Seeking to disclose the organizational features of Club activities like collective excursions, this chapter puts the salon images and discourses into their “original narrative context.”⁹ Thereby, the increasingly complex impact of railroad corporations on the CCC agenda and the members’ receptivity to this sponsorship will be highlighted.

As this chapter puts the photographic salon into a much larger socioeconomic and cultural framework, its material analysis will be preceded by a historiographical discussion that underscores the necessity of this revised methodology. Treating the salons as events exclusively dedicated to artistic appreciation denies the wide range of organizational questions, display conceptions, collective preparations, and public reactions to it. By the same token, the consideration of the photographers’ works shown at the event as pertaining exclusively to the realm of artistic institutionalization neglects the use of these images in a broader cultural context which promoted photography in California *and* the exploration of the state. While this form of corpus selection was a key tool in the quest for institutional legitimation, it similarly generated a narrow analytical framework that has subsequently discarded other primary sources. By pointing to the overlap of institutional selection and monographic framing in scholarship, the second chapter proposes a new reading of the material related to the Californian photo-salon in the period commonly labeled “Pictorialism.”

Since the salons reinforced the rhetoric of Californian uniqueness, the last chapter seeks to examine more closely the mobilization of the state’s most conspicuous ethnic minorities in the shaping of a representative photographic canon. An analysis of the portrayal of Native Americans of California and the broader Southwest, and of the Chinese population of San Francisco’s Chinatown, will allow us to grasp how specific aspects of minority cultures were used to densify the self-image of local practitioners. By examining the various visual and textual representations of these two groups

⁸ Ibid., 6-7.

⁹ Sandweiss, “Undecisive Moments,” 126.

in articles, lectures, and guidebooks, it will become clear how a variety of elements of the local landscape – including its inhabitants – became subject to historical and aesthetic re-appropriation. Looking at the Club’s work from this perspective implies not only a careful reading of the actual publications, but also of the context in which these representations were produced. Through this combined interpretation of photographs in their making and their output, the diverse ramifications of the practice will come to the fore – implying exploring, capturing, narrating, and publishing.

Due to the Club membership’s increasingly large make-up, integrating professionals, aspiring artists, and Kodakers, the methodological approach of this part requires a similarly versatile nature. Only by broadening the archival horizon of the study, including periodicals, newspapers, lectures, and series of views, can we grasp the full reach of this collective practice. The process of maturation observed in this part therefore constitutes both a diversification of photographic practices and a multiplication of source material. It seeks to pursue Sekula’s notion of “a historically grounded sociology of the image, both in the valorized realm of high art and in the culture at large.”¹⁰ It is only through this analytically layered approach that the images’ and the practice’s functions within the local culture can be fully understood, so that the various involvements of the photographic community can be brought to the fore. Ultimately, the embrace of the very complexity of the primary source material will be taken as a point of departure to enrich the thinking about photography – at a critical moment both in the history of the medium and of the region.

¹⁰ Sekula, “On the Invention of Photographic Meaning,” 37.

Chapter 4

Distance as distinctiveness: an “imagined community” of photographers from Northern to Southern California

By the time that he was elected president of the California Camera Club in 1898, James W. Erwin had become well-known for his lectures on the appeal and history of the state. Touring the country from San Francisco to Washington, D.C. Erwin had promoted “the beauties and glories of California” near the close of the century and thereby carried on the well-established Club tradition of public instruction and entertainment. As an amateur photographer particularly interested in the stereograph and in the development of the state, Erwin embodied the CCC’s enthusiasm for dissemination and local promotion. Through his position as manager of postal delivery on the Pacific Coast, he was able to travel widely and would often combine professional duties with the Club interest of circulating local views.¹ Given his financial means and personal convictions, Erwin proved an exemplary figure in the process of maturation that the Club entered by the early twentieth century. Relying on his editorial notes in *Camera Craft* and his connections throughout the state, this chapter takes Erwin’s strategic use of the Californian discourse as a point of departure to examine how a new community of photographers was formed, encompassing the whole state from North to South. It will be argued that Erwin’s rallying appeals to other photographers in the state provided an instrumental impetus for the solidification of a canon with its own style and history. It was the establishment and subsequent application of these mutually shared beliefs in the potential of the region which allowed the photographers to elaborate their own narrative. This collectively fabricated history then operated as a vehicle in the quest for recognition on the national stage.

The inaugural issue of *Camera Craft*, published in May 1900 at a cost of 15 cents per issue (\$1.50 as annual subscription), circulated with some 5,000 copies that sold within a mere two weeks. The substantial number of copies and their extremely rapid sale testifies to the need of a local photographic magazine. While it was issued by the Camera Craft Publishing Company in San Francisco and not by the Club itself, it must be considered, still, the main communication platform with regular contributions by members and news concerning the Club. Its editing staff was largely supported by the Club, including Morgan Backus, who had edited the *Pacific Coast Photographer* in

¹ See the *Washington Times*, November 17, 1899, 8 on Erwin’s lecture on “The Beauties and Glories of California” with views of San Francisco, San Diego and the Yosemite, shown at the Capital Camera Club with a “large attendance.” Despite his Club leadership and local engagement that were covered in *Camera Craft* and San Franciscan newspapers, no photographic corpus attributed to Erwin could be located. Mautz defines him as an “[a]mateur stereo photographer, active San Francisco,” an information lacking both chronological precision and Club affiliation (see Mautz, *Biographies of Western Photographers*, 98). While more information on Erwin’s life and production is missing, it seems that his most active years in the Club were the early 1900s, and by 1912 he had become an honorary life member (see *First Annual California Camera Club*). The Palmquist Collection includes the only photographic sample definitely identifiable as Erwin’s: a copy of two photographs taken on Market Street in 1898 and 1933. These re-photographed views are accompanied by a handwritten note emphasizing “the growth of a great city in thirty-five years” (Palmquist Collection, Box 385).

the previous decade.² Furthermore, its offices were located in the Academy of Science, just below the Club headquarters. As the CCC's "official organ," *Camera Craft* integrated an inclusive approach by responding to both amateur and professional demands. Its numerous monthly sections – "With the amateur" ("A department for the beginner with a few suggestions for the student"), "In professional fields," "News of clubdom," "The demonstrator," "The critic," and "Foreign" – covered the variety of congenial and commercial interests that members cultivated. Its 40-some pages for each issue were extensively illustrated thanks to the affordable halftone reproduction process and included several pages of advertisement for local manufacturers. As Michael Griffin has argued in his thesis on amateur organizations and the impact of the photographic industry, *Camera Craft* counted among the four most important American journals of the first half of the twentieth century which witnessed the diversification of literature on the medium. This process implied the move "from journals intended solely for knowledgeable, serious amateurs and professionals to magazines aimed at a broad range of practitioners stretching from the professional to the beginning snapshot photographer."³ The articles, ads, and news sections included in *Camera Craft* confirm this notion of a constantly growing audience. Through the circulation of monthly assembled essays and portfolios among members and local audiences, the magazine "both facilitated and encouraged a sense of collective identity."⁴ Local newspapers such as the *San Francisco Call* advertised upcoming issues, that declared the magazine "the only high class photographic journal west of the Mississippi," and thereby reinforced the regional identification of its contributors (**fig. 4.1**). In its inclusive conception, it would become the material extension of the congenial platform of exchange established by the Club in its rooms and during excursions throughout the 1890s.

While by the 1900s the push for exclusivity singled out the New York Photo-Secession as the "most innovative and artistically self-conscious" group, reinforced by its sophisticated monthly publication *Camera Work*,⁵ it will be argued here that the Club's 'counter model' of large-scale organization and dissemination was embraced in order to make its production known and gain a legitimate position for both practitioners and region in national culture. As has been recognized in the renewed attempts to formulate alternative histories of the medium around the turn of the century, the widely argued "shift in American photography from collectivism to elitism" with the emergence of the Stieglitz circle constitutes merely one aspect of a much broader development. This persisting, "strongly biased" conceptualization of photography and its applications reveals how the political

² Editorial, *Camera Craft* 1, no. 2 (1900): 69; no information or photographic material could be gathered on Morgan Backus, neither on Fayette J. Clute who would edit the magazine for two decades between 1903 and 1924. He only published a manual, see Fayette J. Clute, *The ABC of Photography, by an amateur* (Chicago: Burke & James, 1909).

³ Griffin, "Amateur Photography and Pictorial Aesthetics," 201, 206. The other three leading magazines were *The Camera* (1897-1953), *Photo-Era* (1898-1932), and *American Photography* (1907-1953).

⁴ Davis, *An American Century*, 43.

⁵ Griffin, "Amateur Photography and Pictorial Aesthetics," 164.

structure of the Photo-Secession has become the standard model by which historians of American photography tend to judge the productions of other camera clubs. It is important to realize, instead, as Keith Davis remarks, that the New York-based circle cannot be taken as representative of the period since “Pictorialism was not a unified movement” and, consequentially, “did not represent a singular, rigorously defined aesthetic.”⁶ In line with the notion of growing diversification and social stratification, this kind of expanded analytical approach to the archival material of this period opens the field for research that moves beyond the label of Pictorialism. The discourse of photographic aestheticism – against which historians like Allan Sekula, Richard Bolton, and Abigail Solomon-Godeau have argued since the 1970s – has obscured a more diverse approach to the medium. It has confirmed the “*exclusivity* of art photography,” as advocated around the turn of the century in New York. What should be embraced, instead, is a more critical approach to “the politics of photographic aestheticism” as well as their institutional and ideological repercussions. These have led to the neglect of less uniform and dispersed corpora, such as the one of the California Camera Club.⁷ Therefore, the following analysis does not take the Photo-Secession as a point of departure, neither does it compare the produced material in a measure of quality. As already argued in the previous chapters, this part similarly seeks to overcome artificial distinctions of “serious” versus “ordinary” amateurs and professionals, as they do not prove useful in the face of the diverse composition of CCC membership. Instead, the argument will be developed *from* the corpora residing in the then still remote West Coast cities San Francisco and Los Angeles in order to explore the variety of expressions and negotiations of photographic practice. As such, this chapter represents an attempt to develop a sociocultural approach to the medium, albeit at times veiled by thick layers of Pictorialist rhetoric.⁸

Due to its geographic isolation from the nation’s cultural centers, the Californian community of photographers had to elaborate its very own practice which was initially and theoretically inspired by the ideals of Pictorialism, but over the course of the years heavily influenced by local forces of promotion. Whereas the American Lantern Slide Interchange proved effective to the distribution of image and text speaking for the state, the regular publication of a magazine alongside the establishment of a collective state agenda were just as important for nationwide visibility. It is from this rallying perspective – encouraged by the constantly increasing Club membership as well as the emergence of smaller local societies – that Erwin evoked the idea of forming a “Pacific League.” The imagination of such a community of photographers with shared local ambitions was supposed to lead

⁶ Davis, *An American Century*, 68-69.

⁷ Richard Bolton, introduction to *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, ed. Richard Bolton (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), xiii; Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the Dock*, xxiv-xxv.

⁸ For an application of this methodological approach to the broader corpus of the CCC, see my recent article, Carolin Gørgen, “Historiens du territoire et de la pratique : les photographes du California Camera Club,” *Histoire de l’Art* 80, no. 1 (2017), <http://blog.apahau.org/revue-histoire-de-lart-n-80-varia-carolin-gorgen-historiens-du-territoire-et-de-la-pratique-les-photographes-du-california-camera-club/>.

to the desired artistic improvement of the practice. Yet, beyond the cultivation of artistic sensibilities to the environment, the imagined formation would spur the need for a coherent local narrative. In the creation of this history, the camera was to become the socially connecting, historically validating, and aesthetically adorning instrument.

4.1 *Envisioning a “Pacific League”*

In his article published in the first issue of *Camera Craft* in the summer of 1900, Erwin looked back on ten years of Club production in the region. Evaluating the various photographic activities, he defined the region’s camera clubs as the main “contribut[ors] [...] to the growing popularity of the great West.” Even though this geographic designation was rather sweeping, Erwin’s following statement on “the delights of a balmy climate and the wonders of nature” to be experienced in these latitudes left no doubt that “the West” and its attribute of greatness were synonymous with the state of California.⁹ While the 1900s witnessed another population increase of 15% in San Francisco, maintaining its position among the ten largest cities in the U.S. with some 345,000 inhabitants, Southern California and its main city Los Angeles underwent rapid urbanization as well.¹⁰ This period of demographic and industrial growth was backed by a national ideology which could draw on the beliefs and future projects envisioned at the Chicago fair in the preceding decade. The rhetoric of a prospering American civilization occupying the continent and the creation of “an empire” in the West, as in the words of Charles B. Turrill and James D. Phelan, took on a new shape by the onset of the new century. Through an imperialist political agenda following the victory of the Spanish-American War, a territorial expansion in the Caribbean and the Pacific, as well as the construction of the Panama Canal, the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt in the 1900s provided an ideological framework from which the nation cultivated its idea of “ownership of the Western hemisphere.” The longstanding notion of an “inevitable advance of civilization” would manifest itself in the occupation of the American continent from East to West, in which California as the promised land for the nation and its expansion became a key location.¹¹

The celebrated and long-established discourse on the westward course of the empire and California as its eventual apex had become a standard trope of the local photographic societies’ productions by the 1880s. As demonstrated in the previous part, the speeches by PCAPA president Archibald J. Treat and the local lectures by O.V. Lange strongly integrated notions of empire-building in the West. However, by the 1900s, the notion of the “great West” became pronounced in a more explicitly local style that efficiently combined rhetoric with images. Erwin’s opening lines on the

⁹ James W. Erwin, “A Pacific League of Camera Clubs,” *Camera Craft* 1, no. 1 (1900): 14.

¹⁰ Issel and Cherny, *San Francisco, 1865-1932*, 24.

¹¹ Moore, *Empire on Display*, 3-7.

importance of circulating images of the West on a national and international scale must be seen in the context of this renewed ideological impetus. His position as postal manager of the Pacific Coast with occasional travels to “our newly acquired territory” – as stated in an article with reference to his trip to the Philippines “on government business and as representative of *Camera Craft*” – underline his direct involvement in the political agenda of the time.¹² As argued by Max Quanchi, the move “from isolationism to an expansionist international agenda” overlapped with the increasing appeal of photographically illustrated publications with “mass-circulation.” Through these enticing visual-textual productions, a process of public familiarization with the nation’s geographic expansion and its declared values took place. Therefore, the “concept of imperialism” constitutes a key analytical tool to read such circulating illustrated publications.¹³ The Club president’s professional implication in the political system and its expansionist realities furnish a new, critically important layer of analysis when examining the Club program he envisioned.

Given this sociopolitical framework, the insistence on an increase in production and on the large-scale dissemination of Californian imagery gained a localized dimension in this period. Since the Club had been eager to distribute images and texts on the state on various supports, Erwin pointed to the participation in the American Lantern Slide Interchange as the most effective means by which “the attractiveness of California has been presented as it could not have been by any other means.”¹⁴ Through its connection to large audiences in San Francisco as well as Eastern cities like New York or Washington, D.C., the Club had demonstrated a desire to tap the full photographic possibilities. In this engagement, it joined the contemporaneous “understanding of the medium as a uniquely versatile and modern technology.”¹⁵ Since Erwin praised the local clubs’ participation in “the growing popularity” of the West, the members’ productions and their dissemination must be considered as part of a visualizing endeavor which worked first and foremost in tandem with promotional efforts – prior to the striving for photography as an institutionalized art form. The technological potential of the camera by the early twentieth century, resulting in a large variety of material supports on which imagery could be disseminated, became the main instrument for the Club in the effort of national legitimation. While the lectures were undisputed in their entertainment and instruction possibilities, the president urged members by 1900 to take circulation further. In order to do so, Erwin suggested to form “a league of clubs, a union of interests” in the shape of a Pacific League of Camera Clubs.¹⁶

Spurred by the formation of the Los Angeles Camera Club (LACC) the same year, the League was to include the CCC, the LACC, as well as clubs from the state capital Sacramento and smaller

¹² Erwin’s professional travels to the Philippines and China, equipped with photographic apparatus, were covered in the magazine, see “President Erwin’s Departure,” *Camera Craft* 1, no. 4 (1900): 186-187.

¹³ Max Quanchi, “Imaging the USA’s Pacific Empire,” *History of Photography* 39, no. 3 (2015): 213-217.

¹⁴ Erwin, “A Pacific League of Camera Clubs,” 14.

¹⁵ Davis, *An American Century*, 52.

¹⁶ Erwin, “A Pacific League of Camera Clubs,” 14.

cities such as Alameda or Santa Cruz. It would also reach out to societies in the Pacific Coast states of Oregon and Washington. This association would then share common interests through both a writing and a print interchange. Despite its “Pacific” designation – resonating with the nation’s amplified geographic reach – the goal of this umbrella organization was “to advance the interests of California” and “assist in the material welfare of the state and the Pacific Coast.” The repeated conceptualization of California as an embodiment of “the West” or “the Pacific” was used by the Club to invigorate both its own production and the state’s cultural development. To make this progress tangible in material form, the goal was to demand each adhering club “portray the scenic features of its particular section” which then combined to “portray the whole of California as has never been done before.”¹⁷ While this kind of visual inventory had an affirmed commodity value in attracting visitors or promoting settlement, its role as a catalog of culturally meaningful locations was just as important. The “double role” of the landscape as “cultural symbol” and as “commodity,” as elaborated earlier through W.J.T. Mitchell, unfolded its full potential in the adoption of this conscious stance. It shows that the photographers’ territorial approach went beyond mere advertisement and integrated an “imperial” overtone.¹⁸

Even though the League itself and its inventory corpus did not materialize as such, the initial responses to the suggestion reprinted in *Camera Craft* were enthusiastic.¹⁹ What was most important in Erwin’s project and what continued to develop strongly – even in the absence of the League – was the congenial approach to the photographic exploration of local surroundings. While Erwin defined the “social possibilities of a permanent league of clubs” as “unlimited,”²⁰ the Club itself and its connection to small-scale organizations already provided this degree of conviviality. With a monthly magazine as corresponding platform and an agenda of state-wide outdoor events, members were strongly connected within the Club’s community and to other groups. In addition to these dynamic exchanges, the Club rooms in San Francisco were constantly improved, boasting just before the turn of the century of a \$4,000 equipment “with every practical appliance known to modern photography.” Describing itself as “the most successful and largest in point of membership” as well as “the most thoroughly equipped in the United States” in 1899, the Club would continue its quantitative comparison with other societies over the course of the 1900s.²¹ The solidity of a large-scale organization with a great number of practitioners was essential to bridge the physical and figurative gap to other photographic networks and to become part of a geographic concept in which Atlantic

¹⁷ Ibid., 14-15.

¹⁸ Mitchell, “Imperial Landscape,” 15.

¹⁹ Apart from the proposal and correspondence referring to the Pacific League in the first two numbers of *Camera Craft* (May/June 1900), there is no further documentation to be found on this organization. The directory of camera clubs in the Palmquist Collection does not list any additional sources either (Palmquist Collection, Box 209).

²⁰ Erwin, “A Pacific League of Camera Clubs,” 14.

²¹ “Camera Club Election,” *San Francisco Call*, April 5, 1899, 5.

and Pacific – New York and San Francisco – were key locations for the display of national power. When *Camera Craft* reasserted the ranking of the CCC as “the largest Camera Club in the world in the city of the Golden Gate” in its first issue,²² it was asked by the *Photographic Times* to justify these numbers. While it was impossible to gather reliable membership information on photographic societies in an international framework, the Club issued a list of 425 members which indeed made it the largest club in the United States, followed by the New York Camera Club with 333 members. Seizing the occasion, editors of *Camera Craft* were quick to remind readers of the international popularity of the Club’s lantern slides as well as its local events with an alleged average attendance of 3,000.²³ Photo-historian and collector Michael Wilson has identified this incident as the onset of San Francisco’s role “as preeminent creative center for photography,”²⁴ yet it would take greater efforts on the part of the members to have their local production recognized.

The importance attached to “numbers that count” on the membership rollcall was reiterated in the coverage on Californian photography in the national press, which pointed out the large number of practitioners in the state at the same period. Acknowledging that “[i]t seems somewhat strange that the model camera club of the country should be located in San Francisco, yet this is the case [...],” a statement in the *Washington Times* on Club activities alluded to the realities of geographic distance. Yet again, the impact of the local climate was defined as a decisive element that made the Club’s work particularly rich.²⁵ When published in national newspapers and photographic journals, statements such as this capitalized on San Francisco’s isolation from other cities in order to mark out the distinctiveness of the practice. In the pages of *Camera Craft*, this formula was repeated and took on an identity-shaping function for local readers and practitioners:

The wonderful climate of California lends itself enthusiastically to the wants of the photographer. The hand of Nature has reared, in eternal beauty, scenic effects unequalled elsewhere on earth. The very atmosphere of the Far West encourages the artistic impulse of its people.²⁶

The photographers’ artistic aspirations were solidified here through what was considered the inspirational force of the Californian climate. Aligning with the symbolic claims made on the local landscape since the 1860s, the editorial statement continued in the promotional vein by lending the resident photographers a relevant stance in the solidification of California’s artistic canon. The large number of participating photographers in this endeavor was then used to make the practice more significant in the national framework.

For the legitimization of the local cultural scene through a demarcation of its distinctive features,

²² Editorial, *Camera Craft* 1, no. 1 (1900): 26.

²³ Editorial, *Camera Craft* 1, no. 4 (1900): 192-193.

²⁴ Wilson, “Northern California: The Heart of the Storm,” 5.

²⁵ “The California Camera Club,” *Washington Times*, July 20, 1902, 25.

²⁶ Editorial, *Camera Craft* 1, no. 1 (1900): 26.

the Club adopted what Roger Hull labeled a strategy of “total emplacement.” It meant that members opted for the distribution of aesthetically appealing Californian images in a variety of formats for constant “revitaliz[ation] and recontextualiz[ation]” of the visual content and its accompanying rhetoric.²⁷ This attempt at increased visibility and distribution moved beyond an embrace of the artistic photographic object and targeted a broader recognition of Californian culture. In this emplacement strategy, the Club drew on the halftone reproduction process which had become “appealing and persuadable,” leading to an “iconographical revolution” that resulted in a profound change in viewing habits of late nineteenth and early twentieth century populations.²⁸ Since San Franciscan photographers had relied on the reproduction and circulation of imagery to “objectif[y] and ratif[y]” their national aspirations from the onset,²⁹ the Club continued these materialized confirmations by choosing an affordable reproduction format.

Even though the artistic making of a photograph became an important means of distinction within the national photographic scene, as will be shown in the following chapter on salons, the larger cultural context to which Club members contributed championed the photograph’s visual content over its making. While this choice has led to the obfuscation of photographic agency and therefore complicates the traceability of Club contributions, it must be seen as an essential part of the members’ ambition. As *Camera Craft* underlined in its editorial: “It is only through photography that the beauties of this State can be displayed for the admiration of the East and the rest of the world.” In this case, the display referred to a series of panoramas of the Californian big trees shown by the Southern Pacific Railroad Company at the Paris Universal Exposition in 1900.³⁰ Club members like Howard C. Tibbitts, friend of Archibald J. Treat and official Southern Pacific photographer, were part of this approach which combined reproduction technologies and an expanding membership for a broader representation of the state. Both photographers were acquainted with local painter William Keith, whose studio they had visited regularly in the 1890s, as reflected in Treat’s portrait taken amid an assemblage of outdoor scenes (see **fig. 2.1**). Like the painter, who had cooperated with the Northern Pacific railroad from early on to distribute attractive views of the West,³¹ the photographers sought to circulate appreciative imagery of the state.

²⁷ Hull, “Emplacement, Displacement, and the Fate of Photographs,” 187.

²⁸ Neil Harris, “Iconography and Intellectual History: The Half-tone Effect,” in *New Directions in American History*, eds. John Higham and Paul K. Conkin (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 198-199.

²⁹ Hales, *Silver Cities*, 30.

³⁰ Editorial, *Camera Craft* 2, no. 1 (1900): 47. At the Paris Universal Exposition, again, there was no identifiable CCC submission. The state’s professional photographers, notably G. Steckel and F. Schumacher of Los Angeles, are the only discussed contributors, see “In Professional Fields,” *Camera Craft* 1, no. 5 (1900): 276. The exhibition of American female photographers conceived by Frances Benjamin Johnston did not include Californian submissions either, even though photographers like Anna Desmond from Los Angeles and Floride Green from San Francisco were represented in Johnston’s collection, see Bronwyn A.E. Griffith, ed., *Ambassadors of Progress: American Women Photographers in Paris, 1900-1901* (Giverny and Washington, D.C.: Musée d’Art Américain and Library of Congress, 2001).

³¹ Scott, ed., *Yosemite: Art of an American Icon*, 201.

In a collective effort, the institutional ties to San Franciscan painters, instigated earlier by the Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association in its cooperation with the San Francisco Art Association, would be revived in this period. The former photographer organization had established close relationships with the artists like Virgil Williams who taught at the SFAA and, as a short-term member, lectured at the photographers' headquarters. Around the turn of the century, the CCC membership would align further with the outdoor agenda embraced by the local painters since the mid nineteenth century – and even more so with the onset of Californian Impressionism in the 1890s. When artists sought to capture “the fleeting effect” of the play of light and shadow at the Bay, their work had to be carried out in the out-of-doors, in intimate contact with the local environment and its changing vistas.³² The discourses developed in the magazine reflect this cultivation of a visual vocabulary since the mid nineteenth century and coalesce with the quest for recognition undertaken by Club members. The fact that *Camera Craft* was associated with the Sunset Press and Photo Engraving Company, which also published the Southern Pacific's official magazine *Sunset*, provided further institutional stability in this framework.³³ The Club's production therefore needs to be seen as embedded in the local art scene, the region's solid booster network, as well as the dynamic exchange agenda envisioned by its officials.

In spite of the futile attempt to form a Pacific League, the evocation of a plan to cultivate a shared canon through shared ideas struck a responsive chord with the demands of photographers throughout California. The collective representation of the state through writings, outings, and official events like salons appealed to several clubs, notably the Los Angeles Camera Club. The latter's response to the proposal discloses the integration of the ongoing “Westering” discourse. The reprint of probably the most revealing response by professional photographer and LACC president Carlton O. Valentine in *Camera Craft* lent a new voice to this imagined West:

The Pacific Coast, from the orange and palm groves of Southern California to the pine-clad mountains of Oregon and Washington with caps of perpetual snow, forms the bountiful treasure-box of the camera devotee, and an interchange of the best work and ideas of the long list of clubs cited by Mr. Erwin would surely conduce to a fuller appreciation of the glories of our Western Empire and the weaving of a pleasant bond between those kindred spirits throughout its length, who, to paraphrase, are ‘by one touch of photography made akin.’³⁴

The climatic conditions – which were again highlighted as the major impetus to sophisticated production – were combined with the widely elaborated myth of the landscape. In this, the “treasure-box” of the coastal landscape became the essential tool for resident photographers to develop their practice. In order to gain greater prestige and value, the collective endeavor resonated with the

³² Jean Stern, “Landscape of Light: Impressionism in California,” in *Impressions of California: Early Currents in Art, 1850-1930*, 38.

³³ “In New Quarters,” *Camera Craft* 1, no 2 (1900): 52.

³⁴ C.O. Valentine, quoted in “The Pacific League: A Reality,” *Camera Craft* 1, no. 2 (1900): 65.

ideology of an American empire originating in the West. It is exactly this imagination of a solidified network of contributors, combined with advanced photographic possibilities, which upheld and reinvigorated the myth of the Western landscape. The envisioned agenda of congenial exploration and exchange therefore cannot be seen as a trivial leisure practice touring the state, but must be considered in its sociocultural and “ideological mediations.”³⁵ The role of photography within this state-wide network requires an evaluation through the lens of its social and aesthetic performance that integrated the national ideology of the West.

Valentine’s endorsement of a Pacific League in *Camera Craft* responded to what had been an ongoing endeavor of the California Camera Club. His embrace of the same discursive agenda not only revealed compatible goals of the two organizations, but as president of the LACC and one of the foremost professional photographers of an emerging Los Angeles, Valentine also embodied the Southern extension of the San Franciscan outdoor practice. As Jennifer Watts has argued in the sole study on collective photography practices in Los Angeles in this period, it was the definition of collective “subject-matter,” rooted in the experience of the landscape, rather than “pictorial form,” which united Southern Californian photographers. The foundation of the Los Angeles Camera Club in late 1899 – drawing some 250 members in the first year and setting up an agenda of lectures and outings equivalent to the CCC³⁶ – tapped into the then already established booster rhetoric, fueled by the expanding Southern Pacific company and Santa Fe railroad. Through the creation of “a social network for the hobbyist,” the inclusive model of the LACC drew on the same internalized belief in the future possibilities of an isolated region. A practice which integrated the articulation of a nationally relevant myth then gave way to a development that Watts defined as “a regional identity-building project as performed through photography.”³⁷ The unifying force in this project was the experience of distance to other cultural centers which both San Franciscan and Los Angeles photographers could sense. In order to overcome this isolated position, they sought to define themselves more forcefully as a community with shared goals – a measure which reinforced the belonging to a region with its very own style and history.

A key component of this campaign for unification between North and South, in lieu of a

³⁵ Trachtenberg, introduction to *Multiple Views*, 8.

³⁶ See “News of Clubdom,” *Camera Craft* 1, no. 1 (1900): 32, with reference to the formation of the LACC and its rising membership numbers (“It must be in the climate.”).

³⁷ Watts, “Picture Taking in Paradise: Los Angeles and the Creation of Regional Identity, 1880-1920,” 243-244, 248. The Los Angeles Camera Club was active over several decades in the first half of the twentieth century, the first period dating from 1899 to 1903. When the Club took up again in 1915, none of the earlier members joined. The second wave of LACC activity was overshadowed by the more influential Camera Pictorialists of Los Angeles, founded in 1914 (see Part IV). See Dennis Reed, “Southern California Pictorialism: Its Modern Aspects,” in *Pictorialism in California*, 67-75. The activities of the second LACC can be consulted in a four-volume club record recently acquired by the Huntington Library, San Marino. Combined with the material on the first period of activity, this archival record leaves ample room for study on the development of photographic clubs in Southern California from the early to the mid twentieth century. I wish to thank Jenny Watts, curator of photography at the Huntington Library, for providing me with additional information and pointing out material related to these clubs in the Huntington photograph collections.

Pacific League, was the mutual coverage of club events in both *Camera Craft* and the *Los Angeles Camera Club News* (1901-1903). The local appeal of the LACC became first tangible in the organization of illustrated lectures which were financially supported by the city's chamber of commerce. This sponsorship by a booster committee reinforced the importance of circulating lectures advertising "the beauties and advantages of Los Angeles and Southern California."³⁸ In fact, the Club's president Valentine had been an assistant to the director of the chamber of commerce and therefore organized the first meeting in the offices of the boosting organization before moving to more permanent headquarters downtown.³⁹ Throughout the four years of existence, Valentine (together with his business partner Arion Putnam), as well as professional photographers Frederic Hamer Maude and C.C. Pierce made the most substantial contribution to the LACC's activities, and – through their longstanding businesses – left a large bulk of photographic work which allow a glimpse of the Club's interests.⁴⁰ Notably Valentine and Maude lectured regularly and provided constructive criticism in the Club's print exchange. The leading positions taken by professional photographers, who cultivated close business relations with the city boosters, had a striking influence on photographic production in Southern California and would differ from the Northern organization, as will be shown. Even though the LACC did attempt to attach an artistic touch to its practice by holding a salon in 1902, it only rarely referred to its members as "amateurs" and did not veil its commercial sponsorship either.

Indeed, a number of LACC slides in the Historical Society of Southern California collection of lantern slides demonstrate the extent of local railroad sponsorship and, in this, visualize what Club member and corresponding secretary Helen L. Davie advertised as one of the organization's main advantages. The great incline railroad to Mount Lowe North of Los Angeles, as depicted by C.C. Pierce, or a monumental scenery of mountain and valley traversed by the latest railway infrastructure, represent two examples of regional boosting imagery produced by LACC members (**fig. 4.2, fig. 4.3**).⁴¹ The contrast of sheer rock walls on the left and a deep valley on the right in the latter slide, set apart only by a thin railroad track running between the two, attested to the technological and entrepreneurial ventures in the region. As a slide projected in a lecture, the image suggested a glimpse of the vista to be caught from the train. As Davie writes, Club members oftentimes benefited from

³⁸ Moure, *Loners, Mavericks and Dreamers*, 92-93. See also *Los Angeles Camera Club News* 2, no. 7 (1902): 7, on a lecture by Valentine on the Californian missions "to be delivered in the Eastern states." The sole extant (yet incomplete) run of *Los Angeles Camera Club News* is preserved in the Pacific Photo Club Records (Collection Number 784) at the Charles E. Young Research Library, Special Collections, University of California, Los Angeles.

³⁹ Information retrieved from "L.A. Camera Club and Bicycles," Los Angeles Public Library, accessed August 1, 2017, <http://photos.lapl.org/carlweb/jsp/FullRecord?databaseID=968&record=1&controlNumber=51645>.

⁴⁰ See photographers' directory in bibliography for the numerous collecting institutions housing material by Maude and Valentine.

⁴¹ Some twenty slides identifiable as LACC productions are preserved in the Historical Society of Southern California Collection of Lantern Slides (photCL 400, volume 27, Box 7), the Huntington Library, San Marino.

“[s]pecial cars [...] frequently chartered of the various railroads for the long trips.”⁴² In *Camera Craft*, her vivid description of these outings – many of which were bound for the Southern Californian missions – allows us to imagine their promotional and community-rallying function:

Large banners, on which appeared the club yell in characters which could be read at some distance from the train, were stretched along the sides of the car proclaiming to the inhabitants of each village through which it passed that “We’re the Los Angeles Camera Club.”⁴³

This practice of Club banners on trains – alongside official group portraits with the banderole in front of train stations – became a common practice for the CCC around the same time, as will be examined in the following chapter. Through their collective travels on trains, advertised by the “club yell” adorning the cars, members contributed to the promotion of a modern technology on which they based their excursion program.

By the same token, the photographers sought to rally awareness for their territorial practice in which an appreciation of the local landscape was encouraged. The various group portraits of LACC members out in the field in the early 1900s demonstrate the importance attached to work on site. The coastal regions of the Pacific and their steep cliffs, for example at Point Fermin South of Los Angeles, were sought out by the photographers to stage an adventuresome practice rooted in the landscape of the American Southwest – a region largely unknown to national publics (**fig. 4.4**). Just like the railroad created an ever-expanding network, traversing hitherto inaccessible areas, the photographers explored the scenery thanks to a combination of infrastructural sponsorship and visualizing technologies. Seizing the promotional potential of traveling photographers, the railroads granted reduced fares to members enrolled in photographic societies, so as to encourage collective exploration. As a mutually beneficial undertaking, *Camera Craft* saw in this concession an opportunity to “stimulate interest in photography” and to be instrumental “in the encouragement and upbuilding of local camera clubs.”⁴⁴ Here, Watts’ notion of a “call-and-response conversation between booster and amateur” (or, more generally, photographer) in turn-of-the-century Los Angeles is strongly confirmed.⁴⁵

Even though the LACC had established a writing and print exchange with its Northern counterpart, including regular contributions of CCC members to the *Club News* and invitations to lectures, the Southern Californian photographers also strove to set their practice apart. More than in the case of San Francisco, the LACC’s production was inextricably related to the city’s chamber of commerce and the large network of professional photographers. Its attempts at demarcation therefore need to be seen more clearly as part of an emerging commercial desire to shape distinct urban identities for the promotion of tourism in the region. In the widespread ambition by U.S. chambers of

⁴² Helen L. Davie, “Los Angeles Camera Club,” *Los Angeles Camera Club News* 2, no. 2 (1902): n.p.

⁴³ “News of Clubdom,” *Camera Craft* 1, no. 4 (1900): 200.

⁴⁴ “Reduced Railroad Fares for Photographers,” *Camera Craft* 9, no. 4 (1904): 169.

⁴⁵ Watts, “Picture Taking in Paradise,” 247.

commerce to create “a unique, easily recognizable identity” by the 1900s, Los Angeles was no exception – and neither was San Francisco.⁴⁶ While the Northern city had initiated a process of local identity-building from the onset of its image circulation in the 1850s, Southern California by the turn of the century “needed photography to make words real, to demonstrate (or at least suggest) the authenticity of exaggerated claims about the future of a place like Los Angeles.” The resident photographers, and their relations to “some of the most conservative and level headed business men in the city,” in the words of Davie, reinforced the creation of a “fixed visual narrative.”⁴⁷ As a local particularity, Los Angeles officials would opt from the 1890s for “new ways of taking boosterism to the streets and to the people of Los Angeles,” men and women alike. This strategy was inspired by a specific “cultural script” that would endow the city and its surrounding region with the desired reputation as an agricultural and real estate paradise.⁴⁸ In the framework of friendly competition and congenial activity, the LACC then sought to set itself apart from the San Franciscan photographers by drawing on its particular climatic conditions and its progressive membership configuration, including a large number of active female members.

Even though, as suggested by Watts, the LACC works did not result in a “uniquely ‘Southern Californian’” style, they were still drenched in the kind of superlative-laden discourse which was supposed to make the practice exceptional.⁴⁹ From this perspective, then, Davie set out to advertise the club facilities in the city, equipped with dark rooms, a gallery, as well as an assembly and a reading room. Just as the CCC had done in the 1890s, Davie also disseminated the floor plan that was published in *Camera Craft* and exhibited in a lantern slide lecture (**fig. 4.5, fig. 4.6**). Since the building was owned by a member of the Club, the rooms would represent “undoubtedly the most convenient photographic club quarters on the Pacific Coast,” or could even be described as “more complete in every detail or better adapted to its requirements” than any other club in the country.⁵⁰ As a personal travel album by San Francisco photographer and CCC member Herman S. Hoyt demonstrates, the exchanges between Northern and Southern California photographers were numerous and solidified by respective visits to Club rooms. However, when traveling through Los Angeles on his way to Arizona in December 1902, Hoyt “visited the LACC [...] [and] was surprised that no utensils were provided for the use of the members.” Eventually, he simply “[d]id some developing.” Despite the apparent lack of basic material, Hoyt enjoyed the company of local photographers.⁵¹ This form of

⁴⁶ Cocks, *Doing the Down*, 150.

⁴⁷ Watts, “Picture Taking in Paradise,” 243-244; quoted from Davie, “Los Angeles Camera Club,” n.p.

⁴⁸ William Deverell and Douglas Flamming, “Race, Rhetoric, and Regional Identity: Boosting Los Angeles, 1880-1930,” in *Power and Place in the North American West*, eds. Richard White and John M. Findlay (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 118-120.

⁴⁹ Watts, “Picture Taking in Paradise,” 248.

⁵⁰ Helen L. Davie, “New Home of the Los Angeles Club,” *Camera Craft* 1, no. 5 (1900): 238-239.

⁵¹ Herman S. Hoyt, “Photograph album and diary pertaining to travels in Mexico, Arizona, New Mexico and California,” (1902), 2-4 (BANC PIC 2010.05--ALB), the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

friendly rivalry with the “Northern brothers and sisters” was similarly encouraged by Los Angeles practitioners, who were familiar with the CCC’s headquarters and similarly invited to show their works.⁵² While the San Franciscan photographers appeared more eager to emphasize their prominent local position and their contacts to the city’s cultural scene, both organization identified with the common California symbolism. The adoption of a boasting discourse becomes likewise tangible in the LACC logo with a bear holding a folding camera positioned on a globe on which the American continent was sketched and Los Angeles marked as sole orientation point (**fig. 4.7**). The desired international dimension of the practice – spreading from an isolated territory on the edge of the continent to the rest of the world – was distinctively marked out here.

An aspect which seems to have marked the LACC more than its Northern counterpart was the active, rather than associate, position held by women. Alongside the city’s professional photographers, two female members made decisive contributions to the four-year activities. Next to Helen L. Davie, who was the corresponding secretary and also worked as clerk in the photographic firms of the city,⁵³ Mrs. A.S.C. Forbes, wife of real estate agent and Club member Armitage Forbes, held an instrumental position on the Board of Directors and as chairperson of the first Los Angeles salon in 1902. With the salon and its results as subject to discussion in the following chapter, it is important here to stress the presence of female contributors. Next to written contributions, they actively participated in outings, as a group portrait of fifteen members, eight of whom women, depicts (**fig. 4.8**). The magazine, in its issue celebrating the club rooms and recent achievements, also prominently staged a woman and a man in the portrait studio as well as two female members in the reception room on its cover. Representations of CCC members in both the *Pacific Coast Photographer* and *Camera Craft* exclusively showcased men at work, hence this front cover depiction of Club work is remarkable in its active position granted to women (**fig. 4.9**). Given the absence of exact rollcall numbers, it is difficult to estimate the overall participation of women. However, from the activities covered in the few issues of the *Club News* and the events that were organized, members like Davie and Forbes played an important role in the local conception of the Club – beyond the decoration of the rooms or afternoon tea receptions.

As a case in point, Forbes and Davie made substantial use of the medium for both civic engagement and writings on female achievements in the practice. Deeply engaged in the local community, Mrs. Forbes held numerous positions, among which director of classes on retouching, developing, and lantern slide making at the LACC. As a participant in the Woman’s Parliament of

⁵² For a print exchange with the CCC, see Editorial, *Los Angeles Camera Club News* 3, nos. 4-5 (1903): 5.

⁵³ Palmquist, *Shadowcatchers*, 62-64. Apart from Davie’s articles in *Camera Craft* and the *Los Angeles Camera Club News*, as well as two reprints of genre scenes in the magazine, no other works are known. See Box 242 in the Peter Palmquist Collection of Women in Photography, ca. 1840-2003 (WA MSS S-2600), in the Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Southern California as well as in her position of chairperson of the California History and Landmarks Committee (and later vice president of the Southern California Historical Society), she made her photographic practice a defining component of civic life.⁵⁴ Similar organizations, such as the Native Daughters of the Golden West founded in San Francisco in 1886, also engaged in a “statewide effort to locate and mark historic places.” In these circles, Mrs. Forbes was as a highly appreciated figure, whose commitment to the regional landscape was considered a valuable contribution.⁵⁵ While her dedication to the preservation and photographic documentation of the Californian missions will be discussed in detail later on, it is worth noting that exactly this communal effort had an impact on the outdoor agenda of the LACC that was dominated by excursions to historic landmarks.

As remarked by Peter Palmquist and confirmed in his large-scale inventory of female photographers, the participation in outings and adherence to other communal organizations encouraged the creation of a network in which the practice of photography served as an empowering tool for women. They were to continue in the vein of the “adventuresome” territorial exploration initiated by 1870s Californian landscape photographer Eliza Withington.⁵⁶ Forbes’ colleague Davie confirmed this liberating potential of photography in a *Camera Craft* contribution on “Women in Photography,” in which she demonstrated an awareness of recent achievements in photographic practice by praising her female contemporaries Gertrude Käsebier, Catherine Weed Barnes, and Frances Benjamin Johnston. Alongside these East Coast examples, she also underlined the “prominent coast workers” of the West, like Helen Gatch and Myra Wiggins of Oregon, or Laura Adams Armer from San Francisco. In collecting their experiential accounts on the practice of photography, Davie confirmed that the medium “broadens the woman’s mind and strengthens her character. By “tak[ing] women out of doors, into sunshine and pure air,” a closer relationship to nature through compositional study could be established – a process in which the Californian landscape, again, proved especially stimulating.⁵⁷ Despite the close collaboration between the CCC and the LACC in this period, the Southern Californian photographers demonstrated a much more conscious stance vis-à-vis the inclusion of female practitioners.

The attempts of LACC members to both establish a regional photographic canon which honored its female contributors and to shape a photographically narrated history of the state remained

⁵⁴ *Los Angeles Camera Club News* 2, no. 2 (1900); “Woman’s Parliament of Southern California,” *Los Angeles Camera Club News* 3, no. 3 (1903): 4; Palmquist, *Shadowcatchers II*, 128-129.

⁵⁵ Glassberg, *Sense of History*, 175-187.

⁵⁶ Peter E. Palmquist, “100 Years of California Photography: Women Innovators and Their Contributions, 1850-1950,” in *Women Artists of the American West*, ed. Susan R. Ressler (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2003), 203-204, 209-210.

⁵⁷ Helen L. Davie, “Women in Photography,” *Camera Craft* 5, no. 4 (1902): 130-138. At the time already marginal figures, the female practitioners from the West Coast have remained in an isolated position in the history of photography, see Roger Hull, “Myra Wiggins and Helen Gatch: Conflicts in American Pictorialism,” *History of Photography* 16, no. 2 (1992): 152-169.

rare undertakings in the commercialized climate of Los Angeles around 1900. The LACC's only effort to establish a record can be found in the small brochure, *The Souvenir* (1900), which was given to its members to commemorate "the birth of the camera club." It included anecdotal accounts of the first excursions and a chronological sketch of the chemical processes and inventions leading to the first daguerreotype. With reference to the Kodak slogan, they deliberately stated that "most of us desire above great riches to do the rest," and in this, set the tone for a committed, exploratory practice.⁵⁸ However, given the material available on Club activities and the discourses developed in their own magazine, it seems that the cultivation of photographic skills was relegated to the fringes in the face of boosterism. Consequently, despite the strong appeal of a congenial Southern Californian practice within the CCC's state-wide exchange network, the relations between North and South and the adoption of a boosting Californian discourse did not suffice to maintain the LACC as a stable organization. By the summer of 1903, it had raised its membership fees and was nonetheless forced to give up its rooms. The last *Club News* issue of November 1903 reminisced about the headquarters' inauguration two years earlier and urged new members to join to reinvigorate the activities.⁵⁹ The photographic press rumored that the cause for disintegration lay in the organization of the Los Angeles salon which had been too expensive and in its format "appeal[ed] but little" to the majority of Club members.⁶⁰ While the context and organization of the San Francisco and Los Angeles salons between 1901 and 1903 will be treated in the following chapter, it seems plausible that a salon targeting the artistic establishment of the medium appealed less to a club largely dominated by professional photographers and financially supported by the city's chamber of commerce.

When reconsidering the imagination of a Pacific League for the promotion and legitimation of California in the face of the disorganization of the LACC within merely four years, the impact of urban boosterism becomes a key element. The Los Angeles club did not undergo a process of negotiation to define its local practice, as the CCC had experienced with its more strictly organized predecessor, the PCAPA, which eventually paved the way for a more inclusive membership. Neither did the Los Angeles practitioners have a five-decade history of photographic practice in the city from which they could draw examples and support. Since the main impetus for establishing a club came from an urban booster network which sought to promote the city and advertise a leisure out-of-doors practice, the role of photography within the community was defined in less diverse schemes than in the case of the CCC. Due to a much more tangible impact from commercial sponsors and professional members, photography could not unfold as an integrated, identity-shaping practice through the

⁵⁸ Clara Douglas and Charles Fuller Gates, eds., *The Souvenir* (Los Angeles: (no publisher identified), 1900): n.p.

⁵⁹ Editorial, *Los Angeles Camera Club News* 3, nos. 4-5 (1903): 3-4; "House Warming of the Los Angeles Camera Club," *Los Angeles Camera Club News* 3, no. 7 (1903): 5-6.

⁶⁰ *Photograms of the Year*, ed. F.J. Mortimer (London: Dawbarn & Ward, 1904), 166. Quoted from copy in Palmquist Collection (Box 216).

collective experience of the environment. Instead, its identity function lay in the ‘branding’ of a semi-tropical Southern California – an advertisement process in which the medium constituted one illustrating tool out of many other commercial strategies.⁶¹

As noted by Watts, the works of LACC members “amplified the hyperbolic prose of the booster” but did not emerge as a photographic “style” in its own right. While the Northern Californian photographers would seek out historical categories of mid-nineteenth century community-building to make their practice historically and aesthetically meaningful, it was the blatant booster discourse of the 1880s which would substantially shape the photographers’ activities in Los Angeles.⁶² Through its sponsorship for outings and lantern slide circulation, the influential position held by the chamber of commerce did not allow for a process of rethinking the medium in cultural terms to fully develop. And yet, it was exactly this reconsideration of photography as a culturally relevant practice which could spur the articulation of a local history of the medium and its uses, as would happen in Northern California. Even though the Los Angeles members held an artistic salon and were eager to insert themselves in the region’s history, as will be shown in the following chapter, the commercial utility of the images dominated the practice. This kind of organizational pressure from the Club’s inception eventually slowed the development of a more diversified membership.

With regard to friendly club competition at state level, the San Franciscan photographers were to maintain their strong position in a more refined Northern Californian urban culture. Despite the shared use of commercialism, the CCC thus remained in a more versatile and prosperous condition than its Southern counterpart. In short, while the CCC *joined* the booster discourse and *picked* strategic elements from it for the elaboration of a culturally and historically valuable practice, the LACC was organized *by* urban promotional strategists who sought to rapidly implement commercial goals – a division which mirrors the binary developments of the Northern and Southern Californian cultural scenes in general.⁶³ It will be important, in the following section, to analyze how the strategic uses of booster vocabulary and local photographic tradition served CCC members to elaborate a narrative in which their isolated position helped define a distinct history of Californian photography.

4.2 *Fabricating a local history of and through photography*

In 1900, a few weeks before the first issue of *Camera Craft* was released, the *American Amateur Photographer* released in its “Society News” section the habitual report on camera club activities across the country. It featured a note on the CCC’s “tin wedding,” that is, the celebration of its tenth anniversary. Participants in the annual meeting seized the occasion to recount the Club’s

⁶¹ See Cocks, *Doing the Town* (2001), for a comprehensive study of the variety of visual and literary strategies employed for the promotion of urban tourism between 1850 and 1915.

⁶² Watts, “Picture Taking in Paradise,” 248.

⁶³ See Moure, *Loners, Mavericks and Dreamers*, 8-9.

“early and later days,” remembering “the real cause of its foundation” due to a dispute with the PCAPA. After describing “a night of pictures” held at the San Franciscan headquarters, taking the audience on a train ride to Mount Tamalpais and showing some additional 300 slides, the magazine concluded that “the California Camera Club is one of the most thoroughly alive and practically useful in the country.”⁶⁴ Since the previous chapters have traced the numerous activities leading to this evaluation of the CCC as a thriving organization, the focus in this section will be set on the assigned usefulness of the Club, which was underlined by president Erwin’s beliefs in the rallying function of camera clubs. From its inception, the CCC considered its utility to local publics in the organization of an entertaining, exploring, and instructing program rooted in the Northern Californian surroundings. This agenda likewise included the ambition to “do justice” to the state and its “ever-varying scenes,” as advocated in the first issue of the *Pacific Coast Photographer*.⁶⁵ The combination of *being useful* – that is, providing public service, advantageous features, and satisfying a human want – and *doing justice* – that is, appreciating properly – motivated the narration of a Californian history of photography.⁶⁶

If Sandweiss’ notion of “a new medium and a new place that came of age together” applies to both the evolution of photography and the growth of San Francisco,⁶⁷ the process of maturation entailed the articulation of a history which integrated this two-fold development. The formulation of such a history required a conscious perception of the medium’s application to the environment. In moving from newness of territory and medium to the request of a more solid anchorage within the national geography and culture, the local practices of photography diversified and its practitioners became more aware of the value of their productions. Given the insistence of the Club on its usefulness, the following section aims at an application of Solomon-Godeau’s notion of “a history of photographic uses”⁶⁸ to the existing material. By covering a rich corpus of written and visual sources, the idea is to expand the analytical spectrum to a two-layered discussion of photographic uses and spatial features. These functioned as tools in the formulation of a local history of the medium.⁶⁹ What follows will be an analysis of the use of the medium for creating a Californian history of photography in which the history of the region itself was a key element.

In the historiography of Californian photography, Charles B. Turrill’s writings appear among the first attempts to initiate a historical narrative of the medium for the region. Indeed identified by Peter Palmquist and numerous other scholars as “California’s first historian of photography,” Turrill’s work implied an active use of the medium which moved beyond its illustrative function and toward

⁶⁴ “The California Camera Club,” *American Amateur Photographer* 12 (1900): 287-288.

⁶⁵ Burnham, “California for the Photographer,” 3-4.

⁶⁶ Definitions retrieved from Merriam-Webster dictionary.

⁶⁷ Sandweiss, *Print the Legend*, 2.

⁶⁸ Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the Dock*, xxiv.

⁶⁹ See G6rger, “Historiens du territoire et de la pratique.”

an appreciation of photographs as historic objects in their own right. Through his numerous engagements in the promotion of the state at universal expositions in the late nineteenth century and his collection of books, periodicals, and photographs over the course of the early twentieth century, Turrill qualifies as one of the most conscious contributors to the preservation of a local history of (and through) photography. Having established a photographic firm of his own, he had been in contact with members of the CCC from early on, but also befriended “pioneer photographer” Carleton Watkins of whom he conceived the first biography and inventory.⁷⁰

In the first article published on Watkins’s work two years after his death in the 1918 issue of *News Notes of California Libraries*, Turrill pushed for the archival preservation of Watkins’s photographs made on railroad trips to Northern and Southern California, qualifying them as “historically [...] of extreme interest.”⁷¹ In a provisional catalog of the Watkins and Hart stereographs preserved at the California State Library, Turrill likewise insisted on the work conducted under difficult conditions, which would heighten the historic value and rarity of the images. With the desire for dissemination in mind, he stated that Watkins “did more to introduce to the world and to perpetuate the scenic beauties of California than any man who has lived in our State.”⁷² Earlier, in a 1914 article in *Camera Craft*, Turrill had already made a grassroots level plea for “historical photography.” Stressing the value of amateur work, Turrill advocated in favor of a new “purpose” to the practice which would lie in a conscious, historically motivated application of photography to local surroundings. His approach integrated the notion of a new medium and a new place developing in tandem by underlining that the state was “filled with the finest kind of historic material” yet to be explored by the camera.⁷³ By infusing the free time applications of photography in California with historical relevance, Turrill sought to rally awareness for a more purposeful, “rational leisure”⁷⁴ practice which, by that time, had undergone a substantial shift toward social entertainment. As the particularities of the photographic recording of the Californian landscape will be subject to discussion later on, it is important to briefly underline the context of his statement of the year 1914. It emerged within the framework of a rapidly evolving entertainment-oriented photographic practice in post-earthquake San Francisco, which had been confronted to innumerable losses only a few years earlier

⁷⁰ Palmquist, “100 Years of California Photography,” 222; Mautz, *Biographies of Western Photographers*, 149.

⁷¹ Charles B. Turrill, “An Early California Photographer: C.E. Watkins,” *News Notes of California Libraries* 13, no. 1 (1918): 34.

⁷² Charles B. Turrill, *Catalogue, C.E. Watkin’s [sic] stereoscopic views and Hart stereos*, 8 (undated typescript (917.94 W), California State Library, Sacramento).

⁷³ Charles B. Turrill, “Historical Photography,” *Camera Craft* 21, no. 11 (1914): 531-535. François Brunet, “Que sait-on des collections photographiques historiques aux États-Unis autour de 1900 ?” (paper presented at the international conference “À l’image du monde : musées et collections de documentation visuelle et sonore autour de 1900,” Université de Lausanne / Université de Genève, November 6, 2015); Brunet, *La Photographie Histoire et Contre-histoire*, 151-152.

⁷⁴ Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 82.

– a condition that rendered Turrill’s call for purposeful preservation and practice more pressing.⁷⁵

Despite the continued importance of Turrill’s writings and preservation efforts, which constitute a recurrent element throughout this thesis, the period before the earthquake needs to be brought into focus. A closer look at the years between 1900 and 1906 allows us to reconstruct how a history of the practice was shaped and to examine the role the collective magazine publication played in the solidification of this “historical desire.” As suggested earlier, the bonds Californian photographers sought to establish – notably within San Francisco but also throughout the state as a “Pacific League” – ties in with Elizabeth Edwards’ conception of photographic clubs as “imagined communities” in the Andersonian sense. They did not necessarily come together as physical groups, but rather established a system of shared beliefs and ambitions which manifested itself in the shape of a “print communit[y].” In order for these collective ideas and projects to take shape, “the photographic press,” that is, printed exchanges published in magazines like *Camera Craft*, represented the main platform of communication.⁷⁶ The identity-shaping function Keith Davis has attributed to these publications applies even more so to the West Coast where *Camera Craft* was the only locally based magazine and advertised itself as such.⁷⁷ Even though Eastern magazines circulated to the West, they hardly covered any of the events taking place in these regions – a case in point being the extensive coverage of LACC events in *Camera Craft* versus the conspicuous absence of material related to Californian photographers in general, and Los Angeleans in particular, in national magazines like the *American Amateur Photographer* or *Anthony’s Photographic Bulletin*.⁷⁸ From the start, the Californian photographers thus seized the potential of their monthly publication in which they could elaborate their own agenda. As the editors put it:

The photographers of the West have for years depended upon the journals of the East for enlightenment, but have looked in vain for recognition in their own columns. It is to remedy this condition that *Camera Craft* now makes its bow to the public.⁷⁹

As a continuity in the desire to remain ‘independent’ – and as such become ‘representative’ of the West Coast – as devised already in the *Pacific Coast Photographer*, the magazine became the major tool to build up a collective discourse and to define the components of a Californian practice. Even though *Camera Craft* would cover a substantial part of photographic activities in the American West and the Pacific, the editors remained very much aware of East Coast activities. The double ambition of developing a local style in its own right while seeking recognition from East Coast

⁷⁵ For a broader discussion of the earthquake, its aftermath, and an increasingly entertainment-oriented program within club circles, see Parts III and IV.

⁷⁶ Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 39.

⁷⁷ See Davis, *An American Century*, 43.

⁷⁸ The LACC was listed as a member of the American Lantern Slide Interchange and received one brief criticism of a set sent in the *American Amateur Photographer* (Vol. 13) in 1901. Both the Los Angeles and the San Franciscan activities, including the salons, were covered as brief announcements.

⁷⁹ Editorial, *Camera Craft* 1, no. 1 (1900): 26.

counterparts was thus maintained. The “uniformity of expression” articulated in *Camera Craft* with regard to California’s future role, already reflected in the correspondence between Erwin and Valentine, can be seen as part of a broader discourse of potentialities that Western newspapers had developed from the mid nineteenth century. This use of what Patricia Limerick called “a ritualized language” became a tool for local photographers to identify themselves as part of a larger community with similar promotional goals. Relying on a rhetoric of “prophecies” for the region, members engaged in a visual and verbal practice which turned photography into a ceremonial act of landscape appreciation. In the early history of the state, newspapers had started to opt for “cultural replication and regional distinctiveness” by adopting a glorifying rhetoric in their pages.⁸⁰ *Camera Craft*, as a communal platform of engagement and exchange among photographers, expanded on these objectives. Within this public framework, the possibilities of the Californian photographer community were verbally and visually articulated, but also carried out collectively in the shape of excursions. The only material trace of these Club events were the reports published afterward in the magazine. Rather than systematically assembling albums or elaborate slide shows covering these excursions, the participants submitted illustrated reports to their local readership. Given the history of San Francisco in the 1900s, the textual and photographic traces preserved in *Camera Craft* – next to members’ correspondence preserved elsewhere – provide the most thorough archive of Club activity in the pre-earthquake period.

The importance attached to published reports on Club activities was continued by members in the 1900s and extended in writings on the usefulness of the medium. The progressive articulation of a local history of photography would be expressed first and foremost in these written statements which underline the application of photography to various purposes of historic exploration. Interestingly, the emergence of a history of the medium itself was initiated by the increasing desire to document and narrate local history through the camera. Keenly aware of photographic proceedings in Europe, *Camera Craft* reported in the summer of 1902 on the European “record work” in which local photographers documented historic sites and preserved the resulting corpus in “local and national museums.” While the author acknowledged Europe’s “great advantages” in such endeavors given the mass of “old relics and associations,” his urge to install the same “systematic” photographic inventory for the United States, and especially California, was prompted by an earthquake in Santa Barbara County a few weeks earlier. Since one of the earliest adobe buildings dating back to the period of Spanish settlement had been destroyed that day, without a proper photographic depiction made beforehand, the author came to realize that these “fast disappearing relics” constituted “a fruitful field for such work.”⁸¹ Given that fires and earthquakes had been recurrent events in the first decades

⁸⁰ Limerick, “Making the Most of Words: Verbal Activity and Western America,” 178-179.

⁸¹ Editorial, *Camera Craft* 5, no. 4 (1902): 158-159.

of the state, it seems coherent that these local conditions intensified the quest for preservation. Yet, this approach was also enriched by the widespread assumption of the United States being a ‘new’ country and California being a territory largely devoid of history. The characteristic “thinness of California’s soil for nurturing historical consciousness,” associated with the state from the mid nineteenth and reaching far into the twentieth century, was an assumption that would be countered by the photographers’ desire for preservation.⁸² Through the growing interest in Southern California’s Spanish past spurred by romantic depictions in popular culture, an awareness for local history was shaped and the camera became a tool in the exploration – and appropriation – of this history, as will be shown later on.⁸³

The condition of relative “newness” combined with unstable climatic factors emphasized the need for preservation, which could be partly stilled by assembling a visual inventory. While the project had to adopt a systemized methodology, in attributing tasks of photographing different sections, its material output also had to correspond to the defined aim for longevity. In stressing “the desirability of printing in platinum” when “work[ing] for posterity,” the photographers attached great importance to the process. As Joan Schwartz has argued, a photograph’s “original physical form” may point to its expected uses, as in this case of the platinum print which communicated both “an awareness of status” and “a desire for permanence.” In rejecting the silver gelatin process for its commercial connotations and its “evanescence,” the photographers opted for the platinum process whose superior qualities proved essential to enoble practice, corpus, and subject matter.⁸⁴

This plea for a purposeful use and material output, bringing to mind Elizabeth Edwards’ extensive study of the British survey movement operating around the turn of the century, would be explicitly discussed and applied by San Franciscan photographers in the early 1900s. Even though the desire to preserve depictions of local surroundings was expressed on numerous occasions, it needs to be mentioned that these endeavors nonetheless succumbed to California’s instable seismic conditions. Many such sources perished in the earthquake and fire of 1906 when the Club’s headquarters in the Academy of Science burned down entirely. Since there is no trace of the survey projects, the desire for archival documentation and material longevity can only be reconstructed through the extant writings. Therefore, it is practically impossible to draw conclusions on the quality and utility of such corpora. At the same time, the various statements on the survey published in the photographic press allow to reassemble at least some of the motivations and intended uses. While a majority of survey projects arose from mounting anxieties about the “loss of history and of culture

⁸² Glassberg, *Sense of History*, 168-169.

⁸³ See Gendzel, “Pioneers and Padres,” 64-71, for a discussion of the emerging historical re-appropriation of Southern California’s Spanish past by the late nineteenth century; see also Chapter 6.

⁸⁴ Editorial, 158-159; Joan M. Schwartz, “‘We Make Our Tools and Our Tools Make Us’: Lessons from Photographs for the Practice, Politics, and Poetics of Diplomats,” *Archivaria* 40 (1995): 58, <https://archivaria.ca/index.php/archivaria/article/view/12096/13083>; Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 103-107.

itself” in a period of rapid sociocultural and industrial development,⁸⁵ the Californian projects also calculated the risk of earthquakes and fires. Yet, they were just as much triggered by a belief in the necessity of an entirely new corpus covering the ‘new’ territory. As Turrill proposed: “a new country has one great advantage in that we can get in on ‘the ground floor’ in our historical picture-making.”⁸⁶ As such, the medium represented a perfectly modern tool to record the allegedly new environment and explore its more ancient historical features. The fear of loss and the desire for the new combined into a photographic exploration of San Francisco and its environs in which an awareness of the medium’s history was similarly cultivated.

An announcement of a systematic photographic survey of the city in late 1901 integrated this double ambition by claiming that “[t]he City of San Francisco has been photographed as no other city in the world has been.”⁸⁷ The awareness of the medium’s history of uses within the city then sparked the desire of Club members, led by president Erwin, to align with these historical antecedents and “do justice” to the urban scenery. The inventory project, which was announced in local and national newspapers, surfaced at a moment of heightened historical awareness fostered by the fiftieth anniversary of California’s admission to the Union in 1900. At the time, Club members had initiated a “street photography” outing during the festivities “to perpetuate the historical occasion for the benefit of generations to come” in the shape of “pictures peculiarly characteristic of the West.”⁸⁸ It was also during this period that the city space became increasingly dominated by “ceremonial urban art” of which the miner of the Forty-niner generation was the “most ubiquitous” symbol, since he was considered “indigenous” to the region. Grand urban festivities envisioned by mayor James D. Phelan were to express “triumphal views of history” and ensure the California pioneer a visible stance in the everyday space of the community.⁸⁹ The Club members sought to contribute to such civic celebrations through outings and lectures. They invited the chairman and later president of the Historical Landmarks Committee of the Native Sons of the Golden West, Joseph Russell Knowland. Described by historians as “the single most influential figure in the making of historic places in California,” Knowland would serve the fraternal organization for the entire first half of the twentieth century and had several other involvements as U.S. Representative and *Oakland Tribune* publisher.⁹⁰ When lecturing at the Club, he invited the “large audience” to appreciate “remarkably vivid pictures of old California,” and lured photographers into membership of the Landmarks Committee.⁹¹ This form of ‘Western picturing’ was strongly emphasized by the Club in the first years of the twentieth century.

⁸⁵ Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 81-83.

⁸⁶ Turrill, “Historical Photography,” 531.

⁸⁷ Editorial, *Camera Craft* 4, no. 1 (1901): 43-44.

⁸⁸ “The Coming Celebration,” *Camera Craft* 1, no. 5 (1900): 263.

⁸⁹ Robin, *Signs of Change*, 11-17; Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco*, 122-123.

⁹⁰ Glassberg, *Sense of History*, 179.

⁹¹ “Lectures on Historic Landmarks,” *San Francisco Call*, December 20, 1902, 11.

It required, however, a more systematic approach when conceived with explicit reference to the photographic surveys conducted in England.

When the *American Amateur Photographer* announced the San Franciscan survey project initiated by the California Camera Club, the title alluded to the National Photographic Record Association (NPRA) – a British association founded in 1897 which mobilized the works of camera clubs around the country for a permanent historical collection. The systematic documentation undertaken by various local societies was to merge into a national, “central resource” preserved at the British Museum, and was to be enhanced by a process of “dual archiving” that implied the preservation of parallel sets at local libraries.⁹² Such an organization resonated with earlier Club projects, as notably its storage concept – encompassing diverse emplacements and formats – mirrored Oscar V. Lange’s documentation of the Berkeley campus in the early 1890s. Other clubs in the country equally found this approach appealing, for instance the Camera Club of New York, one of whose members “urged [...] the advantages of a National Photographic Record Association” at a meeting in 1901.⁹³ When reporting on the CCC’s project, the editors of the *American Amateur Photographer* enthusiastically “proposed to have one central locality like New York for the reception of negatives or platinum prints where they will be kept in tabulated order” alongside “contributions [...] to public libraries throughout the country, where could be kept pictures of their own locality as well as neighboring places.” The inventory of historic sites throughout the country would combine local features and come to represent the nation when assembled as a coherent whole. The methodological and material approach, similar to the NPRA, insisted on the preservation on various supports, from negatives and prints to lantern slides, which could circulate via the Interchange.⁹⁴

In San Francisco, several aspects of urban life were especially underlined for their representative character, for example the area around the new City Hall, “a good photograph of mayor Phelan at his desk,” the numerous hotels, churches, and libraries, as well as manufacturing firms, the fire department, and the hall of justice “with its modern prison.” Everything pertaining to the label of “the artistic, novel and interesting features” of urban life was considered useful.⁹⁵ The material output of the San Franciscan project, estimated by a Brooklyn newspaper between 1,200 and 2,000 photographs “which should accurately represent the life and character of the entire city,” appeared especially important to the history of “a country so young as this.” Alongside the constantly growing archival value of such projects, their organizational “uniformity” which divided the city into sections to be photographed on a specific date, allowed to imagine re-photographing projects several decades

⁹² Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 35-36.

⁹³ “Camera Club of New York,” *American Amateur Photographer* 13 (1901): 520.

⁹⁴ “National Photographic Record Association,” *American Amateur Photographer* 13 (1901): 492.

⁹⁵ James W. Erwin, “A Photographic Army to Impress San Francisco on a Thousand Plates,” *Camera Craft* 3, no. 6 (1901): 238.

later, tracing urban development and improvement.⁹⁶ This kind of comparative approach had been planned by the CCC whose photographers decided in December 1910 – almost a decade after the first project and four years after the earthquake – to dedicate another excursion to the collective documentation of the city. While the images were clearly intended to increase in historic value over time, their deposit in an archive or historical society collection was not mentioned.⁹⁷ Since neither the photographs of the surveys of 1901 and 1910, nor the list of participants, nor the precise location of storage (other than Club headquarters) can be identified, it is not possible to make a statement on the sites that were chosen as historically relevant.

Even though advocates of the project stressed its educational value and fancied its preservation in ample volumes granting open access to “government authorities, local universities and historical societies,”⁹⁸ both the process of archiving and classification for the images as well as the necessary institutional support for such an inventory remain unknown. Here, the gap between the impassioned pleas for historic preservation and the concrete realizations seems to echo Keith Davis’ evaluation of claims made by camera clubs around the same period in which “rhetoric and reality were often related in less than obvious ways.”⁹⁹ Even though the specific archival challenge imposed by the 1906 earthquake and fire obstructs the proper verification of the project’s outcome, the general discourses of historical corpus-creation through a refined photographic practice require a critical examination. They must be seen as part of the superlative vocabulary that the Club had integrated for a long time. They tie in with the rhetoric of grandeur adopted in the wake of the Chicago and San Francisco fairs in which the idea of a museum preserving the entirety of Californian contributions – especially the photographs – had already been evoked, yet would never be put into place. The mobilization of “a photographic army” which would “impress San Francisco on a thousand plates” corresponded to this grand verbalization which lacked a more solid institutional backing. The project initiated by Erwin reflected his definition of a Californian territorial photography as already envisaged for the Pacific League.¹⁰⁰

As an additional layer, and part of the ambitious agenda of the League, the survey project was supposed to enrich the fine-art ambitions of the Club. In the framework of the second San Francisco photographic salon, a separate room with the survey images in the shape of a tour around the city was anticipated, notably in response to the public interest in the project.¹⁰¹ However, this attempt did not materialize either, as can be sensed in a criticism of the second salon in *Camera Craft* which strikingly lamented “the absence of anything like a representative collection of pictures that can be identified

⁹⁶ “Photography,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 28, 1901, 3.

⁹⁷ “Photographing San Francisco,” *Camera Craft* 17, no. 10 (1910): 467.

⁹⁸ “Photography,” 3.

⁹⁹ Davis, *An American Century*, 39.

¹⁰⁰ Erwin, “A Photographic Army to Impress San Francisco on a Thousand Plates,” 237-238.

¹⁰¹ “The Camera Club and Its Work,” *San Francisco Call*, October 27, 1901, 6-7.

as Western.”¹⁰² In its exaggerated verbal claims, the project then joined the promising future outlooks of Erwin’s “portray [of] the whole of California,” yet was never turned into a solidly documented resource.

When evaluated for its instructional value for the future, the photographic depiction of the present gained in importance and thereby became part of a process of “historical imagination,” as termed by Edwards. For practitioners in California, these anticipating portrayals proved even more important as they echoed the longstanding imagination of potential future scenarios for the region. While the Club’s San Franciscan survey remained an “experiment”¹⁰³ whose actual results cannot be verified materially nor verbally, the search for a culturally and historically useful function of the medium persisted. It seems that the only existing collections of “historical photography” in its contemporary definition are to be found not in a collectively assembled archive but rather in individual ventures, like Turrill’s earlier mentioned collection of Californiana or the extensive photographic archive conceived by the San Franciscan amateur photographer Roy D. Graves.

Born in 1889, Graves was in his youth when the CCC reached its climax of activity, yet he never joined its ranks. His intense collecting activity – consisting essentially of creating copy prints of older photographs – was not widely known until the mid-twentieth century when he became an eminent reference for urban historians. Yet, Graves had started collecting as early as 1903. As the grandson of a Forty-niner – a miner during the Gold Rush – he commenced the common local career as fireman and engineer on the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe railroad companies, the same year as he began collecting. Originally spurred by an interest in the history of transportation, Graves’ collection expanded over several decades, resulting in a total of 23,100 prints alongside 10,000 negatives. This “photographic history of San Francisco” includes several photographs taken by Graves himself, yet the majority of images are photographic copies of images held by local institutions. His awareness of the historical role played by the city’s photographers becomes clear in the various subseries of the collection, notably “early cityscapes” which includes a copy of an 1856 print by Fardon or the subseries “pioneer San Francisco” in which one of Shew’s waterfront panoramas prominently figures alongside copies of early maps (**fig. 4.10**). Photographs of prints by Watkins, Muybridge, or Taber are also present. Graves confirmed that his collecting desire intensified after the destruction of the city in 1906. This motivation heightens the general historical value of the collection since the bulk of copied images represents an otherwise impossible photographic inventory. Since some of the originals may have deteriorated, perished, or simply changed location over time,

¹⁰² “The Second San Francisco Photographic Salon, Its Strong and Weak Points with a Criticism of Its Striking Features,” *Camera Craft* 4, no. 3 (1902): 89-90. See, *Catalogue of the Second San Francisco Photographic Salon, at the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art, January 9 to 23, 1902* (San Francisco: San Francisco Art Association and California Camera Club, 1902).

¹⁰³ “National Photographic Record Association,” 492.

the assemblage of their copies allows for an inventory to arise which serves historical research across disciplines.¹⁰⁴ The assemblage of such universalizing inventories through copying, selecting, and classifying has generated a local appreciation of what appears “historically important.” The collections then initiated a reflection process on how duplicates of photographs and related printed material “served as an instrument of collective memory.”¹⁰⁵

Despite Graves’ non-affiliation to the Club and the absence of his name in any of the Club-related papers and magazines, it is noticeable that the practice of duplicating, enlarging or otherwise reproducing historical photographs had become a widespread activity by the 1870s. At the time, many smaller cities had at least one “copying gallery,” notably trading in copied daguerreotypes.¹⁰⁶ While comprehensive collections such as the ones by Turrill and Graves were made at the time, their classified scope only became accessible in its entirety by the second half of the twentieth century. The small-scale production of copied photographs between the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century therefore provided one of the earliest means to discover or purchase historic depictions of the city. As an example, by 1901, when O.V. Lange had become co-editor of *Camera Craft*, he provided advice for professionals on how to achieve the right focus when photographing daguerreotypes.¹⁰⁷ The exploration of the state’s history through images made by local photographers eventually stirred an interest in the individuals behind the camera. The connection between the search for historicity in the local surroundings through photography then led to an exploration of the history of the medium itself. In this framework, the quest for a historically meaningful landscape was combined with the preservation of its photographic depictions, and subsequently tapped into the desire for recognition. For the local to be acknowledged, its practice needed a history of personalities whose early endeavors were laid out as distinct features.

In order to reach this “performance of the local,”¹⁰⁸ the narrative of pioneering Californians was used to infuse the history of photography with deeper meaning. This history then became part of the strongly pronounced geographic identity in which the myth of the Western landscape and its inhabitants was re-conceptualized. Early photographers working in San Francisco and exploring its surrounding “wilderness” thus became representative of the purposeful territorial practice the Club envisioned in the early twentieth century. The emblematic figure of Californian photography was –

¹⁰⁴ See “Finding Aid to the Roy D. Graves Pictorial Collection, ca. 1850-ca. 1970,” Online Archive of California, accessed October 1, 2017, <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf1q2nb2ng/>. See also Roy D. Graves Photograph Collection: Oral History Transcript, Berkeley, 1964 (BANC MSS C-D 4068), the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. The Martin Behrman Negative Collection (1852-1932) at the Park Archives and Records Center, Presidio of San Francisco, represents a comparable accumulation of duplicated historical images (some 6,000 items) that generate an inventory of urban development.

¹⁰⁵ Joan M. Schwartz, “Photographic Archives and the Idea of Nation: Images, Imaginings, and Imagined Community,” in *Photo Archives and the Idea of Nation*, 25.

¹⁰⁶ Erin Waters, “Daguerreotypes in Duplicate: A Survey of Copy Photography,” *The Daguerreian Annual* (2013): 161.

¹⁰⁷ O.V. Lange, “In Professional Fields,” *Camera Craft* 3, no. 1 (1901): 33.

¹⁰⁸ Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 128.

by 1900 already – Carleton Watkins, whose achievements *Camera Craft* associate editor Frederick I. Mosen defined as an impetus to his own work in the American Southwest:

Those were times of difficulty. A thousand and one hidden dangers menaced the old wet plate photographer. Think of coating plates in Arizona with the thermometer standing at 140 degrees in the shade, as Watkins did in the early seventies. And speaking of Watkins, what a great work he did for California! He was the first to photograph the grand Yosemite valley and the colossal sequoias, and it was through the medium of his beautiful pictures that the world first became familiar with California's wonderland.¹⁰⁹

The same way Turrill would, some two decades later, underline the historic value of Watkins's images through their cumbersome production and early circulation, Mosen highlighted the photographers' first-hand exploration which had paved the way for contemporary photographers. The earlier mentioned characteristics of "technical refinement and heroic biography," associated here with Watkins, were key elements in the creation of a Californian history of photography.¹¹⁰ The mastery of the medium in uncommon geographic conditions as well as the designation of grand figures to whom later generations of photographers could turn for inspiration were part and parcel of this legitimizing narrative. As the technical possibilities improved and access to the region's vistas facilitated, the numerous members of the Club participating in excursions to the Yosemite considered themselves the rightful successors of this territorial practice. In cultivating an awareness of the antecedents of their practice, the members saw in their out-of-doors agenda a continuation of Watkins's explorations. Just like the latter who had embarked on excursions throughout the Pacific West on trains, Mosen explained to members how to he had traveled with a dark room and other supplies in an expedition in 1889 for establishing a new railway connection through the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River. The article, which was illustrated with images from this trip and travels to Death Valley along the Santa Fe line, clearly sought to join the narrative of a refined photographic practice in largely unexplored territories – thereby embedding itself in the history of photography in the West (**fig. 4.11**).¹¹¹ Mosen's role as associate editor and contributor to the shaping of a local narrative is further emphasized by his involvement in the foundation of the magazine. The very name, "Camera Craft," was suggested by him in 1900. By associating apparatus, expertise and skill, the title of the magazine was to echo the desired self-portrayal of local photographers.¹¹²

Alongside Watkins's designation as first Californian photographer, the members sought to further augment the historicity of their practice by aligning with the ancientness associated with the Yosemite where the works were produced. While the Club's excursion agenda and ties to the Sierra Club will be examined in the following chapter, it is important at this point to underline how the

¹⁰⁹ Frederick I. Mosen, "Photographing under Difficulties," *Camera Craft* 1, no. 1 (1900): 9.

¹¹⁰ Lee, "American Histories of Photography," 4.

¹¹¹ Mosen, "Photographing under Difficulties," 9-12.

¹¹² "Mosen of the Desert," *Camera Craft* 16, no. 3 (1909): 115.

grandeur attributed to the landscape was used to make the practice historically meaningful. An article referring to Sierra Club founder John Muir and his preservationist work urged the photographers to explore “the noblest picture galleries” of the state which would reveal to them “the inner meaning of the natural splendor so lavished on our majestic landscapes, the secret springs of real poetry of patriotism, of arts, in short, the very cradle-song of the ‘Humanities.’”¹¹³ Here, the study of the landscape became intertwined with an ideology of patriotism, resulting in local productions that were supposed to carry national meaning. As such, the landscape became an “artifact,” a human-made object displaying the discourses and ideologies attached to it. Local landscape photographers then used the symbolic value of this object to infuse their productions with deeper historical meaning.¹¹⁴ Accordingly, the practice of the medium in these settings would give rise to a canon in which both the geographic conditions and the inhabitants were markers of sophisticated creation. As remarked by Jennifer Watts, promoters of California often sought to connect the state’s climatic conditions and imposing natural vistas to the notion of “a better humanity, with kinship ties to the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome.”¹¹⁵ The artistic productions of these populations, matching the assigned grandeur of their surroundings, would then naturally be of high quality. This local demarcation factor was one of the reasons why pictures “characteristic” of the West were particularly desired in competitive displays. Club members seized this discourse furthermore, as reflected in the writings by Henrietta S. Breck, who qualified the Californian landscape and climate as main impetus to the isolated artistic production. While its geography provided the necessary inspiration, the state only lacked the material “traditions of Italy,” which would otherwise grant Californian artists “instant admission into the world’s Louvre” and, by the same token, elevate photography to the fine arts.¹¹⁶

Given this ideological framework for the practice, the photographers who had first settled in San Francisco were declared pioneers and their output defined as prime examples of the medium’s potential. Next to Watkins, William Shew – daguerreotypist and member of the early photographers’ associations of 1866 and 1875 – was also included in the process of history-writing in *Camera Craft*. While both Watkins and Shew were still alive at the time, they were considered living symbols of both the historicity and the rapid progress of the practice in the city. One year before the daguerreotypist’s death, in 1902, O.V. Lange published an article on Shew entitled “[a] portrait photographer for more than half a century in San Francisco” (**fig. 4.12**). Recounting his early acquaintance with Shew, Lange sketched the latter’s career back to the advent of photography. Since he had started making daguerreotypes in New York in 1841, before moving to San Francisco ten years

¹¹³ Olaf Ellison, “The Mountain Heart’s Ease (John Muir),” *Camera Craft* 1, no. 4 (1900): 168, 171.

¹¹⁴ Estelle Jussim and Elizabeth Lindquist-Cock, *Landscape as Photograph* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), xiii-xiv.

¹¹⁵ Watts, “Picture Taking in Paradise,” 245.

¹¹⁶ Henrietta S. Breck, “California Women and Artistic Photography,” *Overland Monthly* 43, no. 2 (1904): 94.

later, Shew's biography developed in tandem with both the history of the medium and of its appliances on the West Coast. In acknowledging his impact as instructor to other photographers in the city, Lange declared Shew one of the main contributors to the solid anchorage of photography in early twentieth century San Francisco.¹¹⁷ Despite the rapid evolution of processes and formats over the course of Shew's career, he stuck to the designation of his studio as daguerrian gallery for several decades and, in the early twentieth century, continued to work on glass rather than roll film. This conscious use of time-tested processes and their rigorous application tied in with Shew's conviction of photography as an art form – a notion which mirrored his adherence to associations like the Photographic Art Society of the Pacific. By 1854, he had already assigned photography “a national character,” in highlighting the superiority of American productions.¹¹⁸ Like his biographer, Shew had pursued an interest in the evolution of the medium and its artistic forms, next to his influential position in the fiercely competitive marketplace.

Thanks to this biographical study, Lange was able to extend his historical preoccupations that had already manifested in his promotional work of San Francisco and Berkeley, in the lecture on UCB's campus, and its photographic inventory. This varied use of the medium, on numerous platforms appealing to different audiences, was enriched by an awareness of the medium's history. His dedication to historic precedents had become tangible in the use of salted paper prints in the Berkeley albums, following the Fardon tradition, but became more vocal through the publication of a biographical portrayal of one of the city's most recognized photographers. The rediscovery of ancient processes, as recently argued by Michel Poivert, would turn photographers into active historians of their practice. By “re-reading and retro-practicing” ancient processes at a moment of technological innovation, the “artistic potential” of older techniques was unlocked.¹¹⁹ In line with the “amateur ideology” of a historically conscious, actively exploring, and congenially improving practice, Lange highlighted the usefulness of the medium in the city. He did so by adopting the role of a historian of photography instructing his peers on their collective publishing platform. In a period marked by the quasi-total absence of photographers' autobiographies, with apparently “very little mystique” involved in the profession, the Californian Club member attempted to “find a usable past” in the biography of an early photographer. Through this portrayal, the contemporary productions of the CCC could be taken as the continuity of a tradition.¹²⁰

In line with Shew's conviction of the medium's artistic possibilities, *Camera Craft* contributors furthered this connection between photography and art by publishing a series of articles

¹¹⁷ O.V. Lange, “A Portrait Photographer for More than Half a Century in San Francisco,” *Camera Craft* 5, no. 3 (1902): 101-107.

¹¹⁸ Cunkle Calmenson, “Likenesses Taken in the Most Approved Style,” 8-15.

¹¹⁹ Translated from Poivert, “La mémoire photographique ou la sensibilité historique des photographes,” 34.

¹²⁰ On the absence of autobiographies or monographs on photographers before the 1930s, see McCauley, “Writing Photography's History before Newhall,” 91-93.

on California's early art scene. By linking the beginnings of photography in the West to a re-appreciation of "California's earliest and best known artist" Charles Nahl, Club member and magazine co-editor Carl E. Ackerman pointed out the short span of time elapsed between these depictions of settlement in the state and the advance of "modern civilization" as experienced in 1900. The article, which reproduced sketches Nahl had made of Sacramento and San Francisco in the early 1850s, adopted a backward- and forward-looking perspective by claiming that "fifty years in California means centuries compared with the age of other countries." Given the proclaimed density of this short history, the author advocated in favor of preservation and display of Nahl's work – an act realized by Jane Stanford who acquired two canvasses for the Stanford University Museum.¹²¹ These preservation efforts were also tangible in a subsequent article on the journey around the Isthmus of Panama, illustrated with sketches by Nahl. In ensuring that the memory of the pioneers would be transmitted to upcoming generations, the article insisted on an authentic portrayal of the journey by sea – a trajectory undertaken by numerous early settlers. Through a juxtaposition of sketches and narrative accounts by Nahl, it sought to underline the hardships of the journey combined with the difficulty of producing artistic work under these circumstances. In a wishful motion, these circumstances were linked to photography's development at mid-century, resulting in a fantasized hypothesis: "Had photography been a perfected science at this time, how rich would have been the annals of the pioneers. With what romance the voyages across the plains and by the isthmus would have been invested."¹²² In this proposition, not the painted sketches but the captured photographs would constitute the actual artistic depictions. For brush as well as camera, their use in adverse conditions and isolated regions heightened the historical value of the productions and their makers. Through the rapid changes in modern technologies, concerning both transportation and photography, the relatively recent histories of artistic production were feared to fall into oblivion. Their re-appraisal in the pages of the California Camera Club's main publishing organ as works of "the early days" then lent the photographers' contemporary productions their desired historical weight.

Since both medium and place were inextricably related in their development, the importance of photographic work for the history of the city was remarked by both newspapers and journals. Thanks to the portraiture works by professionals like Shew over several decades, a visual inventory of historic figures who had lived in or visited the city had emerged – including for example General William T. Sherman, who had led the Northern troops during the Civil War. The portrait, which adorns the opening page of Lange's biographical sketch on Shew, might likewise reflect the latter's staunch support for abolitionism and hint at the importance of California in the national imagination after the

¹²¹ Carl E. Ackerman, "In the Days of Forty-nine, with a short Sketch of Charles Nahl," *Camera Craft* 2, no. 2 (1900): 106-113.

¹²² "Across the Isthmus in the Early Days," *Camera Craft* 2, no. 3 (1901): 236-237.

Civil War.¹²³ Lange's study of Shew's work "in the pioneer days," therefore concludes that "there is scarcely a name identified with the early history and progress of California that will not be found on the yellow and faded registers in the old gallery."¹²⁴ The creation of a photographic studio in the early days of the city, with productions gaining in historical value over the decades, was then conceptualized as an expression of the pioneering spirit of the West – just as the strenuous journey by sea or over land. Shew's work combined the individualism and ruggedness attached to the imaginary of the frontier with the practice of a new medium. Thereby, his biography infused the history of Californian photography with the geographic identity of the West.

An ultimate example fusing the history of Californian pioneers with the practice of photography can be found in Isaiah W. Taber's project "Biographies and Narratives of Forty-eight California Pioneers" which sought to illustrate first-hand accounts of early life in San Francisco with portraits of settlers. The directory – of which today only a manuscript with biographical data, reports, and newspaper clippings remain – had been envisioned by Taber in the late 1880s and was to become a decade-long undertaking.¹²⁵ In a letter to the California State Library, whose historical collections Taber had imagined as an ideal deposit for the directory, he explained the process of collecting, the purpose, and the eventual fate of the project:

In answer to a letter from Mr Gillis, State Librarian, for information about my collection of representative Californians, on which I had been working and collecting data for the past 20 years, with the intention of presenting it to the State Library when completed, I regret to say that it has been destroyed by the fire with my Gallery at 121 Post St. I had 6 large albums holding 300 portraits each. With autographs, Date of arrival in California, occupation, address, Birthplace, Date of birth, and first occupation in California with other biographical history. They contained nearly a thousand of the Pioneer business men of the State, many have passed away, and many professional men, and others who have not figured prominently in public life, but who were among the builders of our state.

It has been slow work in collecting data and securing Negatives of prominent people in different parts of the state. None of the albums were quite complete. It would have taken one or two years more to get photographs to finish the work and to classify it.

The pecuniary loss I do not consider, only the historical value in which I took great interest, being myself one of the early settlers, having arrived at San Francisco, the 22nd of February, 1850, after a voyage of 186 days around Cape Horn.

If I am able to find among my old papers at home, any early data, of interest, I will send it to you some time in the near future.¹²⁶

The compilation of such an allegedly "representative" pioneer narrative and its aspiration to coherence necessitate a closer contextualization. Anthony Lee, the only historian to have critically

¹²³ Cunkle Calmenson, "Likenesses Taken in the Most Approved Style," 11.

¹²⁴ Lange, "A Portrait Photographer," 107.

¹²⁵ Isaiah W. Taber, "Biographical Narratives of forty-eight California Pioneers dictated to I.W. Taber, ca. 1886-1888," (BANC MSS C-D 5062 vol. 1-3), the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

¹²⁶ Isaiah W. Taber to Eudora Garouette, dated July 25, 1906 (Isaiah West Taber, Biographical Information File, California State Library). I wish to express my thanks to Gary Kurutz, director of special collections at the California State Library, for providing me with this source.

engaged with Taber's project, has pointed out the deep-seated notions of racism, prejudice, and discrimination tangible in some of the Forty-niner accounts. Given the commercial and strongly stereotyped framework of Taber's productions, the author considered the absence of any marketability ambition in the biographical project as "equally remarkable."¹²⁷ While it is true that the foundational narrative of the city was closely related to the rejection of its ethnic minorities, it also needs to be remarked that the Forty-niner occupied a special position in the imagination of the city's photographers. This special interest, as we will see, had a strong ties to the practitioners' self-understanding as workers of the remote regions of the American West.

On a general note, when examining the mobilization of photography to create historical coherence and credibility, the larger ideological contexts in which the medium was utilized need to be underlined. By the turn of the century, the stereotyped depiction of the Forty-niner narrative was in full fabrication. While it has been argued that the figure of the Gold Rush pioneer would be turned into "an approachable folk figure" with whom even San Francisco's ethnic minorities could identify by the early twentieth century,¹²⁸ the use of the Forty-niner within photographers' circles remained associated with a specific portrayal of the local community, divided into honorable and despicable figures. In its function as a popular local magazine, *Camera Craft* contributed to the shaping of this narrative division. Articles like "The first Rogues Gallery in the World," published in 1901, instructed readers on photography's role in the creation of a criminal archive of early San Francisco. By the 1890s, this archive in registered some 40,000 criminals, many of whom were identified as Australian, Mexican, Chinese, or African-American. Switching back and forth between anecdotes of lawlessness and the technological progress of the medium, the author created a link between the 'civilizing' of the frontier and photography's ascension to a vital documenting tool. The Rogues Gallery then served as a visual inventory kept by the city's police department that could attest to photography's power of imposing order.

As a seemingly exhaustive photographic record of crime in the early city, the archive could complement the Fardon album of the 1850s that depicted a cultivated, aesthetic urban space in mid 1850s. Similarly, with regard to the photographic inventory of virtuous citizens envisioned by Taber, the police portrait file served as a counterweight by "showing types of early California criminals."¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Anthony W. Lee, *Picturing Chinatown. Art and Orientalism in San Francisco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 55-58. As Lee remarks, Taber's compilation also included an unfinished and unpublished manuscript of his own arrival in San Francisco. Entitled "The Great Chinese Invasion," the account swiftly turned into a fantasized story of Chinese invasion in the Bay Area. The manuscript's further purpose or uses are unclear.

¹²⁸ Robin, *Signs of Change*, 20-22.

¹²⁹ Theodore Kytka, "The First Rogues Gallery in the World," *Camera Craft* 2, no. 5 (1901): 379-384. The fate of the entire set is not known (see Palmquist and Kailbourn, *Pioneer Photographers*, 361-362), yet the San Francisco Public Library, the California State Library, and the Bancroft Library hold individual "mug shot books," some dated before 1906; some are also said to be in private possession. James Eason (principal pictorial archivist, Bancroft Library) and Susan Goldstein (city archivist, San Francisco Public Library), e-mail messages to author, November 17, 2017.

Through these binary archives of San Franciscan society, “a system of representation capable of functioning both *honorifically* and *repressively*” was initiated. In this context, the demonstration of “bourgeois order” could be validated through refined urban scenery and portrait files of both distinguished and infamous citizens, the latter of whom were “objectif[ied] [...] in the files of the police.”¹³⁰ While such historical re-appropriations of San Francisco’s ethnically diverse population as well as their marketability require a more thorough analysis, especially with regard to “representative” depictions made by the Club, the historical meaning of a project like Taber’s merits an alternate reading, informed by its *photographic* conception.

Taber’s description of the meticulous documentation work for the Forty-niner biographies points to the aspiration to shape a visual narrative of the past. If the portraits stored in Shew’s gallery traced a cluttered history of individuals relevant to the construction of San Francisco, Taber selected this imagined “original” corpus himself and assembled it according to his own criteria of coherence and exhaustiveness. Photography served as the ideological glue in this endeavor, providing not only an illustrative component but being an integral part of both the pioneer history and his own biography. As Taber recounted in an interview in *Camera Craft* in 1900: “In 1849 I sold out my business [in New York] and came to San Francisco. I landed here on Washington’s birthday and went right to work.” The article described Taber as “perhaps the pioneer photographer of the Pacific Coast” due to his inventiveness and distribution of Western views. Despite some of the Club members’ aversions to Taber’s excessive business strategies, he was acknowledged as one of the main figures in the local history of photography, indeed leading to a narrative from “the days of Daguerre to the days of Taber.” Like Watkins and Shew, he was considered an inspirational practitioner: “During the afternoons he can always be found at his gallery ready to discuss the future and the past of the art, ever jovial and reminiscent, and withal ready to instruct the younger generation.”¹³¹ The possible exchanges with Taber on the history of photographic practice in San Francisco would be enriched by his large collection of older images, including daguerreotypes, which he either collected or re-photographed – as several others did at the time. Around the time of the article, this endeavor would have amounted to what Gary Kurutz evaluated as “an incomparable record of the West,” offering some 30,000 views.¹³² This accumulation of images had been gathered partly from photographic departments of other firms like Nahl Brothers’ Art and Photographic Gallery (the nucleus of his collection when Taber set up his business in 1871) and most famously Watkins’s negatives covering the Pacific Coast, to which was added his own production of views and portraits. After the destruction of his gallery in the earthquake and fire of 1906 – a foretaste of its dimension becoming tangible in

¹³⁰ Allan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” *October* 39 (1986): 6-7, <https://doi.org/10.2307/778312>.

¹³¹ “Colonel I.W. Taber,” *Camera Craft* 1, no. 6 (1900): 341-343.

¹³² Kurutz, introduction to *Taber: A Photographic Legacy*, 12.

his letter to the California State Library – the losses of the Taber photographic firm were estimated at some 100 tons of negatives, 80 of which were portraits.¹³³

Yet, Taber's statement on the incalculable value of the biographical narratives, which outweighed whichever "pecuniary loss" suffered in the catastrophe, underlines the importance of the project's *photographic* component as key to its realization. Through their ascribed indexical value, the accompanying albums would have made the biographical narratives a directory in an almost encyclopedic form. Its aspiration to knowledge-production, historical coherence, and preservation, was to be completed through the accompanying portrait albums. Since Taber inserted his personal biography, notably his arrival in San Francisco "on Washington's birthday," into the pioneer narrative, the portraits he made of the early settlers would authenticate the circumstances of his own past. Just like the daguerreotypes made in the Gold Rush era, the inclusion of these portraits in collecting institutions sought to shape a "factual" quality, but instead represented "illusions, created fictions, incomplete narratives." As argued by John Wood, daguerreotype portraits of miners in the early 1850s already revealed a "Western theatricality" which constructed a mythical narrative of progress and prosperity. When assembled together, these portraits were to "[picture] [...] communes of possibility."¹³⁴ Produced several decades later, nearing the end of the first generation of pioneers, Taber's albums would then retrospectively turn these possibilities into certainties by merging first-hand accounts with photographic identity. The thus created "visual fiction" translated the desire for a unified, representative narrative in materialized form comparable to Mathew Brady's "Gallery of Illustrious Americans" in the mid nineteenth century, however, this time validated through institutional preservation.¹³⁵

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Even though the material traces of the intertwined historicizing attempts of both city and practice are rare and many of them did not survive the catastrophe from which they initially had sought protection, it can be stated that Club members and Californian photographers in general, in the early twentieth century, were very much exposed to and involved in historical collecting. The phenomenon of historical research at communal level, leading to the assemblage of photographs through which a local history was envisioned, developed in tandem with a more conscious approach to the history of photography. Regarding the articulation of a local narrative through photography, the CCC's attempt at a uniform survey of the city through photographs tapped both the belief in the authenticity and in the archival capacity of the photographic object. As argued by Joan Schwartz, in this period photographs and archives were attached with "shared vocabularies" of "mirrors and

¹³³ Palmquist and Kailbourn, *Pioneer Photographers*, 539-540.

¹³⁴ Wood, "Theatrical Narratives and the Documents of Dream," 25-37.

¹³⁵ Translated from Brunet, *La Photographie Histoire et Contre-histoire*, 77.

memory” and, in this, raised similar expectations of truth and reliability, when brought together. This highly problematic “paradigm of objectivity,” instilled with a process of selection and marginalization that becomes apparent in the aforementioned examples, can be reformulated through a lexical shift: instead of “being objective” suppliers of information, the photographs need to be examined as “having objectives,” in which they are “synonymous with goal, aim, aspiration, and desire.”¹³⁶ Through this reconceptualization, the aspirations of the photographers and the desired performances of the photographic corpora gain new meanings. It further illuminates the collective purpose of the practice and utility of the medium which was negotiated in the pages of the Club magazine. In these discussions, it has become clear that photography needed “a focus, a reason, an application beyond simple picture making.”¹³⁷ This application manifested itself in the construction of a historically valuable corpus of images which were supposed to reflect the progress of the city.

Despite the largely futile character of these strivings for historic preservation, due to a combination of local circumstances and organizational shortcomings, they nonetheless spurred the photographers’ desire to become part of local history in exploring the antecedents of their practice and creating meaningful continuities. Drawing on the early San Franciscan practitioners’ definitions of their work as “art” – be it for the commercial appeal of the term or a belief in aesthetic potential – the members of the Club carried on the quest for a recognition of the medium as an art form with a decade-long past. This search was amplified by the creation of a local history in which Club members sought to perpetuate their activities throughout the state in the shape of exchanges, lectures, collective surveys, as well as an imagined “Pacific League” associated with the Los Angeles Camera Club. The attempt to initiate more official forms of communication and exchange, especially in a magazine and an institutionally supported photographic salon by 1901, then integrated the desire to “elevate” photography. At any level, this quest for elevating the medium by facilitating its platforms of exchange and enriching its history implied the mobilization of Californian history and environment. Since the territory played a crucial role in this quest, photography had to be recognized as an artistic form through which Californian culture at large could be displayed.

In the collectively articulated history of Californian photography that included Watkins, Shew, and Taber – all of whom had been eminent professionals – their productions were used to underline local craftsmanship and aesthetics. In this framework, it becomes clear, once again, that categories of “professional” or “artistic” largely overlapped and were anything but mutually

¹³⁶ Joan M. Schwartz, “Shared Vocabularies of Modernity: Photography, Archives, and the Paradigm of Objectivity” (paper presented at the international conference “Photo Archives V: The Paradigm of Objectivity,” The Getty Center and the Huntington Library, Los Angeles / San Marino, February 25, 2016). See Carolin Görden, “Symposium ‘Photo Archives V: The Paradigm of Objectivity,’” *Transatlantica* 2 (2015), <http://transatlantica.revues.org/7655>. See also Costanza Caraffa, Tiziana Serena, introduction to *Photo Archives and the Idea of Nation*, 3-16. On the mirror metaphor, see Brunet, *La Photographie Histoire et Contre-histoire*, 74-88.

¹³⁷ Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 46.

exclusive. In fact, as oftentimes acknowledged, the very expertise and inventiveness required to produce sophisticated work was provided by the professional exertion of the medium. While this connection between artistic work and commercial production was attempted to be veiled on numerous occasions – especially when aspiring to institutional recognition – it was at the same time an indicator of the “pioneering spirit” of early Californians who had come to the state for financial motivations. If the camera clubs around the turn of the century strove for recognition of their works amid the fine arts, an art-historical conceptualization of the practice through grand figures and technical proficiency, as suggested by Anthony Lee, was needed to add historical depth and antecedents to the works. The members of the Club wished to become part of this local tradition, which they carried on in outings and materialized in salons.

Chapter 5

The San Francisco Photographic Salons, 1901-1903: new insights into context and reception for a historiographical revision

Two years before his death in 1965, Oscar Maurer reminisced in a short unpublished memoir entitled “As I Remember” about his career as a photographer and California Camera Club member. Born as the son of German immigrants in New York in 1870, he came to San Francisco during his youth and the city, as he put it, “stimulated my art sensitive mind.” Maurer’s membership in the Club, starting in 1896, and his submission of a photograph taken in Mexico to the first Chicago salon of 1900, marked the onset of a series of photographic salons held in San Francisco between 1901 and 1903. In his memoir, however, Maurer depicts the photograph and its relevance in another light. As he remembers:

In an open section of Mexico City I took advantage of a rare chance for an outstanding shot with my Kodak. A heavy sky and threatening rain were the background for a score of pack burros being driven along a dirt road headed for market in town. The result was a prize winning picture. I called it *The Storm*. Stieglitz featured it, full page, in his superb magazine, *Camera Work* of 1902.¹

Several details about the statement and the picture itself demand clarification: As *Camera Work* would be published from 1903 until 1917 – and never featured a reproduction of *The Storm* or any other of Maurer’s works – one must turn to its predecessor *Camera Notes* (1897-1902), of which Stieglitz was then editor. Reproduced twice between 1900 and 1902, receiving praise in a review of the Chicago salon and as part of the first exhibition of the Photo-Secession at the National Arts Club in New York in March 1902, *The Storm* was indeed featured in the earlier magazine and in what was considered a landmark Eastern photographic exhibition.² Even though Maurer was “the sole California entrant” in both the Chicago salon and the New York show, photography collectors and historians of the late twentieth century have been unable to locate the print in any major collection. Suggesting that this absence “underscores the rarity of early California Pictorialist photography,” Michael Wilson concluded that “[a]pparently no California collector accumulated and preserved the work of early California Pictorialists, as Stieglitz had done for the Photo-Secessionists.”³ The absence of a main collector notwithstanding, by now, the image can be located in the photograph collections of the Oakland Museum of California, prominently featuring the inscription “prize picture by Oscar

¹ Oscar Maurer, “As I Remember,” (1963), 4, 8 (BANC MSS 2012/1), the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

² See Simone Philippi and Ute Kieseyer, eds. *Camera Work. The Complete Photographs, 1903-1917* (Cologne: Taschen, 2013); Mariana Fulton Margolis, *Alfred Stieglitz Camera Work: A Pictorial Guide* (New York and Rochester: Dover Publications, Inc., and the International Museum of Photography at the George Eastman House, 1978). *The Storm* is reproduced in the following issues: *Camera Notes* 4 (1900): 69; *Camera Notes* 6 (1902): 42.

³ Wilson, “Northern California: The Heart of the Storm,” 5, 20.

Maurer, taken in Mexico” on its back (**fig. 5.1a**, **fig. 5.1b**, **fig. 5.1c**). The Museum acquired several prints, negatives, albums, and memorabilia from Oscar Maurer on the occasion of the sole retrospective of his work shortly before his death in 1965. This version of *The Storm* was included in the acquisition but apparently was not shown in the Oakland exhibition, as it had not been inventoried until 2008.⁴

In 1984, curator Therese Heyman, who had organized the Maurer retrospective twenty years earlier, defined the mission of the Oakland Museum’s photograph collection “to demonstrate that works of art take form within a culture, not in isolation.” Aware of newly emerging critical voices in the history of photography since the 1970s, Heyman denounced “the patronizing interest Eastern critics and museums previously showed in California art as a regional phenomenon” while at the same time appreciating the same Eastern institutions’ “dawning realization that California artists have made significant and needed contributions in photography and printed media.”⁵ Her successors, notably Drew Johnson who confirmed my relocation of Maurer’s “prize picture,” have praised Heyman’s critical contextual work for her awareness of the intersections between photographic practice and its specific local uses. For several decades, therefore, the Museum has sought to integrate photographic material of all kinds into the historical context of its production, thereby adopting an “innovative approach” with a specific “regional focus.”⁶

Drawing on Johnson’s suggestion of the Oakland Museum’s photography collection as an impetus to “challenge accepted views, even those presented by the museum itself,”⁷ this chapter will take the historiographical treatment of Maurer, his involvement in the CCC as well as his often-mentioned affiliation with Photo-Secession as a point of departure for rethinking the material produced in the context of the San Francisco photographic salons between 1901 and 1903. In a history of American photography around the turn of the century dominated by the narrative of the Stieglitz circle – to which the art-historical framings of Californian photographers like Maurer in the Oakland retrospective have contributed – this chapter proposes a two-fold historical and historiographical rereading of the primary sources and secondary literature concerning Californian photography in the early 1900s. The persistent analysis of the local salons through the prism of the Stieglitz circle has led to a narrative of seemingly isolated Californian Secessionist affiliates – among whom Oscar

⁴ It is not clear whether this print (sized 5" x 7") in the Oakland collection is the actual exhibition picture. Information gathered from personal correspondence with Drew Heath Johnson (curator of photography and visual culture, Oakland Museum of California) and Dennis Reed (Professor Emeritus of Art, photography collector), e-mail messages to author, January 4, 2017.

⁵ Therese Thau Heyman, “California Prints, Photographs and Drawings,” in *The Art of California. Selected Works from the Collection of the Oakland Museum*, ed. Christina Orr-Cahall (Oakland and San Francisco: The Oakland Museum Art Department and Chronicle Books, 1984), 27.

⁶ Drew Heath Johnson, “The Regional Photography Collection: A Case Study at the Oakland Museum of California,” in *Photographers: A Sourcebook for Historical Research*, 2nd ed., 21-22.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

Maurer, Arnold Genthe, or Anne Brigman – whose work and worth is almost exclusively defined and appreciated by its appearance in Stieglitz-related publications. Such studies, still relying on “the very few accepted and overused contemporary publications such as *Camera Notes* and *Camera Work*” have – oftentimes also in the case of California-based research – led to the neglect of not only the riches to be found in *Camera Craft*, but also of the supportive network of these seemingly “isolated” photographers, that is, the California Camera Club and its diverse membership. Mostly introduced as a side note, both the Club and its magazine appear as mere backdrops to a narrative of individual figures applying the aesthetic standards of the Photo-Secession to their West Coast conditions.⁸

If the archival material related to California Pictorialism appears sparse or unacknowledged – the underlying argument in the studies of both Margery Mann and Michael Wilson – the categories of analysis for this period need to be critically rethought and opened up to other sources which survived the turning point of the 1906 catastrophe. This chapter therefore proposes to enrich the corpus of material related to the salons by shifting the gaze away from fine art institutions and toward public and university libraries as well as local historical societies.⁹ Despite the continued narrative framings of pioneer artists and technical refinement for institutional legitimation – as desired by Heyman – this materially enriched and contextually embedded analysis seeks to move beyond the Pictorialist overtones of the common salon history. This implies a study of the history of networks and correspondence, of circulation and exchange, intimately intertwined with the artistic desires and economic ambitions of a still-emerging Californian culture reaching beyond photography circles.

In order to articulate an alternative history of the photographic salons, this chapter will trace the preparation, staging, and reception of these events in the specific local context. In illustrating the complexities of the San Francisco salons, the history traced in this chapter is one that reconstructs the “photographic discourse” which was used as legitimizing at the time, and which has continued to inform analyses of such exhibitions in secondary literature.¹⁰ To shed light on the persistent art-historical framework of salons in scholarship, the chapter will start with a historiographical evaluation of the literature on San Francisco Pictorialists. By looking at the repercussions of this scholarship, it will be attempted to provide an understanding of how the young canon of the history of photography

⁸ See Keller, “The Myth of Art Photography: A Sociological Analysis,” 249. Three decades after Keller’s article, this narrow East Coast framework and use of primary source material still persists. An example can be found in Maurer’s overview of works held at Getty Museum, emphasizing his membership in the Photo-Secession and the false assumption of his contributions to *Camera Work*, see “Oscar Maurer,” The J. Paul Getty Museum, accessed October 5, 2017, <http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/artists/2901/oscar-maurer-american-1871-1965/>. For a framing of Californian photography through the prism of the Photo-Secession see, Emily Ballew Neff, *The Modern West: American Landscapes, 1890-1950* (New Haven and Houston: Yale University Press and Houston Museum of Fine Arts, 2006), 102-108; for a persistent reading of Western photographers as isolated artists, see Eva Respini, *Into the Sunset: Photography’s Image of the American West* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2009).

⁹ Mann, *California Pictorialism*, 1977. Wilson and Reed, eds., *Pictorialism in California*, 1994. Both exhibitions were primarily sponsored by fine arts institutions, i.e. the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Getty Museum.

¹⁰ Sekula, “On the Invention of Photographic Meaning,” 37.

has required such narrow selections, which at the same time have led to the neglect of numerous other corpora. As a second step, the organization of the salons and their intricate links to Club outings need to be considered. Here, the history of the territory, its accessibility via modern infrastructural technologies, and the mobilization of the landscape for artistic legitimation are again connected. Given the membership of both the San Francisco and Los Angeles clubs, which fused professionals and amateurs, the output of the salons held in California in this period needs to be examined through the same prism. The interplay of professionalism and leisure, of commodity and culture, provides a new angle from which to approach the works exhibited between 1901 and 1903. Ultimately, this history will reconstruct communications between New York and San Francisco – between the Photo-Secession and the California Camera Club – on the occasion of the third San Francisco salon in 1903. Through the definition of San Francisco, rather than New York, as a point of departure, the specific conditions of local production are used as a guideline to approach the expectations related to early photographic exhibitions. In the light of this broad range of questions to be addressed, the following sections do not include a formal evaluation of the salon works, as this has been carried out elsewhere,¹¹ but seek to generate a contextualized history whose “strength,” indeed, “lies in its regional focus.”¹²

5.1 *The photographic salon and its discursive system: a shift in perspective for new research tools*

Borrowing its title from the autobiography written by his friend, former Club colleague, and probably most well-known Californian photographer of the period, Arnold Genthe, Maurer’s “As I Remember” must be considered in its original context in order to grasp the emphasis on his Photo-Secession affiliation and its subsequent uses. Twenty years after Genthe’s death, Maurer was in his early nineties when he wrote the autobiographical note and was about to have a small yet important retrospective dedicated to his work. This period, in which the Oakland Museum of California (then the Oakland Art Museum) started to cultivate an interest in local photographers in order to diversify its collection scope, research on the history of photography in the United States was largely dominated by an art-historical agenda which, in turn, had repercussions on collecting politics and the market value of photographic objects. Championing individual figures over networks, “aesthetic ideas” over “social histories,” Beaumont Newhall’s *History of Photography from 1839 to the Present Day* (1949) is probably the most influential source for this institutional appreciation of the medium. As a result of the 1937 Museum of Modern Art retrospective “Photography, 1839-1937,” Newhall’s account was first published as *Photography: A Short Critical History* (1938). The book underwent numerous re-

¹¹ For a formal analysis of the salon works and their artistic conception compared to the Photo-Secession, see Wilson, “Northern California: The Heart of the Storm,” 5-12; see also McCarroll, “For the Encouragement of Better Photography,” 20-25.

¹² Johnson, “The Regional Photography Collection,” 23.

editions over the course of the following decades, one of which occurred in 1964 in cooperation with the George Eastman House of which he was then director. Even though his history was conceived in the 1930s at the same time as Kansas historian Robert Taft wrote *Photography and the American Scene* (1938), Newhall's book published in the wake of the MoMA exhibition would become a "canon maker," whereas Taft's would be relegated to the fringes as "primary source" until the late twentieth century. By the time of re-edition in the 1960s, Taft's "social history" had fallen into oblivion, pre-indicating "the rise to dominance of the Newhallian model of history and its institutionalization in major art museums and the art market" between 1965 and 1980.¹³

The East-Coast centered conceptualization of the medium and its history was dominated by the New York Museum of Modern Art, which has been identified as "the single most influential source of photographic legitimation in America." Its exhibition and collecting politics championed "the autonomy of the aesthetic, the primacy of the individual artist, and the noncontingency of cultural production," tying in with the linear narrative of aesthetic production often advanced in the case of the Photo-Secession as well as its later preferences for "straight photography."¹⁴ Although widely criticized, the institutional decisions inspired by Newhall have had a longstanding impact on the popular perception of photographic history, turning photographs into "isolated objects" and favoring notions of "simple authorship." In order to communicate unity, coherence, and linearity, this approach was adopted to develop "formal properties," characteristic of one specific movement which would embody a desired norm¹⁵ – such as the aesthetic imperative established by the Photo-Secession during the period characterized as "Pictorialism." Despite the narrative shortcomings and archival gaps generated by this selection in the long run, the aesthetic imperative constituted a necessary procedure. If the medium was to be appreciated as an autonomous art form in the museum, both its stylistic features and its protagonists had to be depicted through a narrow lens.

In order to understand the narrative selection made for the canon, as well as its repercussions on other corpora, we can turn to Newhall's evaluation of Southwestern photographer Adam Clark Vroman. A Pasadena resident, Vroman covered Native American culture and mission preservation – two fields that largely overlapped with the LACC's agenda and reached into the CCC's state-wide network.¹⁶ In an introduction to a monograph written in 1961, Newhall chose a characterization of

¹³ François Brunet, "Robert Taft in Beaumont Newhall's Shadow: A Difficult Dialogue between two American Histories of Photography," *Études Photographiques* 30 (2012): 45-62. For a scholarly appreciation of Taft's analytical approach, see notably Sandweiss, ed., *Photography in Nineteenth-century America* (1989), Sailor, *Meaningful Places* (2014), Brunet *La Photographie Histoire et Contre-histoire* (2017).

¹⁴ Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the Dock*, xxiv-xxv.

¹⁵ Willumson, "The Getty Research Institute: Materials for a New Photo-History," 31-34. For a discussion of Newhall's academic background and his application of aesthetic theories by Harvard professor Paul J. Sachs and MoMA founder Alfred Barr, see Allison Bertrand, "Beaumont Newhall's 'Photography 1839-1937': Making History," *History of Photography* 21, no. 2 (1997): 137-146.

¹⁶ For connections between Vroman, local clubs and promotion, see for example his lecture at the LACC, "Franciscan Missions and Ramona's Home," *Los Angeles Camera Club News* 3, no. 1 (1903): 11-12; his knowledge and

the photographer that can be seen as symptomatic of the then ongoing process of canon-shaping. After a short passage describing Vroman's apparent contact with the CCC in 1898 when envisioning the formation of his own camera club, the curator goes on to suggest possible reasons for his decision not to join any of the existing clubs in the region:

[T]he West Coast camera clubs were only pale imitations of the Camera Club in New York which, under the dynamic influence of Alfred Stieglitz, was a spearhead of amateur photography until the formation of the Photo-Secession in 1902. To judge from the reproductions in *Camera Craft*, the photographs of the California pictorialists were weak imitations of the styles of the Photo-Secession, lacking in taste, technique, and conviction.¹⁷

Despite the book's historically informed conception, drawing on primary sources preserved at local public libraries, the narrative framework set by Newhall's introduction leaves no doubt about the aesthetic value assigned to Vroman's work. The framing of the photographic corpus as individually conceived, in the secluded regions of the American Southwest, ties in with the landscape aesthetics through which the works of photographers like Carleton Watkins were evaluated at the same period. It created a linear narrative in which Vroman filled the gap between the expedition photographers of the 1860s and the "sensitive styles" of Ansel Adams and Edward Weston in the 1930s.¹⁸

While the contemporary necessity of such a portrayal to shape an authoritative history of the medium is undeniable, its repercussions need to be pointed out in the following. By opposing the two coasts, a comparative vision was initiated that implied a dividing line between the Photo-Secession and camera clubs elsewhere in the country. This schematic representation has dominated and continues to influence histories of Californian photography around the turn of the century. In setting the photographic standards defined by the New York circle as a point of reference for aesthetic evaluation and as a point of departure for formulating a history of the practice *in* California, the model has obfuscated the study of West Coast photography. Newhall's framing of Vroman as an individual artist, an ingenious but lone practitioner traveling the Southwest, denies any affiliation to other practitioner circles. The rejection of all Western material – legitimated solely by the works reproduced

photographic works were requested for reprints of Ramona's story, see Helen Hunt Jackson, *Ramona: A Story with an Introduction by A.C. Vroman. With Illustrations from Original Photographs by A.C. Vroman* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1915); like numerous other Southern Californian photographers, he was involved in mission boosterism, see *Mission Memories. The Franciscan Missions of California. Photographs by Vroman, Pasadena. Engravings by C.M. Davie engraving co. Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Kingsley-Barnes & Neuner co., 1898).

¹⁷ Beaumont Newhall, introduction to *Adam Clark Vroman, 1856-1916: Photographer of the Southwest*, ed. Ruth I. Mahood (Los Angeles: The Ward Ritchie Press, 1961), 19-20. This analysis would persist until the 1982 edition of Newhall's history, in which he identified Vroman's output as "a moving, sympathetic documentation of the Indians of the American Southwest," and the greatest obstacle to his work being "casual shooters, who not only got in his way, but made the Indians so camera conscious that only by befriending them and winning their confidence could he take serious portraits of them," see Newhall, *The History of Photography from 1839 to the Present* (1982), 136. Vroman was far from being the only photographer in these territories, as for instance Arnold Genthe and Frederick I. Monsen went on a trip to Arizona and New Mexico together – and so did other CCC members; see Chapter 6 for further discussions of outings to Native American settlements.

¹⁸ Newhall, introduction to *Adam Clark Vroman, 1856-1916*, 9; for a historiographical discussion of this linear framing, see Kelsey, *Archive Style*, 12-15; Sailor, *Meaningful Places*, xxviii.

in *Camera Craft* – expresses the presupposition that no other photographic formation could live up to the productions made under the Eastern leader and protagonist of the Pictorialist movement. Their evaluation as poor copies of the Secession denies the two-decade history of club-formation and production in San Francisco before 1900, just as it overlooks the fact that Californian photographers could not easily access the New York productions located at a distance of some 5,000 km. Not only were the Club works ascribed technical and aesthetic deficiencies – a judgment deduced from their halftone reproductions rather than from original prints – but they were also attributed an apparent lack of “conviction.” The portrayal of Western photographers in search of artistic inspiration and external leadership conferred them an inferior status. Importantly, however, in the period of the 1960s and 1970s when Californian collecting institutions sought national recognition of their holdings in order to shake off condescending gazes of East Coast art critics,¹⁹ an original corpus of local photographic artists admitted to Stieglitz’s fine-art ranks could rectify this impression. In the long run, the embrace of this comparative approach has led to the re-appreciation of a selective corpus affiliated with the aesthetic agenda ratified by Newhall. It became a history of individual San Franciscan Pictorialists in which the network of Californian clubs was constantly discarded since its pivot became the New York-based formation.

Considering the factual absence of studies related to other American camera clubs of the period, the Photo-Secession has remained a valid point of reference.²⁰ In addition, the making of a canon with artist biographies intensified a monographic portrayal and became the preferred model for tracing photographer-artists’ relationships with Stieglitz.²¹ The Californian photographers’ works, if they were to become part of this artistically and institutionally ratified circle, then had to be inserted into the context of the Photo-Secession, its formation, magazine, and exhibition history. In this appreciation of individual artists, rather than conglomerate groups of practitioners, a self-conscious biographical narrative of the photographer’s career became a valuable instrument. Maurer, who had been acknowledged by Stieglitz in the early 1900s yet remained based in the Bay Area his entire life, assembled material from both coasts in his autobiography, as will be demonstrated. However, the contemporary necessity of a history of photography in individualist rather than network-based categories was subject to a “process of constant self-figuration and external redefinition,” as underlined by Anne McCauley.²² The external components in this case, that is, the reshuffling of photographic history in artistic and art market-relevant terms, dominated the selection of elements from Maurer’s career in later institutional accounts of his work. As a consequence, the few Stieglitz-

¹⁹ Heyman, “California Prints, Photographs and Drawings,” 27.

²⁰ Studies on other large camera clubs of the turn of the century, like the ones of Chicago or Boston, are still to be written. One monograph was published on the Buffalo club, see Bannon and McElroy, *The Photo-Pictorialists of Buffalo* (1981).

²¹ See for example Nancy Newhall, *From Adams to Stieglitz: Pioneers of Modern Photography* (New York: Aperture, 1989); Karl Steinorth, *Alvin Langdon Coburn, Photographs 1900-1924* (Zürich: Stemmler, 1988).

²² McCauley, “Writing Photography’s History before Newhall,” 88.

related aspects of his biography became the main reference for positioning him as a relevant contributor to the history of Pictorialism.

The original *As I Remember*, published in 1936 by Arnold Genthe, underwent a comparable narrative selection process. Even though Genthe had been living in New York for twenty-five years by the time of publication, his autobiography set a strong focus on the San Francisco period between 1895 and 1911 dominated by portraiture and Chinatown views. As McCauley correctly remarks, the photographer succeeded in portraying himself as an intellectual artist – commonly referred to as “Doctor Genthe” due to his degree in philology earned in Germany – as an avid collector of Japanese prints, and as a close acquaintance of the upper classes of the city.²³ Research on Genthe has concentrated on the portraiture and “street photography” components of his work, the latter mostly dealing with San Francisco’s Chinatown and his series of photographs taken on the first day of fire after the earthquake of 1906. Genthe had been in contact with Stieglitz since the 1900s and, in his autobiography, praised the latter for his “far-reaching influence through his own superb work” and “[h]is whole life [that] has been devoted to the task of gaining recognition of photography as an art.”²⁴ Compared to Stieglitz as his intellectual German-speaking counterpart from the West Coast, Genthe is widely cited for his 1901 essay “Rebellion in Photography” in which he criticized the commercialization of portrait photography and its “commonplace, lifeless” aspects. Genthe advocated instead for more artistic feeling which, combined with technical perfection, could expose “something of the soul, the individuality of the sitter.”²⁵ Taking his cue from his former acquaintance and director of the Hamburg Kunsthalle, Alfred Lichtwark, Genthe was inspired by the German advocate of amateur photography and his “commitment to improving popular taste in the era of mass-production.”²⁶ Interestingly, to pursue this desire to incite appreciation among viewing publics, the essay was not published in *Camera Craft* but in the literary magazine *Overland Monthly* – the same pages in which Avery, four decades earlier, had published his “Art Beginnings on the Pacific.”

Both his portraiture and Chinatown views are only rarely put into the context of Genthe’s early career in San Francisco which started at the California Camera Club the same year as Maurer in 1896 – and which reached its first peak at the three salons held between 1901 and 1903.²⁷ While Genthe does not veil the beginning of his practice with the CCC in the autobiography, his affiliation is

²³ Ibid., 92.

²⁴ Arnold Genthe, *As I Remember* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1936), 264.

²⁵ Arnold Genthe, “Rebellion in Photography,” *Overland Monthly* 43 (1901): 93-96. See Wilson, “Northern California: The Heart of the Storm,” 6-7; Birt, “Envisioning the City,” 317-380; Katrina Miottel “‘Rebellion in Photography’: Northern California Photographers at the Turn of the Century” (unpublished Master thesis, Stanford University, 1985), 6-9.

²⁶ Toby G. Quitslund, “Arnold Genthe: A Pictorial Photographer in San Francisco, 1896-1911” (PhD. diss. The George Washington University, 1988), 24-26.

²⁷ A notable exception is Anthony Lee who recognizes that Genthe was much more involved in CCC activities than usually acknowledged in secondary literature, see *Picturing Chinatown*, 116.

conspicuously absent both in secondary literature and in West Coast exhibitions conceived during the ‘museification’ period between the 1960s and 1980s. In this context, the framing of Genthe’s work within the reach of the Secessionist radius nominated him as the desired West Coast contributor to a narrative of “pioneers of modern photography” in the Stieglitz collection.²⁸ A retrospective of Genthe’s work at the Oakland Museum in 1985 entitled “A Pictorialist and Society” sustained this narrative by depicting him as an individual artist, striving for “rebellion” in order to heighten aesthetic sensibilities within a photographic marketplace dominated by commercialization. This approach was anything but new, given the attempt by the 1875 Photographic Art Society of the Pacific to pursue a more refined, albeit professional, practice as well as Treat’s appeals to members of the PCAPA in the early 1880s to detach portraiture from marketing. Other photographer circles around the above-mentioned Alfred Lichtwark also advocated for this approach. And yet, the representation of Genthe’s work as nonconformist could be embedded in the narrative of the by then apparent Secessionist vein. The additional focus on artistry preserved the assumption of Pictorialist practice as exerted by “dedicated amateurs” rather than professionals. The exhibition brochure further stressed Genthe’s affiliation to avant-garde aesthetics by describing his output as a combination of “art and snapshot photography, a synthesis initiated earlier in the 1890s by Alfred Stieglitz and J. Craig Annan.”²⁹

Interestingly, the curator of the exhibition, Toby G. Quitslund, published a thesis on Genthe three years after the retrospective in which his involvement in the Club network is illustrated in greater detail and consequently becomes more stratified. In his own book, Genthe recalled his San Franciscan début as follows:

As I went on making pictures of Chinatown I had better and better results. I began to see that somehow I had evolved something quite different from the ordinary scenic photographs to be found in the shops. The picture I had wanted to catch sometimes formed only a small part of the exposed film. In order to make enlargements, I joined the California Camera Club which had the necessary facilities. At its next annual exhibition I contributed a series of these enlarged pictures, the only ones of Chinatown in the collection. Favorable comment encouraged me to venture into a more exacting phase, one that had been tempting me for some time.³⁰

This latter phase marked the beginning of portraiture work which would dominate the remainder of his career. The San Franciscan photographer network likewise assisted in the progress of this more sophisticated endeavor since “[t]he Camera Club had a portrait studio with a skylight, and a good camera especially adapted to portraiture” – a pursuit members had followed at least since the installation of a refined flash light apparatus in their rooms in the early 1890s, a glimpse of which had

²⁸ See notably Naef, *The Collection of Alfred Stieglitz: Fifty Pioneers of Modern Photography*, 365-367.

²⁹ Toby G. Quitslund, “A Pictorialist and Society,” brochure of the exhibition at the Art Special Gallery of the Oakland Museum, February 9 to April 7, 1985.

³⁰ Genthe, *As I Remember*, 40.

been documented in the *Pacific Coast Photographer* (see **fig. 3.5**).³¹ Genthe's involvement in activities during the first decade of the Club's existence is further documented in lantern slide contributions to the Interchange. The *American Amateur Photographer's* regular evaluation of CCC slides became more critical by the close of the decade, given the Club's production of extensive sets. A set sent in 1898 included a Genthe contribution entitled "Chinese quarter," criticized as too highly contrasted with an additional advice for him and other members to work on their exposure.³² The same year Genthe also participated in two print exhibitions by the CCC, thus constantly improving his practice through the supportive exchange structures provided by the Club.³³

A constitutive but rarely mentioned figure for Genthe's as well as Maurer's anchorage in San Franciscan photography circles was George Knight White. As Quitslund mentions in her thesis, White had a studio on 737 Sutter Street – the same address at which Genthe's studio would be listed for the year 1899 and the rooms of which both Maurer and Genthe shared for several months. Like many other San Franciscan photographers before him, Genthe then set out to make portraits of wealthy citizens, starting his career with portraits of the wife of William Henry Crocker, president of the Crocker National Bank and son of Big Four railroad patron Charles Crocker.³⁴ Oscar Maurer was likewise able to improve his practice and network by adhering to the Club. He writes:

Arnold Genthe, who was rapidly making a good reputation with his portraits, was a member. I started by inviting friends for pictures that I could make at the club. They sent me pay customers. Genthe and I realized that this was not fair to the club. We rented George Knight's gallery on Sutter Street. We used it on alternate days. It was not long before we decided to have our own studios. Genthe found his. I rented rooms in the old Academy of Science building on Market Street about 1897. The Camera Club was on the top floor. I prospered. I continued my active interest in the club's activities by serving on juries to select photographs for exhibits of members' work in other cities.³⁵

Through the inclusive make-up of the Club and its extensive possibilities for showing and exchanging works, both photographers were then able to improve their practice – the commercial dimension of which is strikingly clear. Their common contact, George Knight White, had been based in the city's photographic market since the 1880s and was a member of various associations. Listed as corresponding secretary of the PCAPA in the late 1880s, he sent reports of Western activities to Eastern magazines. As a member of the CCC, he supported newly joining members like Genthe and Maurer, and by 1906 became president of the Club. As a professional, White was also member of the

³¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

³² "The California Camera Club," *American Amateur Photographer* 10 (1898): 316. The Arnold Genthe Collection at the Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress includes five lantern slides dated ca. 1897 with Chinatown images (#LC-G 4085, 180-184). They do not bare a CCC label as the circulating Club slides in the Interchange usually would. For further Chinatown views, see "Genthe Collection," Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Online Catalog, accessed August 9, 2017, <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/agc/>.

³³ Quitslund, "Arnold Genthe," 83.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 80-81.

³⁵ Maurer, "As I Remember," 7.

Photographers' Association of California, a society of professional photographers (1903-1924) whose membership partly overlapped with the CCC and whose corresponding platform was *Camera Craft*. At its first convention, White was present, alongside Isaiah W. Taber, CCC members Howard Tibbitts, O.V. Lange, T.P. Andrews, and Arnold Genthe – the latter not being listed as member of the Association, however.³⁶ Even though Genthe's involvement in the Club diminished after the last salon of 1903, with only one print exhibition at the Club after the earthquake, in 1907, his early years were defined by the encounters with members like George Knight White and by the society's program. These allowed him to rapidly evolve and insert himself in the dynamic marketplace of the city.

Genthe's practice of urban photography, despite its being linked to Stieglitz and Annan in the Oakland exhibition, also had its onset in the CCC's local agenda which declared "street photography" one of its championed activities. The interest in documenting city life and preserving it for future generations had been expressed already in an outing, scheduled for 1895, dedicated to photographing historic buildings of the city. While the exhibition catalog tied Genthe's San Franciscan street photographs to a style allegedly developed by Stieglitz and his interest in the hand camera's potential uses, Quitslund's thesis plays greater attention to the CCC's urban agenda and resists drawing oversimplified conclusions from corpora which have proven more complex.³⁷ Since Genthe had been well acquainted with George Knight White, the phenomenon of urban photography and its preservation was well-known to the photographer before making East Coast acquaintances. As mentioned earlier, one of White's last gestures as corresponding secretary of the PCAPA had been the donation of a daguerreotype of San Francisco to the Society of California Pioneers in 1891 (see Part I, **fig 2.20**, **fig 2.21**). Considering Wilson's lamentation of the absence of an assiduous collector in the West who would preserve Pictorialist prints as Stieglitz had done, it is true that there is no such comprehensive collection. Yet, given the diversity of uses that local photographers pursued, it appears again necessary to re-orientate the gaze toward local collecting institutions, like the Society of California Pioneers, which were rooted in the sociocultural structures of the city like the Club.

As these varied involvements of the period demonstrate, the history of photography articulated during the 1930s and 1970s, in monographs and in exhibitions, has operated through a limited conceptual and archival framework. Seen through the prism of institutional appreciation, the wide range of 'extra-Pictorialist' activities which have shaped the early careers of these Western photographers was to be discarded. Furthermore, this form of narration maintained a theoretical amateur/professional distinction in order to sustain the "amateur ideology" of a sophisticated artistic practice detached from the thriving industry of the medium. It is crucial to point out that exactly this

³⁶ "Photographers of California Organize an Association with Many Members," *Camera Craft* 7, no. 2 (1903): 61-63; see also "Convention Souvenir Program and Annual of the Photographers' Association of California, San Francisco, October 1903," copy in Palmquist Collection (Box 215).

³⁷ Quitslund, "Arnold Genthe," 160-167.

limited material scope and its monographic framing were foundational elements for the emergence of the field of ‘history of photography’ in the institutional sense. As Stieglitz advocated in favor of the autonomization of the medium, and Newhall drew historical continuities in survey exhibitions and monographs, photography progressively came to occupy a more stable place within the realm of the fine arts. The articulation of a limited narrative was crucial to institutional acceptance, and its reliance on material and historical selection was deliberate. Paradoxically, without these reinforced distinctions and the rejection of more varied corpora, the field in itself – and, as such, this history of Californian photographers – could not have emerged so forcefully. In the relatively short time span of less than a century, the repercussions of the select historical corpus are still conspicuous.

However, since the striving for institutional appreciation is not as deeply entrenched in scholarship anymore, it has instead become infused with a new set of critical questionings formulated in the late twentieth century by scholars like Sekula or Solomon-Godeau.³⁸ At this point in time, it appears necessary, accordingly, to broaden the scope of analysis and leave behind the common use of labels to unify specific periods like Pictorialism. As the broader historical corpus used in this thesis manifests, the photographers’ activities in art and industry overlapped and cannot be seen as unrelated. Rather, they should be examined as a complex yet coherent whole. In the light of the earlier historiographical and institutional distinctions, an attempt will be made to illuminate the sociocultural and economic structures in which the photographers’ work was embedded, as they combined strivings for both artistry and professionalism from the beginning. Since the Club was constituted of professionals and amateurs of different ranks, its organization of photographic salons – albeit the heart of the Pictorialist institutional legitimation – requires an examination through the lens of its diversified membership. In approaching the Club practices of the early 1900s then as a complex entity instead of isolated phenomena, the diverse uses of the medium will bring to light the manifold collecting institutions.

A closer study of the neglected aspects of Maurer’s memoir reveals the necessity of such a multilayered approach. Their absence demonstrates how, from the 1960s, a narrative pattern in the history of photography was strengthened by a specific exhibition portrayal. The stress on Maurer’s short-term affiliation with the Photo-Secession was extended by the role of his cousin, Alfred Maurer, who encouraged him in the 1880s to take up photography. His cousin had been also well acquainted with Stieglitz and exhibited at 291 Gallery in New York (**fig. 5.2**).³⁹ A review published by Margery Mann in *Artforum* on the occasion of Oscar Maurer’s Oakland retrospective in 1965 underlined this affiliation by situating his works between Genthe’s well-known earthquake views and the Stieglitz

³⁸ For a discussion of these historiographical processes between the 1930s and 1980s, see Brunet, *La Photographie Histoire et Contre-histoire*, 209-276.

³⁹ Maurer, “As I Remember,” 3.

gallery where “he showed prints.”⁴⁰ The insistence on Maurer’s Eastern affiliation was sustained in a 1966 retrospective on the photographers of Group f.64. The show “f/64 & Before” curated by Therese Heyman presented a linear narrative reaching from Watkins’s and Muybridge’s Western landscapes, to San Francisco Secessionist affiliates Maurer, Brigman, and Bruguière (“the three who showed with Stieglitz”), to works of the 1930s by Edward Weston and Ansel Adams.⁴¹ The creation of such a linear narrative in which photographic aesthetics became an independent category, isolated from their original production context, sustained the Newhallian model of individual artistry and selective group formation. It also reflected a self-conscious “high art” stance adopted by photographer Ansel Adams who, as demonstrated recently by Rachel Sailor, “manipulated the discourse on western landscape photography by aligning himself with the eastern fine art tradition introduced by the influential photographer Alfred Stieglitz a couple of decades earlier.”⁴² While Adams’ involvement in the local scene and the aftermath of the period defined as “Pictorialism” will be subject to discussion in the last part of this thesis, it is important at this point to highlight the tendency “to rarify [...] photography” which developed in the mid twentieth century and was an absolute necessity for the autonomization of the medium as envisioned by Stieglitz and later Adams.⁴³

Through these exhibition and narration strategies, select Californian photographers were ascribed an aura of ingenuity, a process which Allan Sekula described as “[t]he invention of the ‘photographer of genius’ [which] is possibly only through a dissociation of the image maker from the social embeddedness of the image.”⁴⁴ The divorce of form and context then allowed to insert contemporary twentieth-century photographers like Adams in an artistic tradition, validated by the museification of earlier photographers such as Watkins or O’Sullivan. As demonstrated by Rosalind Krauss, since the nineteenth-century photographers’ works were “[m]atted, framed, [and] labeled,” they came to take part in “the space of autonomous Art and its idealized, specialized History, which is constituted by aesthetic discourse.”⁴⁵

Interestingly, the creation of a lineage of photographic artists relied on the notion of a “pioneering spirit.” The secessionist tendencies were analyzed as breaking new ground and thereby came to embody pioneers of the art. This narrative framework has persisted, and dominated fine art exhibitions in both Western and Eastern institutions until the early twenty-first century.⁴⁶ However,

⁴⁰ Margery Mann, “Oscar Maurer,” *Artforum* 3, no. 7 (1965): 48.

⁴¹ Therese Thau Heyman, “f/64 & Before,” brochure of the exhibition at the Oakland Art Museum, October 29 to November 19, 1966.

⁴² Sailor, *Meaningful Places*, 135.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁴⁴ Sekula, “On the Invention of Photographic Meaning,” 43.

⁴⁵ Krauss, “Photography’s Discursive Spaces: Landscape/View,” 313-315.

⁴⁶ See Naef, *The Collection of Alfred Stieglitz: Fifty Pioneers of Modern Photography* (1978); Nancy Newhall, *From Adams to Stieglitz: Pioneers of Modern Photography* (1989); Weston J. Naef, *Photographers of Genius at the Getty* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2004).

this discursive approach also represents the desired label which California Camera Club members envisioned for their territorial practice. Tapping into the history of California's pioneers, they were in the process of fabricating a continuity of pioneer photographers by the early twentieth century. Even though this approach did not make an explicit distinction between artists and professionals, it nonetheless was used as a tool to demarcate the idiosyncrasies of Californian photography. While the general rhetoric relied on the moment of community formation during the Gold Rush in 1849, its most efficient application was found in the biographies and physical achievements of the "railroad pioneers" who had not only conceived of the state's infrastructural system but had also massively sponsored cultural institutions in San Francisco and elsewhere.

Having touched upon the criticism of this pioneer-artist definition in the historiographical and local exhibition scope, the focus will now be set on the Club's strategic uses of the railroad-related pioneer rhetoric and how it served to legitimate its productions. In this context, one of the most significant passages in Maurer's memoir opens new historical and archival possibilities for a re-contextualization of the salon material. He writes the following about the travels involved in the production of *The Storm*:

My Mexican trip in 1899 was financed in part by the S.P. [Southern Pacific] Railroad Company. In return for which I was to supply them with Mexican pictures. [...] I received a free pass to El Paso and return and half rates on the Mexican central railroad to Mexico City. [...] My trunk contained a 6 ½ x 8 ½ camera, tripod, six double plate holders, loaded, and some extra plates. My large heavy outfit yielded poor results. In my hand I carried a number one folding pocket Kodak with which I had good success.⁴⁷

Exactly this hand-held apparatus, rather than the fastidious plate outfit he had carried, allowed him to seize the earlier quoted "rare chance for an outstanding shot" which made him successful at the first Chicago salon and triggered the organization of a salon on the West Coast. In 1963, Maurer would not frame his trip as a pioneer endeavor as his colleague Monsen had done in his 1900 *Camera Craft* article on railroad and expedition photography honoring Watkins's work. While a press release on the occasion of Maurer's retrospective underlined that "at 94, Maurer has turned his full attention to collecting material about the early years of his own work,"⁴⁸ it is not clear to what extent the photographer, at this age, was aware of the contemporary canon. As the process of material selection and historical narration for later exhibitions of his work has been amply demonstrated, the purpose is not to speculate on Maurer's intentions when writing the memoir. Rather, what is at stake here is an analysis of the neglected aspects that do appear in Maurer's biography, such as his involvement in the railroad boosting industry, in order to draw a more complete picture of the history of photographic practices and uses at the turn of the century.

⁴⁷ Maurer, "As I Remember," 8.

⁴⁸ Press release, Oakland Art Museum, "Photographs by Oscar Maurer, February 13 to 28, 1965" (from Oscar Maurer, artist file, Oakland Museum of California).

The commercial activities of camera clubs, although strikingly clear through industry support and popular press illustration, have been continuously veiled under the “amateur” versus “professional” label. As opposed to this artificially imposed division on the photographic corpus, Maurer’s account is a more realistic representation of the interplay between professional practice and artistic ambition. At the time, both the standardized Kodak equipment and leisure railroad travel had become key components of Californian photography. As has been argued in scholarship over the past three decades, notably by Ulrich Keller, “the backing of the equipment industry” was essential to communicating easy access to the production of “art photography” to larger publics of potential customers.⁴⁹ It has been also demonstrated that Stieglitz and other members of the Photo-Secession have participated in these “profane commercial purposes,” for example by sponsoring equipment ads, and by serving as judges in highly popular Kodak competitions and in the Philadelphia Wanamaker department store contests.⁵⁰ The repeated framing of the snapshooter as servant to the industry versus the dedicated amateur as avant-garde artist demonstrates the persistence of “the self-justifying rhetoric put out by the Photo-Secession” and “the subsequent assessments of photographic historians.”⁵¹ Despite its direct relation to the history of photographic salons, the majority of commercial material thus remained eclipsed. Since it was not the contextual adaptability of the medium that required appreciation, but rather its inherent – autonomous – qualities, the relationship to more flexible uses of photographic productions was cut. Stieglitz’s rhetoric of commercial disregard and contempt vis-à-vis the versatility of the medium, and its links to illustration and painting, reinforced this stance.

In this respect, the case of Maurer’s “prize picture” sheds light on another side of the scene. Since members had set up a dynamic agenda in which regular tours of the local surroundings by bicycle, ferry, or train had become a norm, their out-of-doors agenda became attractive to boosters of the “sunshine state.” Maurer’s trip to Mexico is one out of many examples of photographers whose work illustrated the pages of *Sunset* magazine and advanced the promotional agenda of its publishing company, the Sunset Press, owned by the Southern Pacific railroad company. As the details and the extent of this strategic collaboration between Club members and the Southern Pacific will be discussed in greater detail further on, Maurer’s example serves as a valuable point of departure. A year before the photograph made its first apparition in *Camera Notes*, it would feature in a seven-page illustrated article in *Sunset* (**fig. 5.3a**, **fig. 5.3b**). Written by the first president of Stanford University,

⁴⁹ Keller, “The Myth of Art Photography: A Sociological Analysis,” 268-269; Griffin, “Amateur Photography and Pictorial Aesthetics,” 207-208; Greenough, “Of Charming Glens,” 267; Brunet, *La Naissance de l’Idée de Photographie*, 258-259.

⁵⁰ Keller, “The Myth of Art Photography: A Sociological Analysis,” 268-273; Peterson, “A History of Exhibitions of Photography in America, 1887-1917,” 60-64.

⁵¹ Anne McCauley, “The Making of a Modernist Myth,” in *The Steerage and Alfred Stieglitz*, eds. Jason Francisco and Anne McCauley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 26.

David Starr Jordan, and entitled “Mexico: A New Nation in an Old Country,” the article was illustrated with photographs of Mexican monuments taken by Howard C. Tibbitts and impressions of rural life by Oscar Maurer. Praising the economic prosperity and cultural growth encouraged by the administration of Porfirio Díaz, the author highlighted “the spread of American ideas with the entrance of American capital” into Mexico which “extends the railways, [...] [and] makes for stability of law and order.”⁵² The combination of incitement to tourist travel (“there is no foreign land so easily reached”) and aesthetic appeal, emphasized by Maurer’s illustrations, puts the “prize picture” into a larger cultural context. The visual underpinning of “American empire-building,” facilitated by the railroad extension, was part of the rhetoric that had been adopted by the Club in the late nineteenth century. Even though Mexico was not a U.S. government possession, the Northern American cultural and economic impact became increasingly tangible in such publications. They integrated the “economic motivation for imperial expansion” combined “with a secondary pictorial emphasis on agriculture-led development.” As in the case of American occupation of Hawai’i, the circulation of railroad imagery and advice for travelers were supposed to highlight “a solid economic infrastructure” in these distant places so as to encourage “promotion of the nascent tourist industry.”⁵³ In a similar vein, Starr Jordan – who had lectured at the Club in the mid 1890s – used the vocabulary CCC president Erwin had developed when imagining the community of local photographers to support the cultural and economic growth of the West.

In this context, the aesthetics of Pictorialism with its soft tones and tinge of intimacy, became just as appealing to commercial promoters of the Western landscape. As Keller has demonstrated in an “iconographic analysis” of what is commonly considered “art photography,” the choice of Pictorialist motifs in landscape and urban photography echoed the desired imagery for popular magazine illustration in the early twentieth century.⁵⁴ Maurer’s *The Storm* at the Chicago salon was praised in *Camera Notes* for its “rare feeling, exquisite tones, and the best of composition,” and these were exactly the aesthetic features which also appealed to *Sunset* press. If at the Chicago salon “[a]ll visitors seem[ed] to notice it,” the image could catch the attention of *Sunset* readers and potential tourists alike.⁵⁵ The aesthetic appeal and ‘legibility’ of the Pictorialist style represented the desired lulling scenarios which travelers on trains toward “foreign lands” were enticed to. More generally, these aesthetic choices would be adopted by Californian painters like William Keith, and combined alongside Pictorialist photographers in to what was later referred to as Tonalism. The seductiveness of this style lay in its atmospheric effect that could “evoke a mood of reverie, nostalgia and unfulfilled

⁵² David Starr Jordan, “Mexico: A New Nation in an Old Country,” *Sunset* 2, no. 5 (1899): 83-84.

⁵³ Quanchi, “Imaging the USA’s Pacific Empire,” 220-223.

⁵⁴ Ulrich Keller, “The Myth of Art Photography: An Iconographic Analysis,” *History of Photography* 9, no. 1 (1985): 1-38.

⁵⁵ William B. Dyer, “The Chicago Salon,” *Camera Notes* 4, no. 1 (1900): 71.

longing.”⁵⁶ This kind of yearning instilled by magazine illustration could then be satisfied by following the very concrete travel advice furnished by *Sunset*.

If then the aesthetic choices of Pictorialist photographers cannot be taken as indicators of their artistic worth as they can be found just as much in the popular press, we need to turn to the discursive and institutional framework which brought Maurer’s *The Storm* in the Chicago salon to the fore and, in turn, made his Mexican landscape in *Sunset* magazine disappear from photographic history. As Keller has argued, the Photo-Secession relied on “the construction of a complex support system” in which magazines and salons became the barometers by which a photograph’s value was judged. In this, the “concern for physical location and status” outweighed the actual “artistic substance” of the works.⁵⁷ This self-conscious portrayal was further enriched through an active choice of artistic “mentors” next to which the avant-garde stance of the Secession gained momentum and could fashion its own historiography.⁵⁸ As opposed to this highly selective model, the CCC – in the “absence of a single strong leader”⁵⁹ – had opted for a diversity of material supports and locations in which their work would appear and further circulate.

As argued by Roger Hull, it might have been this diversification of practice in which the photographers dissipated their efforts that eventually has reinforced their oblivion. In the period of the turn of the century, the positioning of a photograph in a desirable place, that is, salon exhibitions and determinedly prestigious magazines such as *Camera Work*, secured its presence in photographic history, as is the case for the photographers associated with the Photo-Secession. However, “mispositioning, or displacement,” that is, the distribution of visual content on a variety of material supports “in ever-changing contexts,” led to “anonymity” and eventually oblivion. There is therefore a distinction to be made between the fine-art context on the one hand, in which the photograph is embraced as a framed art object, and the commercial-popular realm on the other hand, in which visual contents fluctuate more freely. At the time, the “commercialization” of images on various supports was highly profitable since “[r]eprinting [and] reformatting” allowed for constant renewal and “recontextualiz[ation],” depending on the discursive framework they would be used in. Exactly this diversification, leading to the inclusion of photographic images in popular culture, has turned some photographs into objects of American popular culture rather than aesthetic objects to be preserved by museums. The process of oblivion therefore needs to be examined with regard to its material support – whether the work appears in the form a halftone reproduction in a popular magazine or as a mounted

⁵⁶ Wanda M. Corn, *The Color of Mood: American Tonalism, 1880-1910* (San Francisco: M.H. de Young Memorial Museum and the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, 1972), 2-16.

⁵⁷ Keller, “The Myth of Art Photography: An Iconographic Analysis,” 1.

⁵⁸ Poivert, “La mémoire photographique ou la sensibilité historique des photographes,” 36; Julien Faure-Conorton, “‘L’accoucheur d’idées’ : Alfred Stieglitz et la construction mémorielle du Pictorialisme” (paper presented at the seminar Camera Memoria, Université Paris VII Denis Diderot, February 23, 2018).

⁵⁹ Miottel, “‘Rebellion in Photography,’” 25.

print in the hands of a collector. So eventually, the ambition to tap the full potential of the photographic medium, especially its reproducibility and adaptability, has worked against the Club's historical legacy. The diversity of material supports was two-sided then: on the one hand, it encouraged broad circulation in the period itself, yet, on the other hand, it has made historical research more complex and particular images more difficult to retrace.⁶⁰

In the specific context of *The Storm*, it needs to be mentioned that Maurer's as well as Tibbitts's illustrations in the *Sunset* article were credited, which was far from the commonplace procedure. In fact, by 1903, Californian photographers complained about the absence of credit attributed to their work in illustrated commercial publications, calling it "an almost unpardonable sin in the eyes of those who photograph."⁶¹ In the light of the Photo-Secessionist agenda, which was supposed to "raise the author's prestige," such a diversified approach to photographic uses in popular culture was not acceptable.⁶² Indeed, as Hull confirms, the practice of photography as advanced by Stieglitz despised commercialization and "such versatility of emplacement," since it worked against the autonomization of photography as an art.⁶³ While this strict demarcation has divided the photographic corpus of the period and has created similar boundaries in the archive, it constituted a strategic necessity so as to bring to the fore the inherent quality of the medium. From this perspective, a literal 'secession' from the myriad practices and discourses about photography could grant a select number of practitioners the desired place in the institution. The ensuing monographic selection has proven signification to the shaping of the history of photography in a fine-art institutional sense. However, through this legitimizing process, taking place on a discursive and a material level, the more stratified image production of the years around turn of the century has been further obfuscated.

With regard to the interrelatedness of these two categories – artistic and professional – the Californian context furnishes an important point of departure that allows us to reconsider the versatility of turn-of-the-century practitioners. Here, *Sunset* magazine constitutes an example for merging booster and artistic ambition. With California as main impetus for both aspirations, the magazine published an advertisement in the souvenir program of the Photographers' Association of California in 1903 (**fig. 5.4**). A photomechanical reproduction of an (uncredited) photograph of the Lick Observatory featured the slogan:

The Lick Telescope shows you the stars [,] The Camera People the beauty of the world, but the Southern Pacific Brings the art of the Photographer, Engraver, Printer together to reveal the charm of California and to publish it abroad.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Hull, "Emplacement, Displacement, and the Fate of Photographs," 169-191.

⁶¹ Editorial, *Camera Craft* 7, no. 3 (1903): 106.

⁶² Keller, "The Myth of Art Photography: A Sociological Analysis," 265.

⁶³ Hull, "Emplacement, Displacement, and the Fate of Photographs," 175-177.

⁶⁴ "Convention Souvenir Program and Annual of the Photographers' Association of California, San Francisco, October 1903," n.p., copy in Palmquist Collection (Box 215).

Here, the Southern Pacific's commissions and its reproduction of images as fine art depictions would merge with the accessibility of photographic apparatus and the widespread appeal of pictorial imagery. The necessity of circulation of such alleged high-quality imagery tied in with the Club's aspiration to large-scale Californian representation in the East and beyond. The identification of the magazine as art publisher also corresponded to its involvement in the first San Francisco salon of which Sunset Press published the catalog. In research on Californian Pictorialism, the railroad company's impact on local photographers' activities has been acknowledged from early on, mentioning the "special cars" companies provided for outings or describing how photographers like Maurer, Genthe, or Dasonville became "boosters for their state." However, the intensity of this network of sponsorship and exchange as well as the adaptation of a similar booster discourse for the recognition of Californian photography as fine art has not been explored in its depth. Both curators and historians of photography have acknowledged the problematic distinction between "good" and "bad" Pictorialists – a separation in which usually the Photo-Secessionists represent the former category and other practitioners of the time simply find themselves on "the 'wrong' side."⁶⁵ Yet still, the comparative framework between East and West as well as the criteria for aesthetic judgment from Stieglitz's view have continued to dominate these histories, which is why the point of departure for analysis has remained on the East Coast instead of being constructed *from* the specific local conditions in California. It is, in part, due to the longevity of analytical categories such as "genius" and "masterpiece" that few other studies have emerged.⁶⁶

Unsurprisingly, if this narrow labeling remains strong, exhibitions like "Pictorialism in California" struggle with more challenging socioeconomic approaches to the medium, like the one instigated by Ulrich Keller, which Michael Wilson footnoted as "a less sympathetic view" on the period he identified as Pictorialism.⁶⁷ With regard to such affinities, it will be argued here that the analytical focus for the salon material should be less set on affiliation or schools. The questions treated here do not concern a qualitative comparison between East and West, nor do they make an aesthetic judgment – they rather explore the diversification of photographic uses which developed in parallel to the salon system and became a part of it. If we open up these analytical categories, a new scope of archival material will similarly unfold. The necessity of this broader approach has been recognized over the past few decades in research on Californian art in general. As Susan Landauer has argued for the same period:

⁶⁵ Davis, *An American Century*, 69; Mann, *California Pictorialism*, 8, 16-17; Rosenblum, "California Pictorialism," 64-66; by the same author, see also *A World History of Photography*, 4th ed. (New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 2007), 323-324

⁶⁶ See especially Bill Barich, "Acts of Attention," in *Picturing California: A Century of Photographic Genius*, 11-12.

⁶⁷ Wilson, "Northern California: The Heart of the Storm," 20.

Southern California Impressionism mirrored the region's self-fashioned image, how the society envisioned itself and desired to be seen from afar. A close examination of this art reveals a complex pattern of choices and omissions that is intimately bound up with the socio-economic development of Southern California in the early part of this century. Briefly summarized, California Impressionism crested with Los Angeles's boom culture and expressed its propensity toward boosterism, nostalgia, and willful escapism.⁶⁸

Pointing to railroad sponsorship, the growing leisure industry, and the general preference for Californian subject matter embraced by local art critics, Landauer reconstructs a process of art production in the specific cultural and economic conditions of Los Angeles in the 1900s. Without speculating on the intentionality of such art works or disqualifying artists altogether as "zealous boosters," she draws a complex picture in which regional promotion and artistic development mutually inspired each other – a process dating back to Bierstadt's first visit to Yosemite.⁶⁹ As this phenomenon applies to the vast majority of cultural production in California around the turn of the century, a more versatile approach toward the material itself is required. Several other exhibitions on California art have acknowledged the participation of resident artists in the booster machinery, the perpetuation of "mythologies" in their productions, and the scope of railroad-sponsored campaigns. By the same token, these exhibitions have redefined the breadth of material to be examined, ranging from paintings and photographs to newspapers and popular magazines. Again, such a network-focused analysis does not pretend to trace artistic production out of "an aesthetic void," but rather as constitutive to a broader socioeconomic and cultural context.⁷⁰

In the light of this archival opening and material diversification, distinctions between amateur and professional, and further divisions amongst amateurs (as dedicated, ordinary, or snapshotter) do not prove useful. Given the vast inventory of individual photographers set up by Peter Palmquist, from which this thesis draws much incentive, combined with the source material on collective organizations compiled in historical societies and libraries, we come to realize that the output of the period was anything but sparse. As realized in a brief study by Stacey McCarroll and Kim Sichel in the early 2000s, West Coast camera clubs blended various forms of photographic practice which, when taking a closer look, "reveals a historical moment far more complex and eclectic than previously believed." With an analytical framework still rooted in art-historical terms, defining "Pictorialism as a mutable set of ideas used in the practice of art photography," their study proposed a new contextual reading in which Pictorialism becomes a precursor of Modernism rather than its dull antidote. While

⁶⁸ Susan Landauer, "Impressionism's Indian Summer: The Culture and Consumption of California 'Plein-Air' Painting," in *California Impressionists*, ed. Susan Landauer (Athens and Irvine: The Georgia Museum of Art and The Irvine Museum, 1996), 14.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 16-18. See Carey McWilliams, *Southern California Country: An Island on the Land* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1946), 146-150, for one of the first studies to recognize this form of cultural development through railroad sponsorship of artists and literates.

⁷⁰ Bernstein, "Selling California, 1900-1920," 65-98; Perry, *Pacific Arcadia: Images of California, 1600-1915*, xi-xiv.

the following examination moves beyond McCarroll's analytical focus, it takes as a point of departure her acknowledgment of the "social forum" provided by camera clubs as main impetus to photographic production. A major aspect of this production is the geographic anchorage in the West as a rapidly evolving region around the turn of the century, thus "a developing and receptive arena [...] fostering an inclusive, rather than exclusive, approach to the arts and culture."⁷¹

Rethinking the salon as a social event, rooted in specific local circumstances and supportive cultural structures, then implies a shift away from aesthetic judgment and an orientation toward its preparation and public reception. Even though it is framed as photography's institutionally legitimizing event par excellence, the salon and its civic meaning for the hosting city as well as its sociopolitical repercussions require further examination. While the model of the Secessionist exhibitions has set an analytical standard, it has been demonstrated that such events also took place on different scales and with more diverse goals in other regions and countries at the same period.⁷² The legitimating discourses of the salon for the medium therefore represents one aspect in a much broader spectrum of local circumstances, social desires, and economic imperatives related to the practice of photography. Even though the following discussion proposes a fresh look on the seemingly wrung-out subject of photographic salons, it does not seek to portray the San Franciscan exhibitions as a counter model to the East Coast events, let alone as a unique exemplar. It rather suggests a modification of the analytical categories and research tools with which salons are examined.

Given the material riches concerning these activities taking place all over the United States and Europe around the turn of the century, it appears necessary to formulate a new point of departure in order to fully appreciate the complexity of the salon as a local cultural event within a broader national context. Instead of opting for a history of comparison or competition, it will be aimed for a narrative of diversification in which seemingly well-known actors appear in a new light and are accompanied by hitherto understudied figures. If the California Camera Club represents a dynamic community with diverging interests that were yet united under the banner of local recognition, we need to adopt an approach which allows us to reconstruct the diverse backgrounds and interrelations that played into this collective ambition. Therefore, what is required is "a historically grounded sociology of the image," that is exposed at the salon and that exists "both in the valorized realm of high art and in culture at large."⁷³

⁷¹ McCarroll, "For the Encouragement of Better Photography," 15-20. For a recent evaluation of West Coast Pictorialism through the conception of a strong regional culture, see also Rachel Sailor, "'You Must Become Dreamy': Complicating Japanese-American Pictorialism and the Early Twentieth-century Regional West," *European Journal of American Studies* 9, no. 3 (2014): 2, <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejas.10405>.

⁷² See Joschke, *Les Yeux de la Nation*, 139-184.

⁷³ Sekula, "On the Invention of Photographic Meaning," 37.

5.2 *The San Francisco and Los Angeles salons through the lens of the local community*

By the 1900s, the Club's practices were deeply embedded in a network of professional photography, increasingly accessible leisure possibilities, and Californian boosterism. Members could draw on this specific framework when it came to elaborating a local history of the practice, imagining a community of photographers along the Pacific Coast, and creating a visible corpus of aesthetically pleasing images. The strivings for establishing the medium as a strand of the fine arts therefore cannot be seen as a phenomenon exclusively pertaining to the sphere of Pictorialism. Given the local circumstances, it can be argued that the construction of an artistic scene did not emerge out of a void – and certainly not the alleged void of the Californian “virgin” territory – but was very much facilitated and encouraged by the ideological construction and technological appropriation of the state and its landscape. In the accessibility of these territories whose depictions were framed as “characteristic” of the West, the railroad companies continued to have a decisive, yet less directly perceptible, impact. This influence was heartily welcomed as a support which manifested itself first in the institutional framework granted to the CCC's three salons at the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art. For the organization of such artistic events, official endorsement was deemed necessary, if not indispensable, to gain admission to the halls of fine-art academies and frame camera club work as a distinguished collective output. Since the quest for recognition did not only concern the medium but California's cultural scene, the institutional support was a deliberate choice for Club members.

If *Camera Craft* provided the photographers with the visibility and recognition they were lacking in the East, the institution displaying works of the members needed to extend this “Westering” paradigm. The support came from the locals' very own institution, the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art, which embodied the quintessence of local cultural history in being built on a railroad patron's wealth, in holding a substantial collection of Californian-made art works, and in affiliating with the University of California at Berkeley. By organizing a salon inspired by the photographic exhibitions held in Washington, Philadelphia, and Chicago between 1896 and 1900, the Club then augmented its self-defined cultural and historical value through the choice of an institution built by “one of California's pioneers.”⁷⁴ As early as 1893, when the Hopkins Institute had just affiliated with the UCB, Club- and longstanding SFAA member Theophilus Hope D'Estrella, had hoped to take a photograph exhibition of 5,000 items by the CCC to the art institution. At the time, however, the effort was not considered “worthy of notice.”⁷⁵ In 1900, eventually, when “[t]he portals of the highest art institution west of the Mississippi [were] thrown open for the first time,” the members expanded the benefits of their isolated position in depicting the institution as well as the works as part of a pioneering spirit, emerging “from

⁷⁴ “Pacific Coast Salon a Fact,” 267.

⁷⁵ Mildred Abronda, *The Magic Lantern Man: Theophilus Hope D'Estrella* (Fremont: California School for the Deaf, 1985), 47-50. D'Estrella remained active at the CCC until the 1920s, however, his entire collection was destroyed in a fire in 1910. He is remembered especially for his art teachings at the California School for the Deaf.

the far West – from our own city.”⁷⁶ If, as argued by Keller, “the pictorialists devoted an amazing amount of work to promotional matters – ultimately, that is, to the manufacture of their own fame,”⁷⁷ the phenomenon of self-publicity can be extended in the Californian case with the search for cultural recognition as a geographically isolated territory. Since the Club work was inextricably related to the dissemination of Californian subject matter, it became one of the most prolific organizations in circulating imagery and discourses on the state. The institutional support from the Southern Pacific as well as the Mark Hopkins’ Institute of Art then spurred a new dynamics of pioneer vocabulary, which was closely intertwined with the works shown at the salons and their original conception.

In his “Plea for Recognition” published in *Camera Craft* in June 1900, Oscar Maurer advocated in favor of organizing a photographic salon in San Francisco. As the only Western laureate in the Chicago salon held two months earlier by the Chicago Society of Amateur Photographers and the Art Institute of Chicago, he had been convinced of both the “higher ideal” toward which practitioners should strive and the institutional support required to achieve it. At the same time, Maurer demonstrated an awareness of the heterogeneous character of local photography (“the vast amount of good material that professional and amateur photographers have produced on this Coast”) which would provide a valuable starting point “to make a very creditable display at the Hopkins Art Institute.”⁷⁸ Coinciding with the inaugural issue of *Camera Craft* and Erwin’s call for a Pacific League, Maurer’s proposal of a West Coast salon struck a responsive chord within the photographer community. Three months later, the magazine announced the first salon to be held in January of 1901 which would “follow in many respects the methods of the Eastern salons, although on somewhat broader lines.”⁷⁹ Accompanied by a photograph of the Institute’s interior taken from Lange’s UCB project, the authors insisted on the location’s historical importance and strategic emplacement within the city (**fig. 5.5**). The elaborate description of its large exhibition space, high ceilings, and available night lighting lent further credence to what Lange promoted around the same period in his lecture “Through the University of California with a Camera” in front of San Franciscan audiences.

The Hopkins Institute’s geographical location on Nob Hill – terrain of the railroad patrons and playing field for earlier photographers from Fardon to Watkins and Muybridge – provided the organizers with economic prestige and historic precedent. They praised the “commanding view of the entire city and the country for miles around” and, in this, created an aura of distinctiveness for the only art institution of this kind in the region.⁸⁰ As recently argued by John Davis, the phenomenon of “regional exceptionalism” appeared in the United States after the Civil War. Given the contextual

⁷⁶ Editorial, *Camera Craft* 1, no. 5 (1900): 272.

⁷⁷ Keller, “The Myth of Art Photography: A Sociological Analysis,” 273.

⁷⁸ Oscar Maurer, “A Plea for Recognition,” *Camera Craft* 1, no. 2 (1900): 60.

⁷⁹ “Pacific Coast Salon a Fact,” 266.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 267.

development provided in the first part to this thesis, the insistence on exceptionalism was especially present in California with its geographically informed identity and its marked ideological value for the nation. While “the roots of exceptionalism” can be traced in the political sphere of the early nineteenth century, the concept would be similarly applied to the foundation of cultural institutions over the following decades. Exceptionalism found its most efficient assertion when “operat[ing] in a group or social context” from which it could draw its “staying power.”⁸¹ The staging of three local salons at the Hopkins Institute reinvigorated exactly this sociocultural and historical value and upheld the portrayal of a pioneer institution. In this context, the photographers’ discourses on the grandeur of the West were used to endow the venue with historical permanence and future potential.

The ideologies with which the practice of photography had been attached thus found a new expression in a photographic art exhibition hosted by a cultural institution based on railroad capital. The mythologies envisioned for the Californian territory were first manifested on a large scale when stereographs and engravings merged to shape an appealing image of the local landscape. San Franciscan artists like William Keith had contributed to these depictions as early as 1867 – when commissioned by the Northern Pacific Railroad – and reached new audiences to whom the combination of text and manipulated image proved highly appealing.⁸² As argued earlier, these strategies reached a new climax around the turn of the century with the publication of *Sunset* magazine (starting in 1898) in which the soft and suggestive Pictorialist aesthetics were used to lure potential tourists into the regions recently made accessible via the Southern Pacific railroad. The commission of such images and the financed trips throughout the region then constituted an extension of the commercial strategies employed by the Big Four. Here, John Ott’s analysis of the railroad executives as influential cultural patrons gains new meaning. The characterization of their strategies as “shap[ing] culture not incidentally, but directly and actively” can be applied to the companies’ active support of photographic practice on train lines, promoting both imagery and travels. The sponsorship they granted to organizations like the California Camera Club or its individual members confirms the assumption that their strategies “celebrated, justified, or otherwise endorsed the socioeconomic trends that propelled them into wealth and prominence.”⁸³ By the turn of the century, Huntington was the last of the four patrons still alive. He had endorsed the intense use of photographs for documentation of construction and promotional circulation from early on. After his death in August 1900, the *Camera Craft* editorial of the following month accordingly paid him tribute:

⁸¹ John Davis, “Only in America: Exceptionalism, Nationalism, Provincialism,” in *A Companion to American Art*, eds. Jennifer A. Greenhill, John Davis, and Jason D. LaFountain (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell Press, 2015), 325-328.

⁸² Willumson, *Iron Muse*, 119-121.

⁸³ Ott, *Manufacturing the Modern Patron*, 4.

By the death of Collis P. Huntington, the Western photographers lose a good friend. Mr. Huntington's views upon advertising were strong and convincing, and the prominent feature in the advertising project by him was pictorial effect. He believed that photographs could present to the people of the East, California as she is, the result being to the material advantage of Western photographers. Although the Southern Pacific will buy just as many pictures as it did before his death, and pay just as liberally, the old-timers in the craft will feel his loss.⁸⁴

The patrons' long-lasting relationship with local photographers as well as the constant extension of their infrastructural network turned them into the state's foremost entrepreneurs. In combining economic ambition and cultural capital, the company sponsored a leisure agenda which proved highly beneficial "to the material advantage of Western photographers." Its embrace of the "pictorial effect" in publications was further enriched by the Club's artistic practice. The aesthetically appealing imagery which members chose to adorn their practice perfectly corresponded to the Southern Pacific's search for images of "California as she is." The company, which was under Huntington's control until his death, had undergone a massive upturn between 1885 and 1900 during which more affordable rates were stabilized. This dynamic, locally rooted management allowed leisure practices – like the outings in the CCC agenda – to flourish.⁸⁵ The appeal of artistic imagery, created when traveling through California, likewise led to the designation of *Sunset* magazine and its associated press as a high-quality illustration publisher. While the photographs produced through commissions and outings provided an important image pool for boosters to tap, they embodied at the same time the quintessence of an artistic Californian practice rooted in the promise of the Western landscape. It is in this context that commercial sponsorship and artistic strivings of Club photographers not only overlapped but coalesced in an outing agenda, which will be subject to discussion in the next part. First, however, it needs to be discussed how the salon as a Californian cultural event was conceived and how it used the support of its community and its assigned pioneer institutions for broader national recognition.

Since the salon system had at its heart the validation of photographs as art works, a supportive institutional framework was deemed essential. As contributors, the photographers themselves also felt the need to identify as artists. To emphasize this self-designation and facilitate the insertion into a locally institutionalized canon, the members revived their ties to San Franciscan painters. After the PCAPA's cooperation with Virgil Williams of the SFAA, the CCC similarly reached out to painters like William Keith and Theodore Wores. Through institutional cooperation and through the alignment with a sensitive outdoor practice, the photographers would target the recognition of their medium. In addition, the practitioners' renewed adoption of the amateur label served to underline aesthetic sensibilities. As will be demonstrated in the following, the successful institutional appreciation

⁸⁴ Editorial, *Camera Craft* 1, no. 5 (1900): 273. For further information on Huntington and the use of photographs, see Willumson, *Iron Muse*, especially Chapter 4 "Reproducing the Image."

⁸⁵ Orsi, *Sunset Limited*, 24-25.

required exhibitors at photographic salons to align with the contemplative, congenial amateur practice and to veil their commercial involvements. The structural elements of the salon, including a jury consisting of photographers and painters, eventually underlined this artistic setup, as had been advocated earlier in East Coast salons. Interestingly, the San Franciscan jury of selection included W.H. Lowden, not a member of the CCC yet ex-member of the PCAPA who, according to *Camera Craft*, “was one of the first to see the artistic possibilities of the craft and his work has been exceptionally successful.” He was assisted among others by the local artist Theodore Wores.⁸⁶ Having studied in Paris and at the Hopkins Institute, the painter lent an international dimension to San Francisco’s art education. His outdoor practice was infused with Impressionist techniques and inspired by local subject matter like mountain scenery or Spanish missions. In addition, his reputation as a renowned teacher provided the salon with a sophisticated judgment quality.⁸⁷ The organizational unification of photographers and painters was a welcome opportunity to demarcate a regional artistic canon in which the latter would grant the former legitimacy and institutional space.

After his success at Chicago, Maurer was invited to participate in the committee on selection and hanging, accompanying another ex-PCAPA member – Archibald J. Treat. While the latter had joined the CCC shortly after its foundation, he remained a strong proponent of a non-commercial practice and never missed an opportunity to describe the PCAPA as “the parent [...] of the California Camera Club.”⁸⁸ From this staunchly defended amateur stance, Treat became one of the most prolific salon critics. Out of the three salons, the first was considered the least accomplished, and yet, its local anchorage was particularly strong. In line with Treat’s advice to his Southern Pacific photographer friend Howard Tibbitts “that the only way to make real good photography was to study the masters,” the salon showcased 123 paintings by local artists alongside 475 photographs. Since the painters represented a large majority of the Art Institute’s and San Francisco Art Association’s affiliates, the list of paintings also included works by William Keith whose compositions Treat and Tibbitts had studied “when bumm[ing] the studios” around the same period.⁸⁹ The Californian photographers thus started to create their own canon in relying on local subject matter, on artists like Keith who were designated as “California’s Old Master,”⁹⁰ and on an institution which collected these local works, and was entwined in the state’s cultural history.

The conception of the salon as a truly local event, rooted in the specific institutional and historical conditions of the hosting city, ties in with Elizabeth Edwards’ definition of such exhibitions

⁸⁶ “First Salon an Assured Success,” *Camera Craft* 2, no. 3 (1901): 242-243.

⁸⁷ William H. Gerdtts, “The Land of Sunshine,” in *Masters of Light: Plein-Air Painting in California, 1890-1930*, ed. James Irvine Swinden (Irvine: The Irvine Museum, 2002), 48, 58.

⁸⁸ Archibald J. Treat, “Today and Yesterday: Some Comments by the Chairman of the Selection Committee of the Salon of 1902,” *Camera Craft* 4, no. 3 (1902): 91.

⁸⁹ Archibald J. Treat to Howard C. Tibbitts (January 20, 1936), 5-6.

⁹⁰ Hughes, *Artists in California, 1786-1940*, Vol. 1, 613.

as stages for local pride. In the organizational setup, not only the photographs' subject matter and the hosting institution reflected self-glorification, but also the "material culture" of the salon in the shape of prize medals. In awarding prizes to participants, a range of "clearly delineated and imagined local identities" was celebrated which, indeed, "often coher[ed] around local manufacturing."⁹¹ The award classes in the San Franciscan case included landscape, marine, and genre scenes, as well as portraiture, still life, animal studies, and architecture. While the jury awarded the prizes, *Camera Craft* also presented separate medals for each class, which were reproduced in the magazine (**fig. 5.6**).⁹² In all of these categories, Californian photographers, either from the Bay Area or from Los Angeles, won the first prize. As advocated for the Pacific League, they drew their inspiration from local subject matter, depicting marine scenes at the Golden Gate, the architecture of local universities, or Native American life.⁹³ While it was lamented on the occasion of the second salon that "Western" views – that is, Californian landscapes, images of Chinatown and Native Americans, as well as marine views – were not as present, the first salon had celebrated exactly these motifs.⁹⁴ Since the local views were the most popular and commercially successful ones, the participating professional photographers were able to breathe new, artistic life in their productions. As suggested by Sarah Greenough, the definition of a "set of rules" by which to reward photographs gave amateurs a sense of artistic legitimacy. At the same time, the display of professional material at the salon constituted an opportunity for business photographers "to regain lost stature in their communities."⁹⁵ Through this combination, the Californian subject matter was again taken as the main indicator of artistic value, be the photographer an amateur or a professional.

If, through the material and organizational setup of the salons, a "sense of local distinctiveness" was reinforced, this particularity came to carry broader meaning when put into a national context.⁹⁶ When announced and distributed on a national scale, the corpus of the San Francisco salon could compete with other societies through its local subject matter and showcase the source of its pride. However, the isolated position which Californian photographers sought to overcome could not be remedied through mere announcements. In order to achieve visibility, the salon needed coverage and critical evaluation in nationally circulating magazines. This process was, however, obstructed by the reality of geographic distance which eventually made the San Francisco and Los Angeles salons of the early 1900s locally circumscribed events with limited attendance. While Californian photographers formulated their endeavors with a broad outlook toward the East, the targeted Eastern platforms kept their focus largely within their own perimeters. The following

⁹¹ Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 145.

⁹² "Details of the Coming Salon," *Camera Craft* 1, no. 6 (1900): 339-340.

⁹³ "Prize Winning Pictures at the Salon," *Camera Craft* 2, no. 4 (1901): 321.

⁹⁴ "The Second San Francisco Photographic Salon, Its Strong and Weak Points," 89-90.

⁹⁵ Greenough, "Of Charming Glens," 260.

⁹⁶ Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 147.

analysis therefore compares and contrasts the salon announcements and critical reception in Western circles with the coverage published in the East. The aim here is to reveal the uses of a Californian vocabulary within the broader organization of such culturally legitimizing events and how they helped to solidify their relevance within the local context. An attempt will be made to confront the verbally expressed ambitions for the event with its actual reception. The focus is therefore less set on the photographs themselves but on their discursive framing and their circulation within – or absence from – the desired channels of distribution.

Maurer's "Plea for Recognition" of the summer of 1900 probably summarizes best the high aspirations with which Californian photographers envisioned their own salon. In a justifying manner, he claimed: "That California is as far advanced in artistic photography as any of her sister states is a fact that we gather from the opinion of prominent local artists who have traveled and the criticism of the East."⁹⁷ In relying on the success and support of figures like William Keith who had studied in Paris and spent much time in the Yosemite with Thomas Hill and Carleton Watkins, Californian culture would gain legitimacy in an extended geographic framework. Yet, in order for these idiosyncratic productions to be acknowledged as such, they had to be shown and approved of in the East. In parallel to an extension of the discourses of a unique Californian art production, its makers developed a similarly strong desire to be recognized in the East and become part of its institutions – a desire which, as we have seen, would reoccur during the period of 'museification' in the second half of the twentieth century. The photographers' quest for recognition in the early 1900s therefore could not rely merely on its local institutions but needed validation from the East in order to gain fulfillment. This tension between an alleged territorial uniqueness, on the one hand, and a necessary comparison to Eastern developments, on the other, was at the heart of the salon conception. It led to the formulation of grand announcements which, when confronted with their actual realization, could not live up to the claims.

However, exactly this rhetoric was necessary in order to infuse the practice with cultural meaning at community level. The rallying vocabulary similarly heightened the photographers' sense of belonging to the surroundings which represented the core of their practice. This gap between the adopted rhetoric and its actual effect becomes tangible from the moment of Maurer's admission to the Chicago salon. Before he made his plea, *Camera Craft* had already boasted apropos his success: "It is seldom that the photographers of the Pacific Coast enter the lists against the guild in the East, but when they do the prizes 'westward take their flight.'"⁹⁸ This portrayal of the Eastern clubs as an artisanal federation in a closed system came to operate as a motivation for Western photographers to challenge the attributed prize system – with the goal to be acknowledged in its confines. Since a

⁹⁷ Maurer, "A Plea for Recognition," 60.

⁹⁸ Editorial, *Camera Craft* 1, no. 1 (1900): 34.

straight line can be drawn from Maurer's success at Chicago to the realization of the first San Francisco salon, the acknowledgment from the East can be considered a catalyst for Californians.

The praise and reproduction of Maurer's *The Storm* in *Camera Notes* was enough impetus for the editors of *Camera Craft* to announce the San Franciscan salon in grandiose wording. Apart from Maurer's appearance in the New York-based magazine, however, none of the widely read Eastern magazines like the *American Amateur Photographer*, *Anthony's Photographic Bulletin* or *Photo-Era* mentioned it. These magazines, if anything, only touched briefly upon the organization of the first Western salon. While *Camera Notes* did not refer to it at all – despite Maurer's success – *Photo-Era* published a short announcement in which it “urge[d] that the eastern amateurs give support to the enterprise by contributions of their work.”⁹⁹ As extensive critical evaluation and feedback on respective salons was common procedure among the clubs of the East Coast, the San Franciscan organizers had to develop their own criticism. When setting aside the laudatory discourses which dominated the pages of *Camera Craft* and local newspapers, it becomes clear that the event was deemed a failure due to its organizational and qualitative shortcomings.

As the Club's most vocal critics, both Archibald J. Treat and Arnold Genthe leveled moderate and useful criticism at the salon. The former concentrated mostly on its organizational features, notably the large number of contributions. Alongside the aforementioned 123 paintings, 475 photographs which had been chosen from some 1,400 submissions were exposed. Without undermining the credibility of the selection committee, Treat urged for a more strict application of artistic criteria in order to prevent works “of ordinary merit” from cluttering the walls of the salon. Unsurprisingly, the Club's well-known figures Maurer, Genthe, and Dassonville received unanimous praise, while others were urged to submit less quantitative but more qualitative work. From this angle, Treat appreciated the “educational standpoint” of the salon as it allowed the photographers to develop their preferences.¹⁰⁰ The laureate Maurer also published an article in honor of his friend Arnold Genthe whose series of portraits represented “undoubtedly the most interesting” work at the event. An accompanying illustration with a display of 27 portraits by Genthe, a *mélange* of Chinese and female subjects, is the only existing visual documentation of the salon interior that can be located (**fig. 5.7**).¹⁰¹

The exhibition, which displayed only American photographers and mostly Western residents, did receive several contributions from Eastern photographers, “whose work we had been looking forward so eagerly,” as Genthe admitted. In his extensive criticism, he praised the Eastern

⁹⁹ “Pacific Coast Salon,” *Photo-Era* 5 (1900): 163. The material on San Francisco salons and their reception included in the Palmquist Collection confirms this lack of coverage in national magazines as it documents only brief announcements and *Camera Craft* reviews (Box 226).

¹⁰⁰ Archibald J. Treat, “Important Lessons from the First Salon,” *Camera Craft* 2, no. 4 (1901): 291-297.

¹⁰¹ Oscar Maurer, “The Grand Prize Exhibit: A Criticism of the Work of Arnold Genthe,” *Camera Craft* 2, no. 4 (1901): 298-299.

productions, especially photographer C. Yarnall Abbott of Philadelphia, who had already shown at the Chicago salon and would later be featured in *Camera Work*. Despite Genthe's praise for his friends and fellow Club members Maurer and Dassonville, he employed the term "masterpieces" only when referencing Eastern works. Without pretense, he underlined the Western photographers' willingness to learn and acknowledge the East's superior production – a fact which was recurrently related to the geographically isolated position.¹⁰² Given the absence of Eastern audiences at their show, the members compensated this lack of attendance by intensifying the circulation of their salon work, for example by submitting it to Eastern events. Maurer may have been the only Western entrant in the Chicago salon of 1900, yet by the close of the following year, Louis Albert Lamb of the Chicago committee praised the works of some ten Pacific Coast representatives in the town's second salon, almost all of whom were CCC members. A majority of the Californian photographers submitted works which had been shown at the first San Francisco salon a few months earlier, like Monteverde's *Fish Cleaners* and Street's *Passing of the Storm*. While these photographs had not been exposed to a nationally representative audience at San Francisco, they were made to circulate via the Chicago exhibition and catalog, and eventually targeted the desired Eastern audiences with their "characteristic" Western views of Chinatown and the San Francisco Bay (**fig. 5.8, fig. 5.9**).

Apparently, the Western contributions were well received at Chicago, given Lamb's enthusiastic announcement that "in no far distant time we shall have a distinctive school of 'Coast Photography' rivaling, in many excellent qualities, the much-exploited 'Eastern School.'" The author therefore lamented the absence of the photographers at the event, calling it "a pity that every one of the Coast exhibitors and all sincere amateurs may not view the great collection at the Art Institute."¹⁰³ A second criticism published a month later in *Camera Craft* took the appreciation even further by defining the Chicago salon dominated by the CCC whose works were "highly creditable in every respect, remarkable for originality and great artistic qualities, unsurpassed in technique, mounting and framing." The circulation of Maurer's and Genthe's as well as Monteverde's and Street's photographs came to embody the desired Western uniqueness since the critics attributed them "an atmosphere that could only come from beyond the Rockies."¹⁰⁴ Capitalizing on the appeal of their photographic production in remote locations, the Californian photographers strategically placed their works in the Eastern salons. Consequently, even though the photographs were not viewed as a coherent group show as they would have been at the Hopkins Institute, they became increasingly visible in Eastern magazines. The San Franciscan prize pictures in marine and architecture – Street's

¹⁰² Arnold Genthe, "A Critical Review of the Salon Pictures with a Few Words upon the Tendency of the Photographers," *Camera Craft* 2, no. 4 (1901): 307-320.

¹⁰³ Louis A. Lamb, "The Second Chicago Photographic Salon," *Camera Craft* 3, no. 6 (1901): 233-236.

¹⁰⁴ Dr. F. Detlefsen and Robert Craik McLean, "Two Impressions of the Second Chicago Photographic Salon," *Camera Craft* 4, no. 1 (1901): 27-29.

Passing of the Storm and R.J. Waters' *Arches Stanford University* – were reproduced in the *Photo-Beacon* and could thus reach the desired audiences through print circulation (fig. 5.10).

The Club members' attempts to address larger audiences through reproduction of awarded salon pictures represents a general phenomenon of dissemination at the time. Through publication in salon catalogs and magazine reviews, the images were displayed in a variety of settings. Instead of championing the exhibition space as a unique platform and thus maintaining absolute control over subsequent dissemination, as done by the Photo-Secession, a majority of participants in American salons in the early 1900s opted for what has been previously described by Hull as "versatility of emplacement." As shown in a study on the Salon Club of America, which will be subject to discussion in the last part of this chapter, it is this widespread dissemination which has made original exhibition prints more difficult to track since oftentimes halftone reproductions in journals remain their only trace.¹⁰⁵ However, it is also exactly this diversified approach to the salon photograph and its reproduction which reveals the ambitions of most participants. While the photographic object shown at the event was certainly meant to grant its maker an artistic status, its subsequent circulation and attached discourses were just as important to bolster this representation. In the dissemination process, the actual object was replaced by its visual reproduction to which was added a written criticism that showcased artistic prestige. Since San Franciscan photographers could not draw larger national audiences to their salons, their photographic objects were altered into precisely these circulating reproductions and discourses. With the expansion of the salon to other American cities in the 1900s, Club members amplified their visibility strategies and submitted works to not only the second and third Chicago salons, but also to the Philadelphia salon of 1901 at which Maurer, Genthe, Street, and Monteverde again displayed their prize pictures.¹⁰⁶ As a backlash against this popular inclusive salon system, a more rigid structure for judging photography was sought. It was created the following year in the formation of the Photo-Secession which Stieglitz founded after resigning from the Philadelphia salon jury and the editorial board of *Camera Notes* in protest of exactly this diversification.¹⁰⁷ While *Camera Craft* only rarely reported on Stieglitz's activities, Californian photographers were nonetheless sensitive to the more rigorous agenda set within East Coast circles.

By the time of the second San Francisco salon in January 1902, Club members had decided to abandon prizes and to opt for a system in which "the acceptance of the picture [was] the only reward." On the basis of European precedent and Stieglitz's criticism of the "highly competitive" nature of annual exhibitions in the early 1890s, CCC photographers eventually decided to follow a

¹⁰⁵ Greenhill, "The Outsiders: The Salon Club of America and the Popularization of Pictorial Photography," 86.

¹⁰⁶ *Catalogue of the Fourth Philadelphia Photographic Salon, November 18 to December 14, 1901* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1901); "San Francisco Pictures at the Fourth Philadelphia Salon," *Camera Craft* 4, no. 2 (1901): 81.

¹⁰⁷ Greenough, "'Of Charming Glens,'" 276-277; Griffin, "Amateur Photography and Pictorial Aesthetics," 125-126.

stricter procedure.¹⁰⁸ Accordingly, the salon's appeal increased and its 1902 version featured works from soon-to-become Photo-Secession affiliates Frank Eugene and Alvin Langdon Coburn, as well as international contributions from Europe, Canada, and Japan. With a consistently vast number of photographs – 450 in total – covering the walls of the Hopkins Institute, the salon focused exclusively on the photographic medium and omitted painting.¹⁰⁹ Within Californian circles, the event was overtly well received and considered an improvement to its precedent. Even though, as mentioned earlier, the absence of “representative pictures of the West” was regretted, the international dimension was appreciated, and its New York contributions celebrated for their notoriety. In their description of F. Holland Day as no less than a “master” and Frank Eugene as “the celebrated New Yorker,” the editors of *Camera Craft* expressed admiration of the Eastern photographers and brought a certain degree of notoriety to the works. Club member Dr. H. D'Arcy Power identified exactly these contributions as “raising the general average” while his colleague Genthe drew a comparison of Western and Eastern contributions being “not entirely to our disfavor.” Even though 450 pictures certainly “mean[t] distraction,” and could not “give the eye the necessary rest,” the salon was still considered an instructive event for local publics.¹¹⁰

The sole critical study that extensively covered the second San Francisco salon in an Eastern magazine was Lily E. White's *Photo-Beacon* review. An Oregon photographer whose salon submissions were appreciated in *Camera Craft* as “exquisite in softness and very rich in chemical quality,” White did not return the compliment on the organizers. Considering the abandoning of the prize system as the main reason for the improvement of the second salon, she singled out the works of Maurer and Genthe as “forerunners in the West.” After this brief appreciation, she set out to criticize the lighting in the rooms of the Hopkins Institute and advised CCC members an “attentive study” of Eastern photographers, “so high in photographic circles,” like Eugene or Day. With regard to the style embraced by the hosts, White pointed out “the abuse of the indirect, foggy misty style so much in vogue” which should be abandoned “if our San Francisco photographers are to be taken seriously.” They would be “too seriously addicted” to soft focus which, to her, communicated fuzziness instead of delicacy.¹¹¹

White's commentary is interesting in that it reveals the controversies at the heart of Pictorialism at the time, that is, the creation of a “picture” as a unique photographic object, which in subject matter and process combined the highest aesthetic ideals. According to the ideal of Stieglitz

¹⁰⁸ Editorial, *Camera Craft* 3, no. 5 (1901): 199; Greenough, “Of Charming Glens,” 273-274.

¹⁰⁹ See *Catalogue of the Second San Francisco Photographic Salon*; Miottel, “Rebellion in Photography,” 18-22.

¹¹⁰ “A Few Words of Criticism upon the Work of Each Exhibitor,” *Camera Craft* 4, no. 3 (1902): 123, 126; “What Various Prominent Critics Have to Say of the Second San Francisco Salon Just Passed,” *Camera Craft* 4, no. 4 (1902): 164-171; Wilson, “Northern California: The Heart of the Storm,” 7.

¹¹¹ Lily E. White, “The San Francisco Salon,” *Photo-Beacon* 14 (1902): 87-90; see also “A Few Words of Criticism,” 145, for a brief comment on White's work.

and his pairs, such a photograph revealed the “abstract, decorative qualities” of the medium. While disputes about print manipulation and the embrace of “the artistic” at the expense of other practices had dominated photographic societies for several years, the salon system and its institutionalized criticism reinforced these boundaries.¹¹² White’s review embodies these hardening lines by embracing the works of Maurer and Genthe who were also appreciated by Stieglitz. Her advice to study Eastern leaders of the emerging New York circle represents a precursor of the aesthetic agenda defended by the Photo-Secession. White had closely followed these developments since her work was featured in *Camera Notes* and she later joined the Photo-Secession.¹¹³ Her criticism represents the strong opinions voiced about photography’s artistic definition in the early 1900s and shows the progressive shift toward an Eastern critical authority.

Whereas the celebratory announcements of the San Francisco photographic salons stand in stark contrast to White’s critical review, we need to understand the significance of such events and their endorsement at communal level. As we have seen, despite their glorifying rhetoric, the participating photographers were keenly aware of the necessity to exchange with other societies. As Genthe admitted in January 1902, the Club was “so little in touch with the big Eastern cities that our salon cannot even be representative of the American school.”¹¹⁴ To compensate for the photographers’ remoteness and the isolation of their works, Genthe and others then opted for dissemination which inserted the photographic works into the thriving salon system and magazine coverage at national level. Even though the members themselves remained mostly unable to engage in a direct conversation with other societies for much of the 1900s, their works would reach larger platforms and address new audiences. As has also been shown, members widely acknowledged the excellence of East Coast photographers. Therefore, the persistence of laudatory discourses in both the run-up and the wake of San Francisco salons cannot be seen as an attempt to demonstrate Californian superiority in photographic matters. It is rather an expression of collective rallying for support in a place which had for long time been a hub of photographic production, and which was yet deprived of exchange due to its geographic distance. As *Camera Craft* editors wrote in summing up the second salon:

Necessarily, the exhibitions held upon the Pacific Coast cannot expect to draw largely from the East. The great distance, transportation charges, and the tendency of the so-called “acknowledged” leaders in Photography to refrain from submitting their work to a board of judges militates against anything like a liberal support. The West is, therefore, forced to rely upon itself in making the Salon attractive and of educational value from year to year, looking for a further support from that broad-minded class of Eastern photographers, who recognize in the West an interesting field, full of unknown possibilities and deserving of consideration.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Greenough, “Of Charming Glens,” 275-276; Griffin, “Amateur Photography and Pictorial Aesthetics,” 133-175.

¹¹³ “Lily E. White,” Portland Art Museum Online Collections, accessed October 25, 2017, <http://portlandartmuseum.us/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=8443;type=701>.

¹¹⁴ “What Various Prominent Critics Have to Say,” 171.

¹¹⁵ Editorial, *Camera Craft* 4, no. 3 (1902): 148.

In portraying the salon as an event at which Californian isolation from the rest of the nation was reconfirmed, the editors drew on a discourse of self-reliance which was an important element of the Club's recently elaborated pioneer image. By holding up a banner of Western autonomy without rejecting potential Eastern photographers' input, they turned the grassroots support from their own community into a key to success. The space granted by the Hopkins Institute and the high approval of the local press were the foundational elements which gave the photographic salons legitimacy in the first place. If these exhibitions showcased pride through the depiction of local subject matter and artistic refinement – validated by the very walls of the institution – they also became a platform for engagement with the local population. Since aesthetically appealing Californian narratives had already been successfully staged in lantern slide lectures with large public attendance in San Francisco, the organization of photographic salons at the city's most sophisticated cultural institution became an extension of this agenda. Through announcements steeped in the self-glorifying Californian vocabulary, the salons were inserted in local cultural promotion and identity construction. The first official exhibition of photography – a practice which had a popular reputation in the city through its connection to the out-of-doors – then integrated what Rachel Sailor termed “views that functioned self-reflexively for the immediate public.”¹¹⁶ Before targeting more distant audiences, the salon had to assure its local support by actively integrating urban audiences and their receptivity to images produced in their own surroundings. The organization of cultural events therefore institutionalized the popular celebratory discourse of the state. Here, the “sense of and need for community” in a geographically remote sphere was reinforced. Through staunch local support, the photographer community was able to capitalize on its isolation in a national framework.¹¹⁷

The salons at the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art therefore require further examination as locally meaningful cultural events. The parallel exhibition of paintings by California-trained artists at the first photographic salon as well as the recurring reference to Mark Hopkins as one of the state's pioneers were necessary for the conception of a purposeful display of local art. The *San Francisco Chronicle*, when reporting on the opening in January 1901, deemed such an appreciation of locally produced art most useful and portrayed the California Camera Club as a community of which “[i]solated specimens of work are well known but few know the amount of treasure trove to be found in this city.”¹¹⁸ This valuable corpus of work, elaborated by members in the city's Academy of Science, would then enter into a coalition with the “greatest of California painters,” William Keith, whose works were on view at the Hopkins Institute. At the time, the institution's exhibitions did not draw large audiences, yet the photographic salon was considered an opportunity to “infuse new life”

¹¹⁶ Sailor, *Meaningful Places*, xxvi.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, xxviii.

¹¹⁸ “Camera Exhibit at Hopkins Institute,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 6, 1901, 7.

into its agenda through free admission once a week and the organization of soirées. This popularization of cultural events was an important factor to familiarize local publics with contemporary and historic art production and eventually abandon the reputation as cultural backwater. As the *Chronicle* underlined: “This city is working out of the pioneer days, when every one was too busy to think much about art and is taking on all the accomplishments and attributes of older cities.”¹¹⁹

As much as the pioneer image proved useful to adorn the practice of photography with a reputation of communal craftsmanship and autonomy, its downside was clearly related to the image of an uncultivated settlement. The Club members, who sought to strike a balance between the pioneering spirit in photography and a refined urban culture, were eager to combine the two aspects in their practice. Their approach proved highly appealing, as local journalist Mabel Clare Craft wrote in *Camera Craft* on the popularity of the salon. Confirming predictions, it attracted much larger crowds than any of the art events held at the Hopkins Institute in preceding years. However, instead of relating this popularity merely to the affordability and appeal of the “little Kodak,” the author observed the real attraction of the salon in the portrayal of “the vast out of doors” which was made available to local publics.¹²⁰ Here, the production of views by resident photographers exhibited in front of local audiences created a shared self-understanding. It likewise allowed residents to imagine engaging in such artistic practices, since the inspirational sites were situated within the reach of their home. This communal reading of the photographs in the Californian cultural and institutional context represented not only the first, but also the most fundamental appreciation of the works.

If geographic isolation must be considered one of the main characteristics of the San Francisco salons’ sociocultural conception, the event reinforced exchanges among photographers of the West Coast. Since the salons were conceived at the same time as Erwin’s imagined Pacific League, they can be seen as expressions of the self-reliance and local canon-creation the CCC president had endorsed. In this framework, once again, the promotional discourses on the state proved highly useful, as they allowed Californian photographers to unite as a community with shared themes and aspirations. This unification found its most compelling expression in the first Los Angeles salon organized by the LACC in May 1902. While coverage on the Southern Californian exhibition was virtually absent from national magazines, *Camera Craft* dedicated an entire “salon number” to the Los Angeles event in the summer of 1902. Even though corresponding secretary Helen Davie used the same pompous vocabulary to announce the exhibition as the CCC – depicting it as “the first opportunity the Southern California amateur has had of comparing his efforts with those of the best-

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Mabel Clare Craft, “The Popular Side of the Salon,” *Camera Craft* 2, no. 4 (1901): 300. I was unable to locate information concerning the number of salon attendants.

known workers throughout the North and East” – it remained a distinctly circumscribed event. The organizers likewise defined members and salon contributors as “amateurs,” despite the leading professionals Maude and Valentine on the committee, and adopted a prize system.¹²¹

As to the salon’s outcome, the exclusively Western and therefore disproportionately positive reviews make it difficult to draw a nuanced picture.¹²² While both Davie and local newspapers highlighted the national reach of the Los Angeles event, with “the best pictures produced by photographers throughout the United States,”¹²³ the salon catalog and attribution of prizes reveals again the actual, rather narrow scope. The notoriety attached to Eastern photographers was used as a tool to legitimize the local exhibition as a nationally important art event. Its framing as an exhibition which included submissions from across the United States would accordingly grant the city the status of a culturally important location for the nation. Furthermore, in attributing the majority of prizes to Californian photographers, the allegedly “national event” at Los Angeles was used to validate the success and importance of its local photographers. As the *Los Angeles Herald* wrote:

Despite the fact that many of the entries have won prizes in Paris and well-known American photographic contests, new views from the dark rooms of the Los Angeles Camera Club members have fairly swept the board of a majority of prizes.¹²⁴

The prize pictures referred to, however, concerned for a major portion the CCC’s award-winning images of the first salon. They also included works by professional photographers Schumacher and Steckel, who had exhibited in Paris in 1900, yet without indicating their LACC affiliation. The portrayal of a triumphant exhibition in which internationally acknowledged contributors gave in to the excellency of the Los Angeles photographers infused the event with local cultural value – especially for viewing publics who were not related to the camera club. In reality, out of the 550 photographs shown by 100 contributors, only some ten percent were sent in from photographers East of the Mississippi, including Ohio, Washington, D.C., Louisiana, Philadelphia, and New Jersey.¹²⁵ In the absence of the notorious New York contributions and without coverage in East Coast circulating magazines, the Los Angeles salon fundamentally remained a state event. The rhetoric adopted for promoting the first Californian photographic art exhibitions yet proved essential to rally support and create self-understanding at communal level.

With San Franciscan photographers exhibiting at Los Angeles, and vice versa, the first years

¹²¹ Helen L. Davie, “The Los Angeles Salon,” *Camera Craft* 4, no. 6 (1902): 248-249.

¹²² One brief review of the salon appeared in the *American Amateur Photographer*, based on the *Camera Craft* number dedicated to the event (see Vol. 5, no. 2, June 1902). It considered the material mediocre and dismissed the “salon” labeling due to the use of an award-system, see “Our Table,” *American Amateur Photographer* 14 (1902): 376.

¹²³ Helen L. Davie, “The Los Angeles exhibition, its history and success, and those responsible for it,” *Camera Craft* 5, no. 2 (1902): 43.

¹²⁴ “Big Success of the Salon,” *Los Angeles Herald*, May 4, 1902, iv.

¹²⁵ See *Catalogue of the First Los Angeles Photographic Salon, at the Los Angeles Camera Club, May 1 to 10, 1902* (Los Angeles: Issued by A.S.C. Forbes, 1902).

of the twentieth century saw the consolidation of the photographers' network between Northern and Southern California. Its exchanges and communication drew on a comparable premise of isolation and lack of recognition which photographers all over the state were facing. Through mutual participation in exhibitions and respective reviews, the two clubs nourished their sense of legitimacy as Californian photographers and thus created their very own communal structure. In supporting each other, they compensated geographic remoteness in a series of local exhibitions in which resident photographers were portrayed as artists worthy of national recognition. Since the critical coverage of the events remained mostly within their own circles, the boosting of both resident art and the local landscape reached a new stage. Watts' suggestion of a "regional identity-building project as performed through photography," was reinforced by the organization of the Los Angeles salon in which outdoor photo practice and booster discourses merged.¹²⁶ In this context, the prize component of the salon – described by local newspapers as "material evidence" – was to validate the artistic legitimacy of the photographers. Their work would be "[b]acked up by the reputation of glorious Southern California," whose landscape and climate, as in the case of Northern California, were taken as natural stimulants for superior results.¹²⁷ The remote location was also taken as an advantage is an instant history-making of the event. While Davie acknowledged that the LACC was, like its Northern counterpart, "[r]emoved so far from the art center," the exhibition was described in the *Los Angeles Camera Club News* as "an opportunity" which had been offered "[n]ever before in the history of Southern California."¹²⁸ Through an instant portrayal of the salon as monumental, it was ascribed historical value and cultural weight at local level.

If these locally rooted salons then stirred the community imagination of both its organizers and its viewing publics, the displayed items need to be related to their creation process. As Edwards has argued, "the local embraces [...] a sense of belonging that is premised in practice, such as the *practice* of photography, rather than in an abstract ideology of belonging."¹²⁹ While the ideological component of belonging had manifested itself in Northern California from the 1890s with the elaboration of a pioneer past, its programmatic counterpart was fed through a practice of the out-of-doors that envisioned itself as just as inventive and self-reliant. In Southern California, as has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, an exploring landscape practice was similarly endorsed. Through outings on railroad cars adorned with club banners, the LACC had defined the on-site production of photography throughout the Southern section of the state as its most important feature. This defining element was repeatedly celebrated in the *Club News* as well as in illustrated publications to which photographers like Valentine and Maude contributed. The LACC's most prominent female

¹²⁶ Watts, "Picture Taking in Paradise," 243.

¹²⁷ "Big Success of the Salon," iv.

¹²⁸ Davie, "The Los Angeles Exhibition," 43; *Los Angeles Camera Club News* 2, no. 3 (1902): n.p.

¹²⁹ Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 125.

member, Mrs. A.S.C. Forbes, had been instrumental in these excursions and illustration endeavors. The 1902 salon criticism in *Camera Craft* indeed portrayed her as the most influential and efficient organizer. As a member of the Southern California History and Landmarks Committee, her central point of interest were the Spanish missions – an interest which she further pursued in encouraging excursions to these historic sites.

By the turn of the century, the Spanish missions – which had been contested spaces of conversion and indentured labor for Native Americans – came to be portrayed as ruins of a romanticized past. While popular culture in the shape of immensely successful novels like *Ramona* by Helen Hunt Jackson (1884) turned the missions into “symbols of a heroic and mythic past,” their aesthetic appeal as deserted ruins soon functioned “as a photography magnet.”¹³⁰ Their cultural functions and the political meaning of “the picturesque” being subject to discussion in the following chapter, it is noteworthy at this point to specify the increasingly assertive – and diverging – popular mythologies of Northern and Southern California. The dominant Gold Rush narrative which San Franciscans used to refer to the state as a whole came under scrutiny by the turn of the century through a heightened interest in the Spanish past, especially in the South. In the intensely commercialized environment of the new settlements around Los Angeles, a nostalgic myth was produced in order to escape exactly these modern-day consumer spectacles. The creation of a romantic past in which simpler forms of life had existed, provided “psychic refuge” and “a measure of therapeutic consolation.”¹³¹ Since Pictorialist photography and its soft tones stylistically fed into nostalgic themes, the “picture possibilities” of the Spanish missions undergirded the symbolic and aesthetic value of the photographs. More importantly, in an emerging cultural scene which was dominated by commercial photography, the depiction of mission ruins constituted a tool to infuse a strongly professionalized field with an artistic aura.

The “material evidence” confirming the Los Angeles photographers’ artistry supported by “glorious Southern California” found its most complete expression in the catalog of the first salon. Its cover showed a closed mission portal whose doors were conceived as cut-out folding portals which, upon opening, revealed a Franciscan friar standing at the entrance. When flipping the cover, the entire image was revealed, staging the friar in a contemplative posture amid the ruins. The photographic reproduction was part of a full-page advertisement for the Santa Fe railway’s special excursion rates to the “Old California Missions” (**fig. 5.11, fig. 5.12**). The merging of artistry and promotion was embodied here by the material choice for the salon catalog which, by opening the portals, exposed the achievements of Los Angeles photographers. At the same time, it encouraged the exploration of the region’s more ancient architectural and societal features. Its inviting gesture of

¹³⁰ Watts, “Picture Taking in Paradise,” 247.

¹³¹ Gendzel, “Pioneers and Padres,” 57, 69.

opening the door had both a symbolic and physical meaning. It represented a discovery of hitherto concealed artistic creations, metaphorically enriched through the unlocking of the portals. It was also an enticement to readers to literally open these doors – perhaps with camera in hand – by benefiting from the Santa Fe offers.

This blending of artistic achievement and promotion, to which preservation efforts were added, is exemplified in the itinerary one of the salon contributions, Putnam and Valentine's *Moonlight Capistrano* (**fig. 5.13**). Reproduced in the catalog as the first prize in architecture, it would feature the following year in the railroad-sponsored guide *California Missions and Landmarks and How to Get There* (**fig. 5.14**). Both the salon catalog and the illustrated mission guide were published by the Forbes couple. Mrs. A.S.C. Forbes' commitment to both the Club and landmark preservation led to the inclusion of several salon photographs in the railroad guide. The example given here – the itinerary undergone by Putnam and Valentine's print – embodies the shift in object value through contextual emplacement, as elaborated earlier through Roger Hull. As a prize-winning photographic object pointing to the artistry of its makers and its subject matter, *Moonlight Capistrano* materialized the aspirations of the LACC in the salon. As a halftone reproduction captioned "Capistrano by Moonlight," the photograph became an illustration of the mission San Juan Capistrano at night, with its accompanying text explaining "how to get there" and describing the ancient features of the ruins as a "masterpiece of architecture."¹³² Here, the salon picture – the masterful photographic object – was flattened to an illustration of its subject's masterful architectural features. This move from a celebration of photographic agency to an appreciation of visual content illuminates the process of re-contextualization which numerous Californian salon photographs underwent.

However, interestingly, the circulation of Californian subject matter through nationally acclaimed photographers also implied increased visibility at local level. An occasion of heightened visibility for the region – but eventually not reflected back on its photographers – was found in Alvin Langdon Coburn's travels to Southern California in the late summer of 1902, during which he photographed the missions. The Los Angeles Camera Club, which welcomed Coburn at the time and had him write short contributions to the *Club News*,¹³³ must have been one of the foremost supportive networks for the conception of these pictures. Due to the sponsorship of the region's chamber of commerce as well as its numerous outings to missions through the Landmarks Committee and its leader Mrs. A.S.C. Forbes, the Club had declared the missions its leitmotif. Since an allegorical depiction of the ruins not only decorated the salon catalog, but also the *Club News* cover, the LACC considered itself an ardent advocate of preservation (**fig. 5.15**). In providing Coburn with further

¹³² Mrs. A.S.C. Forbes, *California Missions and Landmarks and How to Get There* (Los Angeles: Official Guide, 1903), 29. Further information on Forbes retrieved from Palmquist Collection of Women in Photography (Box 250).

¹³³ See Alvin Langdon Coburn, "More about Gum Prints," *Los Angeles Camera Club News* 2, no. 7 (1902): 11-12.

information on these sites, the Club members had hoped for an exhibition of his characteristic pictures in Los Angeles. Rather than being shown in California, however, the photographs became the nucleus of Coburn's New York solo-show as Photo-Secession fellow in January 1903, to which the LACC was invited.¹³⁴

Camera Craft seized the occasion of local subject matter being granted a prestigious platform: "The series of Mission pictures made by Mr. Coburn on his recent trip through California was the leading feature of the exhibition and attracted much comment."¹³⁵ While further exchanges between Coburn and other Californian photographers must have taken place in these years, reflected for example in several series of Coburn portraits made by LACC member Anna Desmond or CCC secretary William E. Dasonville,¹³⁶ these relationships did not result in greater visibility for the local workers. Instead, Coburn's Californian photographs were reproduced in two consecutive portfolios on ancient missions in *Photo-Era* (**fig. 5.16**). Its style and tone very much reminiscent of Mrs. A.S.C. Forbes guide, mixing picturesque photographs with historical information, the photographs were used to attest to both the ancientness of the subject matter and the artistry of its maker. In his perpetuation of a romanticized history of the missions, internalized and spread by LACC members, Coburn reproduced the discourse of a nostalgic Western history. His article made reference to the work of the Landmarks Committee, yet without referencing any works of the LACC.¹³⁷ Despite the obvious overlap in rhetoric and style of the Southern Californian Club and Coburn's work, it is the latter's Californian mission pictures which appear in histories of Pictorialism.¹³⁸ The Californian clubs from North to South, which extensively covered the missions, had made these sites the core of their Pictorialist work – as embodied in the Los Angeles salon catalog or the regular exhibition submissions in San Francisco (**fig. 5.17**). Yet, the subsequent attachment of Coburn to the Photo-Secession made his depictions of Spanish ruins well-known, even though a large proportion of Western photographers had declared the missions their Pictorialist theme of choice.

As has been amply demonstrated, the diversified publication platforms were enthusiastically embraced by professional club members in both Los Angeles and San Francisco, as they promised greater visibility to the region – yet not necessarily to its makers. Depending on the context, the images were to attest to the artistic legitimacy of its creators, the commercial appeal of state, or the cultural weight of its regions in national history. As these different publication contexts cannot be seen as mutually exclusive, its contributors oftentimes struck a careful balance and thus provided

¹³⁴ "Coburn Exhibit," *Los Angeles Camera Club News* 2, no. 11 (1903): 5.

¹³⁵ "Mr. Coburn's Exhibition," *Camera Craft* 6, no. 4 (1903): 176.

¹³⁶ See Peter E. Palmquist, "William E. Dasonville: An Appreciation," in *William E. Dasonville: California Photographer, 1879-1957*, eds. Susan Herzig and Paul Hertzmann (Nevada City: Carl Mautz Pub., 1999), 13; Griffith, ed., *Ambassadors of Progress*, 149.

¹³⁷ Alvin Langdon Coburn, "The California Missions – San Fernando Rey," *Photo-Era* 8 (1902): 51-53; Alvin Langdon Coburn, "The California Missions – San Juan Capistrano," *Photo-Era* 9 (1902): 253-255.

¹³⁸ See for example Padon, *Truth Beauty: Pictorialism and the Photograph as Art, 1845-1945* (2008).

useful material for artistic, promotional, and communal purposes. Since the majority of these depictions implied a practice in the out-of-doors, the leitmotif of the two Californian clubs was upheld in the various dissemination channels. The importance of territorial practice, its portrayal, and its output, became key elements of the clubs' self-definition and will be examined in the following section through their relationship to the salon material. The focus of this examination will be the membership of the CCC and its ties to other San Francisco-based organizations like the Sierra Club and the Southern Pacific. As the source documentation of Northern Californian practitioners is broader and more diversified, the CCC's chosen destinations, notably the Yosemite, will remain at the center of attention. The preceding analysis of the Los Angeles photographers' practice and their ambition to foster self-promotion constitutes a phenomenon which, in Northern California, drew on a decade-long tradition.

When the CCC conceived its first salon, the catalog included a brief sketch of the Club's history, which depicted it as a constantly growing association of some 420 members in ten years of existence. Citing the Club's constitution, the definition of "a social, scientific and art center for photographers" was reiterated and linked to the firm anchorage of the Club's headquarters in the center of the city. The Club's belonging to the community, not only of the city but of the state as a whole, was expressed in the catalog's perhaps most important statement:

Its members, appreciating the magnificent field for their photographic operations, have, in the enthusiasm which stirs the heart of a lover of the grand and beautiful nature, organized many club outings and together visited almost every locality in the State.¹³⁹

By drawing on exactly this thoroughgoing, seemingly methodological practice, they created a corpus which represented the local roots of their work. The president's endorsement of local subject matter and his assumption that "no single organization has done more to widen the fame of the State than the California Camera Club" reflects the priority of the agenda at the time.¹⁴⁰ With such emphasis placed on the collective and the territorial aspect, an exploration of exactly these excursion practices will be proposed in the following. It will investigate the outings and their documentation as activities which shaped the self-identification of the Club through communal support and local promotion. In this setup, the direct implication of Club members in railroad boosting campaigns will come to the fore. Rather than being mere sponsors of picturesque production, the companies' rhetoric made its way into the pages of *Camera Craft*. There, it served as a cornerstone of self-definition and encouraged exploration and dissemination. Through this sponsoring network, the railroad's infrastructure became part of the Club production. By the same token, the company's victorious history and its notorious patrons provided the institutional frame for portraying the photographers'

¹³⁹ *Catalogue of the First San Francisco Photographic Salon* (San Francisco: San Francisco Art Association and California Camera Club, 1901), n.p.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

works as pioneer art. Due to this two-fold impact, the region's most forceful promoter and user of photographic material cannot be ignored in the discussion of the San Francisco salons.

5.3 *The resource of the salons: excursions to the Yosemite and California's visual vocabulary*

In order to gain an impression of how the Californian visual vocabulary was shaped, a glance at the Southern Pacific's monthly publication *Sunset* reveals the efficient coalition of text and image in which local photographers came to partake. First published in the summer of 1898, the magazine featured its main creed on the first page, that is, the "[p]ublicity for the attractions and advantages of the Western Empire." The advertised geographic realm stretched out from California to Oregon and Nevada, and into Arizona and New Mexico where it came to compete with the Santa Fe railroad. It found its geographic limit in Texas and Louisiana, where the line of the Sunset Limited, after which the magazine was named, had its terminus. Drawing on the "foundation deep and strong" constructed by California's "pioneers," the magazine predicted a prosperous future for the region – one that was "sunset-limited," that is, without limits.¹⁴¹ In doing so, it heavily relied on halftone illustrations, which were supposed to lend a more truthful character to what had been advertised in words and engravings beforehand.

Sunset can be seen as a popular extension of illustrated books like *Picturesque America* (1872-1874) or *Picturesque California* (1888), the latter of which coincided with the advent of the halftone process yet used mostly photogravures and etchings. It featured works by Californian artists like William Keith or Thomas Hill, alongside writings by John Muir, who would unite the former under the banner of the Sierra Club in 1892. The desire to illustrate grand natural scenery and civilizational advance in tandem dominated these publications, epitomized for instance by the Yosemite and the ongoing construction of Stanford University.¹⁴² This coalition of text and image, which the CCC also practiced in its regular lantern slide lectures, found its most efficient circulation by the turn of the century in the railroad-sponsored journal. By 1905, *Sunset* had a circulation of 58,000, with New York City alone receiving 3,000 copies. Defining its promotional output as an "immense circulating library," the Southern Pacific passenger department was keenly aware of photography's usefulness. In the desire to showcase images of California "on the walls of railroad stations, in clubs, in hotels, in busy offices," they sought to "weave in the brains of men visions and fantasies untold wherein California shall appear a signboard, each of them commanding attention for California."¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ *Sunset* 1, no. 1 (1898): 1; Orsi, *Sunset Limited*, xiii.

¹⁴² Sue Rainey, "Picturesque California: How Westerners Portrayed the West in the Age of John Muir," *Common Place* 7, no. 3 (2007), <http://www.common-place-archives.org/vol-07/no-03/rainey/>. See also Sue Rainey, *Creating Picturesque America: Monument to the Natural and Cultural Landscape* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1994), 113-174.

¹⁴³ "Telling the World about California: How the Southern Pacific is doing it," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 1, 1905, 43.

Photography's ubiquity in this promotional effort overlaps with the role assigned to the medium by San Franciscan photographic societies from the 1860s. Its interweave in "the whole fabric of society" and its outreach to "the people at large" constituted major qualities emphasized by both the 1866 and the 1875 professional photographer associations. Given this intricate relationship between the practice and the public reception of photography, the union of the California Camera Club members with the boosters of the Southern Pacific passenger department should not come as a surprise. The shared goals of local production and national distribution proved beneficial to both. On the one hand, they supplied the passenger department with photographic material to be used and reused in promotional brochures. On the other hand, the photographers were ensured financial means (as a continuation of Huntington's generous pay) and beneficial tariffs to go on collective excursions and report back on the pleasures of these travels in both *Camera Craft* and *Sunset*. Through the significant impetus of the Californian landscape, the photographers created their desired "art photographs" while the promotional press was provided fresh source material. These supportive strategies will be examined in the following, revealing not only the direct implication of the Club's salon contributors in the promotional campaigns, but also the network of painters, preservationists, and patrons who were engaged in the making of Californian visual culture in the early 1900s.

A case in point for these multiple engagements is the work of geologist Joseph LeConte, whose photographs were reproduced in an illustrated article on the Yosemite in *Sunset's* first issue. A professor at the University of California at Berkeley since the early 1870s, his portrait and results of research were included in Lange's photographic documentation project of the UCB campus. During his early professorship, LeConte had become friends with naturalist John Muir and at the time already took groups of students to the Sierras. When Muir became president of the Sierra Club in 1892, LeConte counted among the first members, and so did artist William Keith and Stanford University president David Starr Jordan.¹⁴⁴ As demonstrated by Richard Orsi, John Muir and Southern Pacific officials were involved in the same San Franciscan cultural circles from the 1870s onward. Even though the company was criticized for its aggressive monopoly and constant expansion, it likewise cultivated an "enlightened corporate self-interest," which granted sponsorship to agricultural improvement initiatives and support for conservation measures. The Southern Pacific leaders endorsed the development of parks and recreation areas and had provided financial sponsorship for San Francisco's Golden Gate Park in the 1870s. This business support was also embraced by Muir when founding the Sierra Club, since he realized that the spreading of tourism in the Sierras could rally awareness for "a new conservationist ethic by opening up the region's wild beauties to a wider,

¹⁴⁴ Michael P. Cohen, *The History of the Sierra Club, 1892-1970* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988), 4, 8; Figueiredo Couto, "Du Monumentalisme à l'Écologie," 230-231.

influential middle-class public.”¹⁴⁵

For this strategy to become efficient, the Sierra Club “took up aesthetic arguments,” that is, the aesthetic appeal of the landscape was used as a primary vehicle to convince audiences of the necessity of conservation. Research carried out on the visual promotion strategies of the Sierra Club – and on nineteenth-century painting – has put forward the idea that this “primarily visual” appreciation of the American landscape worked through a strategic use of the term “scenery.” Its origin lies in the French *scénique*, “a word that in the fourteenth century meant ‘of or belonging to the stage or drama.’” The staging of the environment through photography accordingly led to its framing as “a theater set, a motionless array of visual features awaiting human action and intended for a human audience.” While the Sierra Club made extensive use of photography to these tourist-conservation ends in the 1960s – for example through postcards, calendars or photo books to which Ansel Adams massively contributed – the roots of these strategies lay in its early membership. Their enthusiastic endorsement of aesthetic promotion at times, however, worked at the expense of preservation. The encouragement of large-scale tourism, working to make audiences sensitive to the environment while at the same time harming its ecosystem, would become a strong paradox at the heart of the Sierra Club’s work in the Yosemite.¹⁴⁶ Before photographers explored the landscape, painters of the Hudson River School would already endorse the study of an “American scenery,” as Thomas Cole’s essay was titled in 1836. Its artistic contemplation implied the double goal of preservation in the ecological sense, and as the symbol of an emerging national identity.¹⁴⁷ While these depictions predate the debates in which locals would engage by the turn of the century, they set the tone for the photographic portrayal of a nationally relevant landscape, and its accessibility.

The shared interests of San Franciscan conservationists, intellectuals, artists, and patrons find their fullest expression in the contributions to *Sunset* magazine. The aforementioned figures can all be found throughout the first volumes when it became “a magazine designed to serve Western differences.”¹⁴⁸ This demarcation of difference, as has been amply demonstrated, worked through the aesthetic appeal of the Californian landscape and the geographic fact of its distance. While the beauty of the landscape had to be preserved, it was to be witnessed through travel on the Southern Pacific’s famous lines. The visual and textual contributions in *Sunset*, by members of the Sierra Club, the Bohemian Club, or the California Camera Club, voiced the values of its contributors. Through a large-

¹⁴⁵ Orsi, *Sunset Limited*, 353-371.

¹⁴⁶ Robin Kelsey, “Sierra Club Photography and the Exclusive Property of Vision,” *Rachel Carson Center Perspectives* (2013): 12, 24-26, <https://doi.org/10.5282/rcc/6205>; see also Cohen, *The History of the Sierra Club*, 8; for further information on Sierra Club strategies in its first two decades, see Figueiredo Couto, “Du Monumentalisme à l’Écologie,” 541-549.

¹⁴⁷ See François Brunet, “Le paysage dans le décor,” in *Thomas Cole. Essai sur le décor naturel américain*, ed. François Brunet (Pau: Publications de l’Université de Pau, 2004), 12-17, 23-28.

¹⁴⁸ Paul C. Johnson, *The Early Sunset Magazine, 1898-1928* (San Francisco and San Marino: California Historical Society, 1973), 11-13.

scale circulation in train stations and stores across the country, these values were transmitted to wider American publics via text and image. Through the focus on a distinct rhetoric, designed to appeal to a local as well as a nationwide readership, *Sunset* was part of the magazines that came to “[penetrate] other spheres of American life.” Its editors developed a “direct magazine voice” that would come to resemble a “trademark style,” and as such, respond to the expectations of its readership to find distinctive Western scenarios.¹⁴⁹

The communal aspect that was expressed in these writings was also reflected in the outdoor activities of its contributors. Since the first decade of Sierra Club activity was marked by an encouragement of tourism and recreation, its members sought to set an example by organizing the first outing with 96 attendants in July 1901. Through this collective exploration, the shared goals would be consolidated and its participants “emphasiz[ed] community.” A setback in this community event was, however, the death of Joseph LeConte shortly before the first excursion.¹⁵⁰ The *Sierra Club Bulletin* reported on these events with a biographical sketch reproducing “the last photograph of Prof. LeConte” at Vernal Cascades taken one day before his death. The excursion to Tuolumne Meadows was likewise illustrated through photographs, showing the importance of documentation of an on-site practice and its affordable halftone reproduction. Using pocket cameras, the members nominated the Kodak their traveling companion, following and facilitating thus the practices LeConte had developed in the Sierras from early on.¹⁵¹ While it is not clear whether CCC members were directly engaged in these outings, the congenial exploratory practice certainly bore resemblance to the excursion agenda the CCC would envision by 1900.¹⁵²

O.V. Lange, as the professor’s acquaintance and in his function of local photography historian, paid homage to his friend in *Camera Craft*, extending thus the circle of Sierra Club intellectuals to members of the CCC. Lange remembered the enthusiasm LeConte would spur among students at the UCB and, like the *Sierra Club Bulletin* contributors, captioned “Professor Joe’s” portrait with the obligatory detail: “died in the Yosemite Valley, California, July 6, 1901.”¹⁵³ The excursionist agenda LeConte had started decades earlier with his students as well as his photographic work were not unnoticed by the CCC either. Shortly before his death, *Camera Craft* had published an article on “the wonders of the West,” encouraging local photographers to visit the High Sierras. Reproducing

¹⁴⁹ Christopher P. Wilson, “The Rhetoric of Consumption: Mass-market Magazines and the Demise of the Gentle Reader, 1880-1920,” in *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980*, 43-44, 48-49.

¹⁵⁰ Cohen, *The History of the Sierra Club*, 18-20.

¹⁵¹ Frank Soulé, “Joseph LeConte in the Sierra,” *Sierra Club Bulletin* 4 (1902): 1-11; E.T. Parsons, “The Sierra Club Outing to Tuolumne Meadows,” *Sierra Club Bulletin* 4 (1902): 19-24; see also Riley, *Women and Nature*, 87.

¹⁵² The connections between the Sierra Club and the California Camera Club necessitate still further exploration. Since the CCC membership lacks systematic documentation and the *Sierra Club Bulletin* did not credit all photographers and participants, direct connections are challenging to draw. Material requiring further investigation in this regard are the Sierra Club Pictorial Collections at the Bancroft Library.

¹⁵³ O.V. Lange, “Professor Joe,” *Camera Craft* 3, no. 4 (1901): 138-140.

photographs of snow-clad mountains and dense valleys, reminiscent of *Sunset*'s first portfolio, the article credited Joseph LeConte as photographer (**fig. 5.18, fig. 5.19, fig. 5.20**). Merging historic information on the Sierras with travel advice, it was addressed to Californian photographers seeking a challenging terrain to improve their practice. As the authors warned: "In making the trip go prepared to expose numberless plates and to be dissatisfied with one-half of them. No artist, no photographer can fully portray the nature of this wonderful country."¹⁵⁴

This kind of territorial practice – "doing justice" to the local environment – was envisioned by the Club under Erwin's lead in the 1900s. While the Sierra Club planned its first annual outing in 1901, the CCC had started a monthly outing agenda in the early 1890s, expanded to a more elaborate annual summer excursion to the Yosemite by the following decade. The seeming popularity of these excursions notwithstanding, their cost is an undeniable component that demands attention. The Southern Pacific passenger department, which was in charge of promotion, had advertised special rates to California from the 1880s. While one-way tickets for people choosing to settle in California were sold at cheaper "colonist rates," ticket prices within the state were far from affordable to the mass of society. The passenger department therefore maximized its advertisement budget in the first decade of the twentieth century, from \$400,000 in 1900 to \$1.8 million in 1911. These sums were an investment in illustrated travel brochures and other kinds of promotional literature, constantly increasing the number of tourists and settlers in the state.¹⁵⁵ As part of this budget, Club members received special fares for excursions and commissioned works, as in the case of Maurer. While it is not clear by which specific conditions these commissioned travels were bound and recompensed in return, the prices for round-trips to the Yosemite from San Francisco and Los Angeles for general publics were clearly outlined in *Sunset*. Ranging between \$38 and \$48, depending on the point of departure in the state, the cost amounted to more than \$1,000 in today's money – accommodation not included.¹⁵⁶ By 1903, the CCC advertised its annual outings in East Coast-magazines like the *American Amateur Photographer*, announcing a fifteen-day trip in June through the Valley and the Sequoia National Park. Transportation, accommodation, and meals included, participants had to calculate \$59 – without mentioning the cost for Eastern visitors first having to reach California.¹⁵⁷

Even though appeals were made in *Camera Craft* to the broad public of Californian photographers to improve their practice in these locations, the excursions were affordable only to several dozens of members whose participation required a considerable investment in photographic apparatus. As Oscar Maurer was firmly rooted in this network of Club outings and railroad commissions, he was a regular participant. In his memoir, he mentioned the free pass he had received

¹⁵⁴ "Take a Trip to the New Wonderland this Summer," *Camera Craft* 2, no. 6 (1901): 465-468.

¹⁵⁵ Orsi, *Sunset Limited*, 156-163.

¹⁵⁶ "Yosemite," *Sunset* 1, no. 1 (1898): 8.

¹⁵⁷ "The California Camera Club," *American Amateur Photographer* 15 (1903): 333-334.

to conduct the commissioned works in Mexico in 1899 and also referred to his main contact in train travel matters, “genial James Horsburgh” – an ardent booster of the Southern Pacific’s passenger department, active throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century.¹⁵⁸ Given Maurer’s numerous contributions to *Sunset* around the turn of the century, he must have been in close contact with Horsburgh. Documentation of his travels and especially of the Club outings was published in *Sunset* either in the form of illustrated articles focusing on specific activities, like fishing or sleigh rides, or as special reports covering the section “With the Camera,” featured sporadically between 1900 and 1904.

Maurer’s first report “Around Mt. Shasta in Winter” appeared in early 1901, around the time of the first San Francisco salon. Rather than covering the photographic activities of the Club – of whom some twenty-five members assisted the trip – Maurer expanded on the “ideal conditions for winter sport” which were within a day’s reach of San Francisco. The photographs, presumably Maurer’s yet uncredited, were assembled as a collage to illustrate amusement possibilities in California in a cold but mild season (**fig. 5.21, fig. 5.22**). Advising owners of resorts to engage in “a little judicious advertising,” Maurer recognized the appeal of the region as favorite spot for health seekers. The depiction of California as a “land of sunshine” in which tourists could find “all the comforts of snow” added to its reputation as a pleasing environment.¹⁵⁹ Recreational promotion was a strategy used throughout the period by various railroad companies in the American West to attract Eastern publics and to demarcate the climatic advantage of these regions. In this context, prospects of health and leisure were combined with an attractive *scenery*.¹⁶⁰ The depiction of enjoyable outdoor activities, even in winter, went hand in hand with the promotion of California’s abundant landscape that was attractive year-round. It tied in with the broader desire of wealthy turn-of-the-century publics to return “back to nature” and find “health” and “abundance” – a striving well-directed toward the state’s landscape and the Bay Area’s mild climate.¹⁶¹

In line with this potential advertising dimension, the documentation of Club outings in both *Sunset* and *Camera Craft* were focused less on the photographic aspect of the event, but rather consisted of elaborate descriptions of the social pleasures the group had engaged in over several days. More often than not, the accompanying photographs served as illustrations of the landscape and the group’s encampment rather than as collectively conceived specimens of aesthetic achievement. In order for this travel to become enjoyable and draw wider ranks of practitioners, train lines had to operate efficiently and make these terrains practicable. While San Franciscan photographers had from

¹⁵⁸ Maurer, “As I Remember,” 7-8; Orsi, *Sunset Limited*, 54.

¹⁵⁹ Oscar Maurer, “Around Mt. Shasta in Winter,” *Sunset* 6 (1901): 142-144.

¹⁶⁰ Victoria E. Dye, *All Aboard for Santa Fe: Railway Promotion of the American Southwest, 1890s to 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 16-18.

¹⁶¹ See T.J. Jackson Lears, “From Salvation to Self-realization: Advertising and the Therapeutic Roots of Consumer Culture,” in *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980*, 11-12.

early on benefited from railroad travel and advertised its advantages, *Camera Craft* editors took the collaboration to a new level in 1900 by publishing a laudatory account on the construction of snow sheds across the tracks in the High Sierras. Illustrated with five photographs depicting the snow plows in a commanding winter landscape, the article stressed the importance of the forty-mile-long sheds for the protection and comfort of the travelers (**fig. 5.23**, **fig. 5.24**, **fig. 5.25**). As a precursor to Maurer's article on the pleasures in the Californian snow, this account emphasized the "bold defiance of the elements" it had taken to conceive of this infrastructure. In homage to "the quartet of merchants, who were destined to become railroad kings," the article extended the pioneer narrative. Depicting the construction as "monument" or "memorial" to the railroad patrons, the author linked the engineering achievement to the "glimpse of the magnificent scenery in the high Sierras" which tourists on the lines could thenceforth enjoy.¹⁶²

These engineering works gained in meaning primarily through photographic documentation and later on through the practice of local photographers in these newly accessible territories. A largely neglected yet extremely prolific CCC member whose output embodies this approach is Howard C. Tibbitts. Showing the natural and the man-made in symbiosis, his photographs illustrated the account on snow shed construction. As official Southern Pacific photographer, Tibbitts had been on site for many of such projects to document progress and later on distribute the results in a variety of formats, oftentimes accompanied by celebratory accounts as the one in *Camera Craft*. Photographs like *A Heavy Cut* (see **fig. 5.24**) depicted the cyclone snow plow – living up to its name – as a forceful machine in stark contrast with the surrounding snow landscape. Confronting the machine at eye-level when standing on the tracks amid stacks of condensed snow, the viewer would imagine its forcefulness. Here, the natural and the man-made merged in shades of white clouds through steam shooting toward the winter sky. As argued by David Nye, these nineteenth-century technologies "literally rework[ed] the landscape, usurping the place of natural things with man-made objects." Yet, at the same time, they were depicted as entering in communion with the environment by improving it. The process in which these machines "vigorously project[ed] themselves into the world" is tangible in the *Heavy Cut* as well as in the following photograph taken from an elevated perspective: *A Break in the Sheds* showed the railroad piercing through the landscape and coming to dominate it (see **fig. 5.25**).¹⁶³ While the article celebrated exactly these undaunted engineering ventures, the combination of text and image served as justification. It projected readers into a sunny future in which the tracks would allow passengers to travel safely and marvel at a seemingly unchanged scenery out the window.

While his friend Archibald J. Treat has received brief mention in the history of Pictorialism as a local critic – despite the meager archival remnants of his practice, Tibbitts's photographic legacy

¹⁶² W.G. Woods, "Through the Snowsheds," *Camera Craft* 1, no. 6 (1900): 332-336.

¹⁶³ Nye, *The American Technological Sublime*, 37.

still demands critical exploration. By combining high professional standards and aesthetically pleasing subject matter, his works did gain some visibility in varying contexts in recent years.¹⁶⁴ Most notably, the halftone reproductions in *Camera Craft* were originally assembled in a series of twenty-one albumen prints in a uniquely conceived album entitled “Across the Sierras in Winter.” It was dedicated to the western passenger agent of the New York central railway, and is held at the California Historical Society today. In a leaflet brochure in the shape of a “holiday keepsake edition of California History” by the California Historical Society in December 2001, the author reproduced the album sequence and reiterated Tibbitts’s position as a “little studied” photographer.¹⁶⁵ The original album included the images appearing *Camera Craft* and others, many of which were assigned a title and a Southern Pacific Company item number. Showcasing shoveling workers, plows, and vast stretches of land, the album narrated the construction process. Its balanced focus on manual labor, machine power, and scenery provided the passenger agents with ample material to illustrate popular publications, to fabricate tales of achievement, and to imagine explorative futures (**fig. 5.26**, **fig. 5.27**). The peaceful scenery of valleys and snowy hillsides, dotted by fir trees, provided ample room for traveler imagination when described in *Camera Craft* accounts. Even in the early twenty-first century, apparently, this imagery lent itself perfectly to a historically inspired Californian Christmas greeting. If the man-made dimension of the project seemed audacious, or perhaps to some exploitive, it was remedied in images such as **fig. 5.28**, taken from atop the snowed-in hillside. Without a glimpse of the tracks, when seen from a slightly elevated perpendicular angle, the train seemed to float smoothly into the landscape. Its stack merged with the dark trees in the background while only the contours of its smoke emissions suggested movement.

Given the appeal of evocative visual subject matter to boosters and tourists alike, Tibbitts’s photographs were regularly reproduced and credited in *Sunset*. Yet, the albums he assembled and presented to company officials constitute rarer objects and are found today in both historical institutions and private collections. These uniquely conceived leather-bound works, entitled for example “California: The Picture Land on Line Southern Pacific Company,” include some 100 bromide prints covering landscapes, agriculture, farming products, and the Yosemite.¹⁶⁶ In the collector’s context, the album is appreciated as an aesthetic object which points to the excellency of the professional photographer. As fine art object, the album combined historicity and artistry, and has

¹⁶⁴ See directory of photographers in bibliography for a substantial list of Tibbitts’s works in collecting institutions. Recently, his 1899 photograph of troops in the Mariposa grove appeared in the exhibition “Wild West: Plains to the Pacific” at the Legion of Honor Museum, San Francisco, see Anisha Gupta, “Preserving a Giant: Treatment of a 19th-Century Photograph,” Blog of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, accessed November 20, 2017, <https://www.famsf.org/blog/preserving-giant-treatment-19th-century-photograph>.

¹⁶⁵ Janet R. Fireman, *Across the Sierras in Winter. Photographs by Howard Clinton Tibbitts* (San Francisco: California Historical Society, 2001), n.p.

¹⁶⁶ The album, dated around 1910, is in the collection of Stephen White, Los Angeles. I wish to thank Stephen White for generously sharing with me the riches of his photograph collection.

gained in value over time through the earlier mentioned narrative changes in the history of photography. As with Fardon's *San Francisco Album* (a copy of which is owned by Fraenkel, a fine art photography gallery strong in "early masters"), the images are appreciated from an aesthetic point of view for their "subtlety and sophistication."¹⁶⁷ In comparison to their halftone reproductions, the Tibbitts fine-art albums come to embody different histories and object narratives. As carefully compiled, captioned sequences, they narrate a story of the territory from which company officials chose specific images for wider circulation. While the visual content of these productions has made its way into popular Californian culture through massive distribution, it is important to shed new light on its makers and the itineraries of their productions.

Since Club members' works oscillated smoothly between commercial appeal and aesthetic ambition, Tibbitts also counted among the list of contributors to the first San Francisco salon. His single contribution "Mariposa Big Tree Grove" was neither reproduced in the catalog nor discussed in magazines, and is therefore practically impossible to identify among his vast corpus of Mariposa images. The following discussion therefore traces Tibbitts's emplacement of photographs from the Mariposa Grove in various Club and booster publications, in order to exemplify how a salon contribution could become an overarching representation of Californian photographic practice. Described in *Camera Craft* as "photographer of world-wide reputation, a man who has made thousands of big-tree pictures," the appeal of Tibbitts's work was widely acknowledged by state boosters, local professionals, and Club colleagues. A century before the California Historical Society Christmas greetings were decorated with his High Sierra imagery, Tibbitts's photographs of the Wawona Tree had already decorated a *Camera Craft* Christmas supplement on "art paper" with "natural coloring."¹⁶⁸ At the national convention of professionals, the Photographers' Association of America in 1901, Tibbitts represented *Camera Craft* in an exhibition of big tree pictures which "was surrounded by throngs whose desire to see the living trees was fully as strong as their admiration of the pictures."¹⁶⁹ While these exhibition pictures enticed visitors to travel the state, they could just as easily be connected to the Club's outing agenda and its ambition to promote California. As the San Francisco salon of 1901 had intended to showcase the work of Club members as "material evidence" of their "doing justice" to the local landscape, Tibbitts's promotion of this particular motif served as an extension of the Club's discourse.

As demonstrated by various historians, the big trees of the Mariposa Grove – the giant sequoia – located in the Yosemite National Park, had been subject to visual depiction from early on. While circulating stereographs of the 1860s served to heighten the visual experience of Californian nature,

¹⁶⁷ Jeffrey Fraenkel and Hans P. Krauss, Jr., introduction to *San Francisco Album: Photographs, 1854-1856*, 9.

¹⁶⁸ "Wawona: The Christmas Supplement," *Camera Craft* 2, no. 3 (1901): 235.

¹⁶⁹ "The Educational Convention and Its Work," *Camera Craft* 3, no. 5 (1901): 187.

paintings by Bierstadt shown at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876 demarcated the trees “as emblems of the nation.” Over time, the trees were bent to several needs, which fluctuated between an embodiment of the state’s ancientness and “robustness” on the one hand, and a signifier of a prosperous future for the nation on the other. Since they were said to have existed for thousands of years, the trees were expected to “[presage] the next long-lived empire,” literally rooted in the American West. This natural extension of the Western myth, materialized in the giant sequoia, thus constituted a central theme in Californian photography. Efficiently exploited in their entire artistic potential, the trees’ monumentality oftentimes was depicted in a comparative dimension to human activity.¹⁷⁰ One of Tibbitts’s first commissioned albums for the Southern Pacific, conceived in 1894, includes a double-spread of a group of big trees combined with the famous Wawona Tree (**fig. 5.29**). Neither of the two photographs reveals the height of the trees in their entirety, yet the inclusion of human figures – in the form of a horse-drawn carriage or a lone figure posing in the Wawona’s tunnel – invites spectators to imagine the imposing vista. It is exactly this depiction of human access to and awe-inspiring experience of the Mariposa Grove which turned the big trees into an ideal motif for Club photographers. Through this “double action of the imagination [...], the landscape was appropriated as a natural symbol of the nation while, at the same time, it was being transformed into a man-made landscape.” The photographic depiction of the sequoia thus “conflated the preservation and the transformation of the natural world.”¹⁷¹

While promotional sequoia imagery had shifted by the 1900s from majestic to more welcoming and even playful representations, thus ensuring a constant influx of tourists,¹⁷² works by Club members still alluded to the big trees’ emblematic appeal so as to solidify their artistic ambition. Tibbitts actively sustained this preference for a territorial practice, which would become more accessible thanks to inclusive organizations like the California Camera Club. As a case in point, his photograph of a sequoia was used for a Kodak ad in the first issue of the magazine *Country Life in America*. It compared the majesty and power of the tree to the capacity of the new photographic apparatus, claiming that “[t]he Kodak is to other cameras as the Redwoods of California are to ordinary trees” (**fig. 5.30**). In this combination of a native Californian tree as national monument and a Kodak camera as unequaled photographic device, the agenda and rhetoric of the California Camera Club are perfectly represented. On the one hand, the monumentality of the sequoia and its artistic potential were upheld by depicting the tree in a lone setting devoid of human activity, thus a perfect location to expand the practice in allegedly unexplored territories. On the other hand, the accessibility to this photographic motif was communicated through the Kodak’s affordability and the apparition

¹⁷⁰ Vermaas, *Sequoia: The Heralded Tree in American Art and Culture*, 6-11, 29-38, 85; Figueiredo Couto, “Du Monumentalisme à l’Écologie,” 242-246, 346-350.

¹⁷¹ Nye, *The American Technological Sublime*, 37.

¹⁷² Vermaas, *Sequoia: The Heralded Tree in American Art and Culture*, 152-162.

of the ad in a magazine encouraging outdoor recreational activities. In a period when the Eastman Kodak company massively bolstered its advertisement budget to an annual sum of \$750,000, ads for photographic equipment came to focus particularly on leisure activities out in nature. Pretending to target middle-class Americans, the products and activities which were advertised, however, could only be afforded by “those whose incomes registered far above that of the average middle-class American.”¹⁷³ In its comparison of monumental trees to the latest photographic technology, the advertisement created a desire for easy access to artistic possibility. In the case of the California Camera Club, this promoted vision of potential access to artistry reflected the organization’s inclusiveness and large-scale membership. It also mirrored the Club’s narrative of a territorial practice which becomes accessible and meaningful to larger circles of society.

Tibbitts further strengthened the meaning of this accessible Club practice by illustrating announcements for outings in *Camera Craft*. The Yosemite excursion planned for the summer of 1901, coming at a cost of \$55, invited members to participate in an event “which not only appeals to the artistic sense, but is as well an unsurpassed summer outing amid the finest mountains, with the best summer climate.” The alliance of tourist enjoyment, health benefits and photographic practice made the production of appealing photographs appear intriguingly facile. The Southern Pacific was explicitly mentioned as sponsor of the outing and offered a thinly veiled invitation to Club photographers to submit their works to the company. As it had increased its advertisement budget, the company engaged in a Yosemite promotion which was communicated “more thoroughly than ever before throughout the United States and in Europe.” Within this dissemination cycle, “[m]any of the club’s pictures have been used,” and thus could continue to be used beyond earlier set boundaries.¹⁷⁴ This promise of visibility of Californian imagery was certainly an appealing proposal to members. Furthermore, the identification of the Southern Pacific’s Sunset press as art publisher – sponsoring not only the first salon catalog but also magazine portfolios – appeared a valuable business partner. In this context, Tibbitts’s position as Club member, well-known professional photographer, and advertiser of the Kodak, turned the photographs of the *Camera Craft* ad into high-quality productions which yet could easily be emulated by any member able to afford the excursion.

While it is uncertain whether Tibbitts actually accompanied members to any of the excursions, the photographs used for the portfolio did not stem from a Club outing but from a commissioned album. A popular motif like El Capitan – with its steep façade providing the dramatic backdrop to a harmonious depiction of fir trees and a lake which mirrored the mountain’s imposing vista – had been photographed from the 1860s and became a motif popularly associated with Carleton Watkins (**fig.**

¹⁷³ Nancy Martha West, *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 2000), 25, 37-40.

¹⁷⁴ “The California Camera Club’s Outing to Yosemite,” *Camera Craft* 3, no. 2 (1901): 65.

5.31). Tibbitts's depiction of it, taken in the exact same spot yet with a less dramatic effect since "kissed by clouds," was thus poetically captioned and reproduced in *Camera Craft* where it was intended to lure local practitioners into the Valley (fig. 5.32). The photograph, which might have evoked the "pioneer days" of Californian photography to well-versed readers, similarly came to advertise a "picture possibility" within easy reach for new members or aspiring Kodakers. Since Club members considered themselves dignified successors of California's early photographers, they felt entitled to access the Yosemite – which was facilitated by the Southern Pacific. The company's strategic emplacement of images, reinforced through subject matter and agency here due to Tibbitts's Club affiliation, can be traced back to one of his first commissioned albums in which "El Capitan" prominently featured (fig. 5.33). The photograph's itinerary, from carefully assembled album to *Camera Craft* announcement, reveals again the diverse strategies of visibility which local photographers embraced.

The results of the annual Yosemite outings – as "material evidence" of the collective work – were displayed in both *Camera Craft* and *Sunset* and thereby spoke to both local photographers and potential tourists with Kodak at hand. In the photographers' journal, the convivial and the artistic part of the journey were underlined. A photograph of a fireside gathering with mandatory American flag-waving was displayed next to a photographer setting up his tripod at Glacier Point, 3,200 feet above the Valley (fig. 5.34). The "picture-spot" on the overhanging rock at Glacier Point – that had risen to fame through audacious renderings of photographer-explorers like William Henry Jackson – gained further popularity when depicted as a playful jaunt by George Fiske (fig. 5.35, fig. 5.36). By "mix[ing] a little mirth with the monumental," Fiske depicted the high-altitude venue as an accessible playground with stunning vistas to be taken home.¹⁷⁵ It can be argued that the repetition of such iconography, circulated in magazines or consumed in the shape of stereographic views, drew a large number of tourists to these spots. By producing their own record of the same location, tourists equipped with cameras would "re-mystify" the place and, by the same token, develop a ritual to "authentica[t]e" the place.¹⁷⁶

In the case of Fiske, as a photographer with a studio in the Yosemite since 1879, he contributed massively to this form of commercialization. His playful views inspired visitors equipped with cameras to map out their own place among the monumental scenery and create a "domesticated" version of the scene. The photographic object, taken at the exact "picture spot," then allowed to "individualize" the experience, despite the permanent presence of other visitors. Its keeping as a souvenir evoked a shared communal memory and an active participation in the cultivation of a

¹⁷⁵ Kurutz, "Yosemite on Glass," 81-84.

¹⁷⁶ See Jane Lovell and Chris J. Bull, *Authentic and Inauthentic Places in Tourism: From Heritage Sites to Theme Parks* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 140-141. The authors draw on Benjamin's *Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936) to make their point.

myth.¹⁷⁷ Much in the same way as the Santa Fe railroad would advertise the Grand Canyon, by commissioning photographers and creating identifiable picture-spots, an industry of desirable places and closely associated representations emerged in the Yosemite. To “[enjoy] authentic awe in comfort,” they would employ adventuresome imagery combined with reliable tourist information.¹⁷⁸ While it is not known whether members of the California Camera Club were in contact with Fiske or other well-known photographers of the Valley like Julius T. Boysen, they certainly cultivated a comparable conception of the practice. Most importantly to Club members, the excursions and the self-portrayal on the spot infused their photographic work with both an individual-adventuresome and a harmonious-communal character. The combination of campfire and climbing in vertiginous altitudes was hence appealing to promoters of *Sunset* and to the photographers who desired to insert their practice in a lineage of pioneers.

Another item on the excursion program, again realized through transportation on “[t]he smooth highway of the Southern Pacific,” implied a visit to Wawona. Here, the members “met a valued friend in Thomas Hill, the artist.”¹⁷⁹ The SFAA affiliate, who notably produced sequoia paintings on redwood panels, had a gallery in close proximity to the Wawona tourist resort built in 1879.¹⁸⁰ The encounter between the 35 trip participants and the accomplished Californian artist reinforced the stance adopted by the Club for the first salon. In their affiliation with local painters, who pursued the same Californian subject matter, they demonstrated sensitivity toward a regionally produced canon of art works. As a general feature of Yosemite excursions, members had met artists in residence at the Yosemite from the beginning of the trip schedule in 1900. At the time, a group consisting of O.V. Lange, Dietrich Wulzen, and others visited the studio of landscape painter Chris Jorgensen. Having studied under Virgil Williams at the SFAA, the Norwegian-American painter was receptive to exchanges with local photographer organizations. Most famous for scenes of the Valley and of the California missions, Jorgensen’s paintings and working manner embodied the approach similarly embraced by the Club.¹⁸¹

Contrasting Stieglitz’s practices of photographic autonomy for legitimization, the CCC membership deliberately embraced the tight-knit circle of local painters and photographers who had contributed to the dissemination of California’s “scenery.” The photographers envisioned their works as a continuity of the friendships between Yosemite’s early photographers and painters, as exemplified in Watkins’s travels with painters Virgil Williams and Thomas Hill. As a renowned

¹⁷⁷ Figueiredo Couto, “Du Monumentalisme à l’Écologie,” 442-449.

¹⁷⁸ David E. Nye, “Visualizing Eternity: Photographic Constructions of the Grand Canyon,” in *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination*, 84-85.

¹⁷⁹ Dr. G.G. Burnett, “Outing of the California Camera Club to the Yosemite,” *Camera Craft* 5, no. 3 (1902): 121-122.

¹⁸⁰ Vermaas, *Sequoia: The Heralded Tree in American Art and Culture*, 135-136.

¹⁸¹ A small collection of California Camera Club material at the Yosemite Museum includes 57 glass plate negatives by Dietrich H. Wulzen, taken in 1899 and 1901, some of which show the interior of Jorgensen’s studio. For further information on Jorgensen, see Scott, ed., *Yosemite: Art of an American Icon*, 201.

painter trained in Italy and short-term member of the PCAPA, Williams had been much appreciated among local photographers and provided them with the desired artistic connection they had long sought out. After Williams' death in 1886, artists closely related to the SFAA teacher – like Hill and Jorgensen – continued to cultivate this local connection by receiving Club photographers at their studios. The paintings produced by Hill and his peers, “classic images of western scenery in postcard-perfect views” as one historian put it, became inserted in the photographers' desire of nationwide circulation for the sake of cultural and historical legitimation.¹⁸² The artistic collaboration of painters and photographers was made explicitly clear in the article's call for preservation of Hill's works which “ought to be purchased as an entirety, placed in Golden Gate Park in a building especially erected for them, and posterity permitted to revel in and enjoy these splendid works of art.”¹⁸³

The photographers' alignment with painters discloses once again the overlap of artistic and promotional practices over a variety of media. As regular visitors to the Valley, benefiting from affordable railroad sponsorship, the vast majority of Californian painters, photographers, and literates became promoters of the state's scenery.¹⁸⁴ Their promotional endeavors cannot be divided from the desire to shape an idiosyncratic local canon which was to be preserved by cultural institutions. Through practice on site, with pen, brush or camera at hand, the exceptionalism of Californian art was to be demarcated. This practice implied a congenial dimension of exchange between contributors to the state promotion, through which a sense of communal belonging was strengthened. The choice of common subject matter then made the works nationally meaningful, that is, for instance, by integrating the sequoias as symbols of ancientness and prosperity. Depicted as “some of sort of living American monument, a botanical pantheon,” the Big Trees had become the territorial embodiment of the nation's grandeur during the 1860s, amid fierce national struggle, and thus nourished imaginative scenarios related to “the Promised West.”¹⁸⁵ Through allusions to such symbolism and the specific conditions of work on site, a patriotic *and* locally conscious rhetoric was developed. It became an essential aspect of the Club's activities – and found its strongest expression in the salon discourses.

Living up to Tibbitts's advertisement of Kodaking in the redwoods, the participants of the 1902 outing were particularly dedicated to a proper representation of this part of the Yosemite, as one participant described:

The Mariposa big trees claimed the attention of our party for an entire day, and the click of the shutter was constantly heard recording enduring evidence of the majesty of these noble giants of nature.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² Jones, “Landscape Painters of Northern California, 1870-1930,” 55-56.

¹⁸³ Burnett, “Outing of the California Camera Club to the Yosemite,” 122.

¹⁸⁴ Ogden, “Sublime Vistas and Scenic Backdrops,” 55-60.

¹⁸⁵ Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 187-201.

¹⁸⁶ Burnett, “Outing of the California Camera Club to the Yosemite,” 122.

As argued earlier, rather than depicting the accessibility of the Mariposa Grove through the staging of leisure activities, members preferred to insist on the trees' grandeur to endow their productions with artistic and national meaning. The portrayal of the members as active workers of the territory, dedicating an entire day to photographic coverage of the sequoias, would attest to the thriving production that CCC members sought to advertise. Perhaps, to some, it also offered an incentive to produce works which could be potentially interesting for the Southern Pacific as omnipresent sponsor of the trip. The congenial aspect of the excursion represented an appealing aspect to the railroad company as well, since it served as a harmonious staging of travel on their lines. By 1903, the members' campfire image appeared in *Sunset's* "With the Camera" section, announcing yet another summer outing of the Club to the Yosemite. Instead of focusing on the photographic activities, the announcement listed the ever-growing number of places participants would visit during their trip. As the "pilgrimage" was advertised as an event for local photographers to "pursue their vocation," the deep attachment to the territory was made unmistakably clear.¹⁸⁷

By reproducing the campfire gathering as proof of a convivial, patriotic activity, in which local practitioners explored the Western territories, *Sunset* tapped the importance of such depictions. In a period when stereoscopic views still widely circulated, the collectively generated sense of belonging to the Californian landscape could be easily displayed. Images of the CCC's 1902 outing thus made their way into the view collection of the American Stereoscopic Company, showcasing some twenty members – male and female in equal number – alongside five tripods, positioned in front of a giant sequoia (**fig. 5.37**).¹⁸⁸ As stereographic views "emphasized appreciation of the trees as objects of incredible height and heft,"¹⁸⁹ the group portrait of local photographers gained in momentum by lending the figures an aura of commitment and experience. At the same time, the representation of well-equipped male and female photographers in the form a stereoscopic view made the practice accessible. These territorial practices gained in patriotic meaning when President Theodore Roosevelt visited the redwood forests in 1903. His portrait in front of a sequoia, *The Nation's Chief Before the Forest King*, circulated as a stereographic view by Underwood & Underwood and came to embody the desired national representation of patriotism and virility in a commanding landscape (**fig. 5.38**). Here, the political figure of commander-in-chief of a constantly expanding nation joined his "natural" counterpart, "the forest king," who represented a more ancient lineage of grandeur. They were united by the signpost "giant," attached to the tree just above Roosevelt's hat, thereby granting the two a form of superhuman strength which the three-dimensional quality of the stereograph helped reinforce. In his address to Californians at the Big Tree Grove in

¹⁸⁷ "With the Camera," *Sunset* 11 (1903): 200.

¹⁸⁸ This image (reproduced in Palmquist's essay "100 Years in California Photography," 210) is the only example of a stereographic depiction of the Club that could be located.

¹⁸⁹ Vermaas, *Sequoia: The Heralded Tree in American Art and Culture*, 38.

May 1903, Roosevelt praised the preservation of “the wonderful scenery of this wonderful State unmarred by the vandalism or the folly of man” which should be kept “as a precious heritage to your children and your children’s children.”¹⁹⁰ Through the emphasis on preservation for future generations, the symbolic value of Roosevelt’s portrait as leader of the nation “at home in the western wilderness” was enriched. As his preferred self-representation was the rugged frontier individualist, his photographic representation among the sequoias fed this personal myth and thereby extended the narrative formulated for the Californian landscape as part of the nation. However, the celebration of the sequoia’s preservation in this framework also showed their ascent as “a place of recreation,” if not “the landscape of choice for elite tourists.”¹⁹¹ Here, both the President’s and the Club members’ portraits were infused with national meaning by embodying the ancestry of pioneer explorers and displaying historical awareness. While the President sought to inscribe his administration into a more ancient, “majestic” history of the continent, the Club members could showcase a congenial, accessible practice apt to appreciate these imposing surroundings.

Given this framework of leisure promotion overlapping with claims for legitimacy, the activities Club members engaged in during the years of the San Francisco salons become more complex. Far from the exclusive desire to elevate photography to the fine arts, the agenda and publications discussed here reflect a broad range of promotional, historical, and artistic desires developing in tandem. The salon concept of photography as an institutionalized art form could then draw on these different practices and discourses to cover its exhibition walls and to articulate a collective statement. In this context, the local landscape and its varying representational features revealed their full “ideological mobility,” in the words of Lawrence Buell. That is to say, the territory helped to construe a narrative template which promoters, artists, and tourists would share. The representation of places like the Mariposa Grove were employed “in the service of cultural self-definition,” in this case seeking to validate an historical role, promote access, and underline artistic worth.¹⁹² In this period, the two-fold depiction of the Yosemite as “simultaneously wild and pastoral” therefore assisted both photographers and promoters.¹⁹³ For Club members, the imagined wilderness of the Valley fed their self-representation as successors to pioneer landscape photographers. At the same time, its idyllic aspect allowed to imagine a congenial, physically beneficial journey of which photography was but one part. A comparable narrative scheme ensued for promoters, including conservationists, who preserved the “wild” scenery whilst making it accessible to health seekers.

¹⁹⁰ “Remarks of President Roosevelt at the Big Tree Grove, Santa Cruz, California, May 11, 1903,” Theodore Roosevelt Center at Dickinson State University, accessed November 30, 2017, <http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o289817>. For further information on Roosevelt and preservation, see Figueiredo Couto, “Du Monumentalisme à l’Écologie,” 558-560.

¹⁹¹ Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness,” 77-78.

¹⁹² Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*, 53-54.

¹⁹³ Ogden, “California as Kingdom Come,” 24.

In all of these efforts, the railroad remained a key alliance which added money, means, and efficiency to the result. Here, the concept of “narrativity” proved most fruitful, as it integrated both a process of articulation and reception.¹⁹⁴ As an example, the articles and ads in *Camera Craft* and *Sunset* advanced a particular plot which anticipated an enthusiastic audience reception. They combined past and future scenarios, like the construction of the snow sheds, in which both the achievements of the past were appreciated and future explorations imagined. The accompanying images added to this process as they represented blueprints for other scenarios. Since the articles endorsed photographic practice in these spaces, readers could come to imagine their own productions. Through the coalition of text and image, past and future, a new form of collective practice developed. This practice was informed by narrative forms of projection, which would inspire the Club’s program, for instance when organizing local salons. It was reflected in announcements which relied on the local public’s positive response to California’s visual vocabulary. The augmented promotional budget as well as the striving for cultural legitimacy then influenced Club activities around 1900, how they were envisioned, carried out, and later narrated.

This narrative grid is especially important when considering the different emplacements and subsequent framings of Club members’ works in scholarship. The productions did not remain within a closed system, but rather fluctuated between various spheres. Thus, their articulated content and subject matter also spread beyond photographic circles and played a part in the process of “promoting, normalizing, and effecting the nation’s territorial expansion.”¹⁹⁵ As has been shown in the discussion of the first San Francisco and Los Angeles salons, the internalization of this vocabulary proved essential to promoting the event on a local level and identifying it as a culturally and historically meaningful moment. The grand announcement responded to the local need for a relevant self-definition detached from the reputation as cultural backwater. It has also been demonstrated how the various discursive developments in the history of photography, and especially in the period identified as Pictorialism, have sustained forms of approval or neglect.

With regard to the photographic salon as a formal ceremony performed to elevate the medium, a verbal strategy of division between artist and professional was initiated in order to veil the profit-making aspect of photography. In its conscious embrace of commercialization for the sake of Californian promotion, the Club did not mirror this separation and therefore did not match the raised bar of the New York circle of photographers. And yet, in the third and last San Francisco salon in the period denominated as Pictorialism, the Club could set up a Photo-Secessionist display which was shown, accordingly, in a separate section. The last section of this chapter therefore examines how the third salon of October 1903 was conceived, which communications took place between San Francisco

¹⁹⁴ Johnston, *Narrating the Landscape*, 9.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

and New York, and how questions of discursive framing and social organization have informed the legacy of the participating photographers. An attempt will be made to connect strategies of emplacement, structures of membership, and institutional framings of corpora in order to understand how the process of oblivion of Californian material has come about.

5.4 *The Third San Francisco Salon, a Photo-Secession loan exhibition, and a persisting division*

As one of the few Californian photographers of the turn of the century to be mentioned in the history of photography, Oscar Maurer's legacy is inextricably related to Alfred Stieglitz. The retrospective framing of his short memoir "As I Remember" has shown how Club affiliation was neglected at the expense of an individual artist biography, endorsed by historians of the medium and curators from the second half of the twentieth century for the sake of institutional legitimation. Yet, given the diverse platforms of engagement of Californian photographers illuminated in the previous sections, Maurer's life work cannot be reduced to these binary categories. Despite his commissions as *Sunset* contributor and participant in convivial campfires, Maurer was strongly attracted to the artistic exploration of the medium, for which he considered Stieglitz an excellent discussion partner and advisor. Writing to New York from camp Yosemite in June 1902 – the very place and time of the CCC campfire – Maurer reported:

I am here with a number of camera club members and the click of the shutter is heard in all parts of the valley at all times of the day. Photography is too inadequate to do justice to such grandeur and personally, I hardly hope for serious results.¹⁹⁶

Given this correspondence, it is easy to imagine Maurer as a lone artist surrounded by snapshooters seeking to achieve pleasing results. While members like Dr. G.G. Burnett enthusiastically reported in *Camera Craft* on exactly this omnipresent "click of the shutter" as a sign of frenetic artistic activity, Maurer described it a spectacle of frantic aspirations which he mutely denounced. Taking Stieglitz as his confidante, he sought to align with the New Yorker agenda by tacitly despising the practices of his own organization. On the occasion of the second San Francisco salon in which several members of the New York circle had displayed for the first time, Maurer already corresponded with Stieglitz: "Our socalled [sic] "salon" is in full blast and attracting much attention. The general effect of the exhibition is not so bad being considerably above last years [sic]."¹⁹⁷ What followed this general introduction was a criticism exclusively treating Eastern photographers, concluding "with the general remark that it is a very good photographic exhibition, and a very poor salon."¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Oscar Maurer to Alfred Stieglitz, June 19, 1902 (The Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O'Keeffe Archive (YCAL MSS 85), Box 35, folder 803; Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University).

¹⁹⁷ Oscar Maurer to Alfred Stieglitz, January 15, 1902 (The Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O'Keeffe Archive (YCAL MSS 85), Box 35, folder 803).

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

Maurer's conception of the San Francisco salon as an event which stands in clear qualitative opposition to the Eastern contributions reinforced the secessionist stance embraced by Stieglitz. It already envisioned the New York photographers' contributions as a separate exhibition which was irreconcilable with the rest of the show. Through this written alignment, Maurer's works and critical sensibilities would be brought in closer connection to the New York circle – of which he was an associate between 1903 and 1904 – and distanced him from the apparently less sophisticated California Camera Club productions. This trust in and allegiance to Stieglitz also became tangible in the Yosemite letter in which he granted Stieglitz full permission to reproduce *The Storm* – “as I can depend on your judgment.”¹⁹⁹ From Maurer's written communication, a general dissatisfaction with the activities and productions of the Club becomes palpable, which yet stands in contrast with both his contemporary professional engagements and his later autobiographical sketch. His partaking in Club outings, Southern Pacific commissions, and *Sunset* portfolios – which granted him ample possibilities for production, generous recompense, and visibility as salon photographer in Chicago – were dismissed in his correspondence. It is not clear to what extent Maurer was actually displeased with the Club at the time and to which degree, in turn, he attempted to please Stieglitz's fine-art agenda. Even though his later memoir sheds a comparatively positive light on the Club and provides balanced information concerning both commissioned works and membership, the desire to align with the notorious New York circle was relatively strong, especially by claiming the reproduction of *The Storm* in *Camera Work*.

As already elaborated upon earlier, the aspired designation of ‘photographer-artist’ was at odds with the actual practice these figures engaged in, which is why it is not surprising to find commercial works by Maurer, Stieglitz, and a majority of other Pictorialists. In the words of Ulrich Keller, “the elitists’ objective function was at variance with their subjective understanding of it,” that is, the activities of the theoretically ‘highest class’ of photographers did not correspond to their actual, at times trivial, commercial practices.²⁰⁰ Since affiliation and emplacement eventually proved essential to the shaping of an institutional legacy, the Photo-Secession put into place an organizational and a discursive framework which upheld their artistic reputation. This framework gained in efficiency through its strategic portrayal manifested not only in 291 Gallery or *Camera Work*, but also in its implications elsewhere, like the diverse relationships to Western photographers. In this supportive structure – what Roger Hull has labeled “the now-forgotten underpinnings, the regional and local sub-structure, of the Photo-Secession and its rivals” – select figures like Oscar Maurer or Anne Brigman came to embody the appeal of the New York circle and reinforced its exclusivist stance. As Hull emphasizes, “the vantage point of the local scene reveals the extensive anatomies of these bodies, the

¹⁹⁹ Oscar Maurer to Alfred Stieglitz, June 19, 1902.

²⁰⁰ Keller, “The Myth of Art Photography: A Sociological Analysis,” 269.

breadth of the discourse that sustained them, and the essential, if marginal, nature of their regional and local memberships.” In short, the cultivated ties to Western photographers, the contributions to their salons, and the inclusion of distant figures in the New York shows, would attest to the latitude of Secession affiliates who set themselves apart from other organizations. What was most important in the local context then, was “the nature of the prestige of being associated with national groups,” that is, the acknowledgment and appreciation of local productions by a nationally reputed organization.²⁰¹ This desire for national esteem and recognition is perfectly exemplified in the correspondence between San Francisco and New York in the wake of the third San Francisco photographic salon. It shows how – next to the grassroots support from local publics and the shared vocabulary of the community – a contribution from New York was considered an essential input to the progress and standing of a local club.

By the time of Maurer’s correspondence with Stieglitz concerning the second San Francisco salon, in January 1902, A.L. Coombs, in his function as chairman of the Club’s print committee, requested material for an exhibition by the Camera Club of New York in the San Franciscan CCC headquarters. “Encouraged” by Maurer and Dassonville, Coombs felt “emboldened to make this request,” which was justified as follows:

We are so far removed from the photographic centers that we have no opportunity to study the work of the best photographers, except through reproductions in the magazines, and a few of the better class of workers who have exhibited in the San Francisco Salon. Through these mediums we have not had the opportunity of seeing the best work of you, Mr. Keiley, Mrs. Kasebier [sic], Clarence White, Rudolph Eickemeyer, Miss Ben Yusef [sic], [...] and others whose names do not occur to me at this moment.²⁰²

Without veiling their inferior position due to geographic distance and thus lack of dialogue, the Club officials acknowledged the superiority and desirability of the Stieglitz circle’s productions. By 1902, when the Photo-Secession had formed, the list of names mentioned by Coombs came to embody this select circle whose work had to be displayed as a distinct entity not be judged by any kind of jury nor prize system. Stieglitz’s active canon-shaping through privileged exposition standards and selective display reinforced the group’s notoriety, as becomes tangible in Coombs’s request. The idea of seceding from the mainstream by pursuing “a different but parallel course,” and in this “conscious of being, and remaining, different,” constituted its prominent character. By being “defiant and critical, but at least in part resigned to its own marginality, with some degree of pride,” the Secession came to develop an “intrinsically photographic aesthetic” which sought to set itself apart from the Victorian-inspired mainstream that also cooperated with painters.²⁰³ Its insistence on a unique material culture

²⁰¹ Hull, “Myra Wiggins and Helen Gatch: Conflicts in American Pictorialism,” 167.

²⁰² A.L. Coombs to Alfred Stieglitz, January 15, 1902 The Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O’Keeffe Archive (YCAL MSS 85), Box 9, folder 201).

²⁰³ Bochner, *An American Lens*, 86-87.

of photography in the shape of group exhibitions or magazine portfolios created a new dimension of photographic corpus-shaping to which Californian practitioners were attracted. Physically engaging with works produced in the East Coast cities had been a longstanding desire of the Californian cultural scene which was acutely aware of its remoteness. Therefore, the sophistication of Eastern artists was voluntarily admitted and, when displayed in the West, provided an inspiration to local work. This acknowledgment of superiority and the ensuing motivation to improve can be dated back to Albert Bierstadt's first visit to California in 1864. As an artist trained in Europe and represented by Eastern American institutions, his Yosemite paintings displayed in San Francisco "stimulated resident artists, professional and amateur."²⁰⁴ The recognition of superiority of Eastern schools, be they painters or photographers, thus had been integrated in the Californian artistic scene for several decades before the emergence of the Photo-Secession. The subsequent outreach to the New York circle as an impetus to local photography can be seen as an extension of this recognition of excellence.

Stieglitz's "manufacture of [the Photo-Secession's] fame" worked through the select criteria for display as well as through a high-quality material culture which was reinforced by laudatory announcements.²⁰⁵ The discourse of self-promotion, also embraced by Californian photographers, was a tool Stieglitz employed especially in the early period of the Photo-Secession. Although New York-based activities only rarely found their way into the pages of *Camera Craft*, the announcement of his new magazine was applauded by West Coast editors. The coverage of *Camera Work*'s first publication, and the general discussion on photographic literature in the early twentieth century, reveals, however, two profoundly different conceptions of what journals were supposed to include. By the time Stieglitz had withdrawn from *Camera Notes* in early 1902, Californians "openly lament[ed]" the disbanding of the editors, yet at the same time did not hesitate to state that "*Camera Craft* has never been in thorough accord with the policy of *Camera Notes*."²⁰⁶ This disagreement manifested itself in a critical survey of photographic magazines published by the New York journal in 1902. Even though California was seen as "well represented by *Camera Craft*," the editors found the magazine "a little bit showy." Criticizing Eastern magazines like *Photo-Beacon* and *Photo-Era* for both content and lay-out, they insisted on the importance of simple covers with "an air of luxury and grace" instead of seeking to "dazzle the beholder into a momentary liking for the effect." An awareness of "good type, good paper, good presswork and a decent cover," unspoiled by advertisement, would then turn an ideal photographic magazine into an all-encompassing aesthetic experience. The insistence on formal qualities turned content and advice into lesser priorities, since the editors did not believe in the educational value of journals: "at its best," a journal could become

²⁰⁴ Avery, "Art Beginnings on the Pacific II.," 114.

²⁰⁵ Keller, "The Myth of Art Photography: A Sociological Analysis," 273.

²⁰⁶ Editorial, *Camera Craft* 5, no. 2 (1902): 83.

“a poor substitute for apprenticeship and professional preparation.”²⁰⁷ It is exactly this formalist, non-educative, non-advertising conception of photographic literature which was at odds with Californian editors. As opposed to this model, the breadth of *Camera Craft* relied on the knowledge of professionals, the advice of amateurs, the advertisement of local manufacture, and most importantly, the support of local enterprise. Through the combination of these different sections, an attempt was made to overcome the distance to other circles, which constitutes the main reason why the promotional potential of *Camera Craft* was tapped to the fullest.

Despite these editorial disaccords, the desire for recognition in the more artistically oriented magazines of the East was particularly strong among Californian photographers. Before the apparition of Stieglitz’s own magazine, *Camera Notes* had already set a widely acknowledged standard. In a no less “showy” manner, its editors asserted the magazine’s “unique position in photographic literature,” since “it [was] not easy to exaggerate its influence in the development of artistic photography.”²⁰⁸ Due to its independence from advertisement, the magazine itself and its discursive stance can be seen as a precursor of the Secession. Striving for inclusion in Eastern platforms in the run-up to the first salon, San Franciscans insisted on Maurer’s success at Chicago by singling out a micro-moment of visibility as proof of excellency for the entire organization. As the editors wrote, “*Camera Notes* has published only one picture of the Chicago Salon which was by a member of the California Camera Club.”²⁰⁹ Unsurprisingly then, the publication of *Camera Work* as main organ of the Photo-Secession by 1903 received wide, yet not unanimous, praise. Specifying its exclusive dedication to “the camera as an instrument of *creative art*,” editor and Club member Ackerman saw in *Camera Work* “the new ideal” which proved that “the battle of the Pictorialists is won.” In a patriotic conclusion, he then defined “*Camera Work* as a triumph of American art.”²¹⁰

The identification of Stieglitz’s publication as proof of photography’s ascent to the fine arts certainly spurred the desire of several Californian practitioners to become part of the circle or be reproduced in the pages, as claimed later by Maurer. Stieglitz’s announcement of the magazine in September 1902, is one of his few writings reproduced in *Camera Craft* and must be seen as main catalyst of the desire to be affiliated. In a secessionist vein, he claimed “allegiance only to the interests of Photography,” which would result in “the best and most sumptuous of photographic publications.”²¹¹ The acclaim Stieglitz had thus gained by 1903 was further reflected in the responses to *Camera Work* by the Californian photographers in direct contact with New York. Having received the first issue in January 1903, Maurer congratulated him on the publication and mentioned the

²⁰⁷ “Photographic Magazines,” *Camera Notes* 6 (1902): 191-193.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 193.

²⁰⁹ Editorial, *Camera Craft* 1, no. 4 (1900): 193.

²¹⁰ “Camera Work,” *Camera Craft* 6, no. 4 (1903): 167-168.

²¹¹ Alfred Stieglitz, “A New Journal,” *Camera Craft* 5, no. 5 (1902): 204.

reaction of friend and Club colleague Laura Adams Armer, who “went into ecstasies over it.”²¹²

The circle of Club members who would become most attracted to and involved with the Secession manifested itself in early 1901, when the CCC sent a “characteristic” print display to the New York Camera Club. This effort tied in with the gradual decrease of lantern slides in favor of a print exchange which could reveal the material quality of the photographs rather than their subject matter. Contributors to the CCC display at New York included, among others, Genthe, Maurer, Dassonville, Coombs, and Laura Adams Armer. While *Camera Craft* dedicated several pages to the “characteristic” Club contributions which “will undoubtedly attract attention,” *Camera Notes* merely listed the names of contributors to the Californian print display, making it more of a business report (**fig. 5.39, fig. 5.40**).²¹³ While the CCC’s self-glorification was far from being received in the same enthusiastic manner in the East, the Club maintained its rhetoric to ensure local support. The circulation of Californian works for artistic recognition in the East therefore was advertised on a much broader scale on San Franciscan shores than it would be received in New York. The major discrepancy between original conception and actual reception, announcement and report, which had started with the first San Francisco salon thus also manifested itself in other events. It confirmed, once more, the need for strong grassroots support of local photographers before circulating works to more distant destinations. In this context, the prestige of the New York Camera Club, and later the Photo-Secession, as well as their respective publications, raised the stakes and made the circulation and expected appreciation of local photographs all the more important. The promotional machine of the New York-based magazines and club thus struck a responsive chord with Californian photographers, and intensified the local search for recognition.

In the run-up to the third San Francisco salon of October in 1903 in which a loan exhibition from Stieglitz was separately displayed, several CCC members and *Camera Craft* editors sought to honor in the most visible way the principles of the Photo-Secession in an attempt to align with them, or at least, benefit from the laurels. By late summer, Ackerman requested Stieglitz to explain the aims of the Photo-Secession to Western readers. The three-page article – which was illustrated with a Yosemite photograph by Arnold Genthe, the Western contributor perhaps coming closest to Stieglitz in his “fame” – made the selectivity of the group unmistakably clear (**fig. 5.41**). For San Franciscans, this meant that the loan exhibition was to be shown as “a collection which would be accepted as a whole without submission to a jury,” its shipment being arranged for by the hosts. In order to overcome earlier “misunderstandings and misrepresentations” caused by the prize system, the Secession members sought to cultivate a photographic ideal within their own circle, without seeking

²¹² Oscar Maurer to Alfred Stieglitz, January 6, 1903 (The Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O’Keeffe Archive (YCAL MSS 85), Box 35, folder 803).

²¹³ “The Eastern Print Exhibit,” *Camera Craft* 2, no. 3 (1901): 231-233; “Exhibition of Prints by Members of the California Camera Club,” *Camera Notes* 4 (1901): 278.

to impose their standard on others. This detached stance, implying a selection process far more “severe” than any salon jury, then granted the participants “the right to follow their own light.”²¹⁴ While clearly, the possibility of admission to the circle appeared most obscure in this wording, it heightened the desirability of the pictures and spurred curiosity about the third salon. Readers were informed of the event’s particularities on the same page: in a strategic editorial move, Stieglitz’s article finished next to the announcement “Third Salon is Booming,” which emphasized the increasing international dimension of submissions received by the selection committee.²¹⁵

As secretary of the salon’s executive committee, Charles A. Love corresponded with Stieglitz on a potential loan exhibition from “the new movement,” and ensured the CCC’s acknowledgment of Secessionist exhibition standards. In order to make his stance clear, Love insisted:

Many members of the California Camera Club are working on the same lines as your society and we all appreciate the merit of the earnest work under your able management. We believe a collection of your pictures will command wide and favorable attention and at the same time form a most agreeable and attractive addition to our Salon.²¹⁶

While these standards were far from unanimously embraced among San Franciscan photographers, they were used as a shared conviction in order to ensure good proceedings and a proper appreciation of the loan exhibition. The New Yorker standards furthermore inspired the conceptualization of the salon catalog which was announced as “modeled somewhat after the style of *Camera Work*, Alfred Stieglitz’s sumptuous publication, but of course [...] not so elaborate.” Even though no permission was obtained to reproduce photographs of the loan exhibition, “an effort [was] made to carry out in tone and quality the beauty of the original print.”²¹⁷

At first glance, this adaptation of Photo-Secession ideals creates the impression that the salon’s sole value would be drawn from the notoriety of the Eastern contributions. Abandoning both the pioneer rhetoric and the insistence on “characteristic” Western pictures, it seems as though the event was considered a success merely because of its alignment with the country’s most acclaimed photographers. This hypothesis gains in significance when looking at the coverage of the event in *Camera Craft*. As chairman of the selection committee, Genthe observed a general improvement of submissions, resulting in 175 photographs chosen out of 900 submissions. His extensive criticism was mostly informed by the loan exhibition, which put the entire event into a more glamorous light:

²¹⁴ Alfred Stieglitz, “The Photo-Secession – Its Objects,” *Camera Craft* 7, no. 3 (1903): 81-82.

²¹⁵ “Third Salon is Booming,” *Camera Craft* 7, no. 3 (1903): 83.

²¹⁶ Charles A. Love to Alfred Stieglitz, May 19, 1903 (The Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O’Keeffe Archive (YCAL MSS 85), Box 9, folder 201).

²¹⁷ “The Salon Catalog,” *Camera Craft* 7, no. 5 (1903): 188; see also *Catalogue of the Third San Francisco Photographic Salon at the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art, October 8 to 24, 1903* (San Francisco: San Francisco Art Association and California Camera Club, 1903).

The chief significance of this year's Salon, however, does not lie in the high average of the pictures shown, but in the fact that for the first time we have here in San Francisco the opportunity of seeing the work of some of America's great photographers. [...] If our Salon had no other merit than to be a motive for the presence of these leaders, the time and efforts of the various committees would not have been spent in vain.²¹⁸

In both contemporary criticism and secondary literature, this most memorable component of the salon would be confirmed. The insistence on an adoption of Stieglitz's style and rigor, highlighted by Genthe in his appreciation of the catalog as "a typographical masterpiece," would then heighten the quality of Northern Californian photography as a whole and, according to Michael Wilson, make them "[rebel] against the uniform standards of industrially manufactured photographic materials."²¹⁹ From a historical as well as a historiographical perspective, the alignment with the Photo-Secession helped to 'elevate' San Franciscan photographers from their restricted local platforms to the national scene, and inscribed their works into the aesthetic agenda. The Photo-Secession's contribution to the third San Francisco salon became the touchstone by which its worth was measured and by which Californian affiliates gained both a place in the history of American Pictorialism and in museum collections. As explained earlier, the well-known Californian figures who aligned with Stieglitz were thus inscribed in the art history of the medium. With respect to Hull's notion of a "local sub-structure," the third San Francisco salon consolidated the national acclaim of the Secession. Furthermore, the locally felt "prestige" in affiliating with the group had repercussions not only on contemporary criticism but also on the history of the event, in which the emphasis on aesthetic esteem was sustained. The status of the Photo-Secession was thereby conferred on its local manifestation in San Francisco and, in turn, led to a historical appreciation of the third salon through an aesthetic prism.

Yet, despite its portrayal as a major aesthetic input bringing to the fore local photographer-artists, the reception of New York standards was not unanimously appreciated in California. Since the editors of *Camera Craft* could hardly identify with the editorial policies of *Camera Notes*, the idea of "unstinting [...] praise" on the part of Californian photographers does not hold.²²⁰ A closer look at coverage in *Camera Craft* confirms this criticism. The same issue that published Genthe's salon appreciation included an editorial note by an unknown author, denouncing the selection process which had narrowed the scope of the exhibition. The author evaluated the salon as "deficient in the number of prints exhibited, and in the presence of anything like a strong western representation." Given these less visible, yet strongly opposed voices, the importance of the salon as a San Franciscan event with distinct local representation gains new urgency. The statement lamented the lesser extent of "publicity" granted to the third salon, which could have ensured a broader local appreciation. The

²¹⁸ Arnold Genthe, "The Third San Francisco Salon," *Camera Craft* 7, no. 6 (1903): 207.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 208; Wilson, "Northern California: The Heart of the Storm," 10.

²²⁰ Wilson, "Northern California: The Heart of the Storm," 9.

suggestion was therefore made for future exhibitions that “[t]he photographic press should be bombarded with literature and pictures.”²²¹ What is at stake here is thus a different, profoundly local endorsement of the salon as a display targeting Californian recognition rather than serving as a vitrine for nationally prominent groups. Again, in this context, historians of photography have not granted much space to these “divergent strains” of Pictorialism. Since it cannot be described as “a unified movement” nor as a linear move toward artistry, the critical voices of the salons require a more in-depth examination. These local conceptions, detached from or at least resistant to the Photo-Secessionist model, have been largely overlooked. They can be located on what Davis termed “the ‘wrong’ side” of photography’s history, that is, the portion of practitioners who were not concerned with exclusivist exhibition and organizational models, but opted for an inclusive, regionally representative approach to the practice²²² – as originally outlined by the California Camera Club.

An organization which embodied this largely neglected perception was the Salon Club of America which hosted nine exhibitions between 1904 and 1912. Founded by Metropolitan Camera Club president Curtis Bell, the New York-based organization sought to bring together and “encourage regional groups” for traveling exhibitions, the first of which would display 350 photographs out of 9,100 submissions.²²³ In its widespread, “democratic” approach, accepting a broad range of submissions, traveling several American cities over a period of seven months, aligning with art museums and painter juries, awarding prizes and allowing purchases, the Salon Club of America became “a parallel movement to that of the Photo-Secession” which consciously rejected the circumscribed lines of the latter. Stieglitz refused to participate in the events or comment on them in *Camera Work*, setting himself once again apart from these more popular events as he would do for the 1904 universal exposition at St. Louis – where the Salon Club accepted to show photographs in the Liberal Arts Building.²²⁴ Even though the first exhibition of the Salon Club in New York in 1904 attracted large audiences, it could not live up to the reception of the Photo-Secession displays which were described as “mysterious and emotional.”²²⁵

Interestingly, as Gillian Barrie Greenhill has demonstrated in her thesis on the Salon Club, it was exactly this fuzziness of vocabulary – the attempt “infuse their work with ‘higher meaning,’ without ever fully explaining what was meant by that” – which constitutes the overarching theme of

²²¹ Editorial, *Camera Craft* 7, no. 6 (1903): 255.

²²² Davis, *An American Century*, 68-69.

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ Hull, “Myra Wiggins and Helen Gatch: Conflicts in American Pictorialism,” 161; Peterson, “A History of Exhibitions of Photography in America, 1887-1917,” 102-104. As Peterson demonstrates, the photographic display at St. Louis once again was organized with major difficulties and late submissions, resulting in a show of sixty photographs. *Camera Craft* considered the exposition “a fiasco,” and it is not known whether the CCC showed in the Liberal Arts Building. Yet, the fair’s California Building included a “California Camera Club Room,” managed by James W. Erwin who would hang some one hundred San Francisco views and lecture regularly over several weeks, see “Club Notes,” *Camera Craft* 9, no. 3 (1904): 123. Details concerning the display, the lectures, or the fate of this material are unknown.

²²⁵ Peterson, “A History of Exhibitions of Photography in America, 1887-1917,” 82-90.

Pictorialist work in the period. Tying in with the earlier-made argument of discourse over actual production, Greenhill points out that it is this wording combined with Stieglitz's control of the publication and dissemination process which made him an inevitable point of reference. His "master[y] of the printed word, not stylistically, but as effective propaganda" created a dividing line in photographic appreciation.²²⁶ What accelerated this portrayal of a local avant-garde embodied by Stieglitz was his radical stance which earned him a place among the New York anarchists of the early 1900s. The "hatred of academic conservatism" as well as the disdain for "the exploitation of artists at the hands of a commercial gallery system" were elements that tied him to a tight-knit network of artists who would become involved in 291 Gallery and affiliated with what was at the time already labeled as the "Stieglitz cult." As an alternative space for photographers and artists, his gallery provided a refuge not only from tradition, but also from mass popularization and commercialism. As a foundational element of the history of photography in the institutional sense, these strategies of isolation proved crucial to canon-making.²²⁷ The rigorous exhibition policies and the embrace of a photographic aesthetic, as embodied in the pages of *Camera Work*, allowed Stieglitz to develop a form of autonomy for the medium. As Club members already experienced in the period, these radical standards diverged from their own practice. Accordingly, in the long run, the network of industrial support and competing collective organizations that concerned larger groups of society – and their desires attached to the photographic medium – have been obfuscated.

While the powerful organizational politics and the implementation of standards has shaped a prism through which a majority of photographic work of the period is still looked at and appreciated, it is important now contextualize the productions of the larger salon system so as to draw a more complex picture. The number of participants and attendants to the first Salon Club exhibition – ranging from over 9,000 submissions to some 100,000 visitors all over the country – shows the actual popularity of photographic practice and display. The "patriotic self-esteem" manifested by Curtis Bell implied a criticism of Stieglitz's "politics of ultra-exclusiveness" and sought to give photographers from all over the country the possibility to showcase and circulate their works.²²⁸ The participation of Californian photographers is a case in point. While Maurer is remembered for his Photo-Secession affiliation, which was effective only between 1903 and 1904, he was strongly involved in the Salon Club from its inception. Participating alongside Armer, Dassonville, Monteverde, and other regular CCC contributors in the first American Salon, he would sit on the national preliminary jury the

²²⁶ Greenhill, "The Outsiders: The Salon Club of America," 55, 98-99.

²²⁷ Allan Antliff, *Anarchist Modernism: Art, Politics and the First American Avant-garde* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 32-38. For further discussion of Stieglitz's relationship to radicalism, see Edward Abrahams, *The Lyrical Left: Randolph Bourne, Alfred Stieglitz and the Origins of Cultural Radicalism in America* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1986), 128-203.

²²⁸ Greenhill, "The Outsiders: The Salon Club of America," 25-29, 62, 99.

following year.²²⁹ When the itinerant show came to San Francisco in May 1905, *Camera Craft* extended a special thanks to Maurer for making the exhibition a popular success. What added to its popularity was the hosting location, the Palace Hotel, which was one of the most prestigious upper-class venues in the city and free of charge for viewing publics of the American Salon (**fig. 5.42**). The show was further supported through photographic firms of the city, including early Club member T.P. Andrews, who granted “unstinted financial support.”²³⁰ These organizational aspects, including free admission, the staging in a social entertainment location, as well as strong support by local manufacture, constitutes a more realistic representation of the extent of photographic practice and display at the time. It reveals the intersection of urban social enjoyment and professional sponsorship in the shape of a photographic exhibition in which careful attention was paid to a distinctive local representation.

Even though adherence to the Salon Club of America and the Photo-Secession was portrayed as mutually exclusive, it has been demonstrated by Greenhill that the Photo-Secession later “welcomed former ‘enemies’ into the fold” – a fact which “reinforces the argument that no basic differences in artistic philosophy, style, or approach separated the Secession from the Salon Club.”²³¹ Still, these patterns of affiliation were to have repercussions on a photographer’s legacy, as Roger Hull has shown in a case-study on two Oregon-based Pictorialist photographers, Myra Wiggins and Helen Gatch, the former of whom was associated with the Secession and the latter with the Salon Club. Both embraced the same subject matter of domestic genre scenes, and yet their works were exhibited and appreciated in different spheres. In their competing affiliations, they transferred the conflict of the national onto the local scene. Listed as an associate to the Stieglitz circle, Wiggins was too far removed from New York to reach larger audiences with her work, whereas Gatch gained “much more visible support” through the Salon Club and its itinerant shows. However, through the historical framing of Pictorialism in the form of the Secession and its affiliates, Wiggins was more consciously inscribed into the history through the “local sub-structure” she provided as Oregon photographer to the New York group. A comparable development of this fluctuation in membership and subsequent historical legacy can be observed for much-discussed Californian photographer Anne Brigman who, by 1908, had come to “replace” Wiggins in the Photo-Secession.²³² While her affiliation to the Photo-Secession was a source of local pride for California Camera Club members at the time and later constituted the main factor for her persistent visibility in photographic history and museum collections, it must be seen as a form of conscious emplacement in the canon. Like Maurer and numerous other photographers of the first decade of the twentieth century, she “came to realize

²²⁹ For a complete list of contributors to the nine American Salons, see *Ibid.*, 181-207.

²³⁰ Albert J. LeBreton, “The First American Photographic Salon,” *Camera Craft* 10, no. 5 (1905): 279-281.

²³¹ Greenhill, “The Outsiders: The Salon Club of America,” 94-95.

²³² Hull, “Myra Wiggins and Helen Gatch: Conflicts in American Pictorialism,” 152-153, 162, 166-167.

that the road to fame and recognition had to be travelled via Stieglitz and the Photo-Secession.”²³³

Brigman, who is most famous for her dramatically staged female nudes in Californian nature produced in the 1900s, exhibited in the first Los Angeles as well as the second and third San Francisco salons. Known for a long-time correspondence with Stieglitz from 1903 onward, the beginning of her career was however bolstered by the California Camera Club, which she apparently did not join as a member, and which yet provided a crucial framework of support. She was further involved in Berkeley’s intellectual circles of Charles Keeler and William Keith and exhibited her work at Paul Elder’s gallery in San Francisco – which also showed other CCC members like William E. Dassonville.²³⁴ Born in Hawai’i and coming to San Francisco as a teenager in the mid 1880s, she was portrayed as a “Bohemian free spirit.” This was underlined by her choice of liberated female subject matter with occasional references to Pagan mythology – a combination which was unconventional at the time and which reinforced her image as a lone, nonconformist practitioner. Her landscape mysticism came to be related to the American back-to-nature movement of the turn of the century, inspired by writers like Thoreau and Emerson, who celebrated a recovered spirituality in alliance with nature. Brigman’s origins and her home of choice emphasized this stance and lent further credence to her work, since “[n]o region in America, apart from perhaps Hawaii, was more romanticized and aligned with the out-of-doors than Brigman’s home state of California.” It is unclear to historians of photography how exactly she first made contact with Stieglitz, yet “in less than a year,” between 1903 and 1904, she had moved “from a West-Coast amateur to an East-Coast avant-garde photographer.”²³⁵

Given her focus on the “woman’s quest to free herself from the restrictions of her place in a social order predicated on assumptions about woman’s nature and about the body itself,” it has been argued that Brigman’s inclusion in the Photo-Secession was a strategic choice by Stieglitz in order to embrace a modern “feminine voice.” Gradually replacing Käsebier’s Victorian domesticity, Brigman’s “choreographed” bodies corresponded to a European Modernist aesthetic. Even though her work was not exclusively dedicated to female and landscape subject matter, Stieglitz capitalized on exactly these motifs so as to “[tailor] her image into a figure who was politically useful to him in the contested terrain of modernist Manhattan.”²³⁶ Brigman’s technical clumsiness – mentioned by

²³³ Greenhill, “The Outsiders: The Salon Club of America,” 94.

²³⁴ Palmquist, *Shadowcatchers*, 35-38; Susan Ehrens, *A Poetic Vision: The Photographs of Anne Brigman* (Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1995), 20-23.

²³⁵ Wilson, “Northern California: The Heart of the Storm,” 15-16; Leslie Kathleen Brown, “Staging the Mystical: The Photographs of Anne Brigman and the Mystical Philosophy of Edward Carpenter” (unpublished Master thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1998), 28-32, 56-59; for further analysis of the Brigman-Stieglitz relationship, see Judith Fryer Davidov, *Women’s Camera Work: Self/Body/Other in American Visual Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 315-324.

²³⁶ Kathleen A. Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice: O’Keeffe and the Women of the Stieglitz Circle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 63-64, 76-77.

curators describing her as a “terrible technician” who “carelessly retouched,”²³⁷ – was apparently not an obstacle, as the reproduction of her photogravures in Stieglitz’s magazine added a hitherto unseen outdoor mystique to the photographs commonly published in New York. In a vocabulary reminiscent of Californian boosterism, the introduction to her 1909 *Camera Work* portfolio insisted: “We might add that these negatives are not produced in a ‘studio fitted up with papier-maché trees and painted backgrounds,’ but have been taken in the open, in the heart of the wilds of California.”²³⁸ Photographs like *Soul of the Blasted Pine* (**fig. 5.43**) with an emotionally expressive female body set against a commanding landscape thus came to represent the core of the Californian Photo-Secessionist’s work.

Even though Stieglitz’s promise of “a solo exhibition at 291 [...] was continually delayed, never to materialize,” Brigman contributed to the magazine and group exhibitions, for example in Washington or Hamburg, between 1904 and 1913. Given her distance to the New York circle – which was remedied in 1910 with an eight-month stay – she trusted Stieglitz in matters of publication and display, much like her Californian peer Oscar Maurer had done earlier. In his managing function, Stieglitz could “[shape] her artistic identity” as a Californian photographer of female nudes.²³⁹ Through his later donations, Brigman’s contributions eventually made their way into the photographic collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art to which Stieglitz gave 419 prints from the Photo-Secession in 1933. Claiming that this collection had “performed the miracle” of the medium’s admission into fine arts collections, Stieglitz’s collaboration with the New York institution eventually came to form “the nucleus” of the Metropolitan’s photograph collection – and as such granted Brigman an eminent position in the art history of photography.²⁴⁰

Portrayed as “his adoring disciple and devoted friend,” Brigman very much consented to his New York management of her career and – like other Californian photographers – sought to align with his principles. In her well-known correspondence with Stieglitz, she detached herself from other Californian Pictorialists like Dassonville, whom she described as “a queer freaky chap” and Genthe who appeared “very Teutonic, and in with rich customers.”²⁴¹ Furthermore, when residing in New York in 1910, she came into bitter conflict over the reproduction of two of her photographs in the London *Amateur Photographer*, whose editor she accused of having “cribbed” from *Camera Work* – to her “disgust and [...] surprise.” Supported by Stieglitz, the correspondence later circulated among

²³⁷ Margery Mann, *Women of Photography: An Historical Survey* (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Art, 1975), n.p.

²³⁸ *Camera Work* 25, no. 1 (1909): n.p. (from Anne Brigman, artist file, Museum of Modern Art, New York).

²³⁹ Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice*, 76, 82-83, 104-105; C. Jane Gover, *The Positive Image: Women Photographers in Turn of the Century America* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 99-102.

²⁴⁰ Sarah Greenough, “Changing Visions: Photography and the Art Museum,” in *The Altering Eye: Photographs from the National Gallery of Art*, ed. Sarah Greenough (New York, London, Washington, D.C.: Thames & Hudson and the National Gallery of Art, 2015), 3.

²⁴¹ Brigman quoted in Gover, *The Positive Image*, 97-98. See also Anne Brigman to Alfred Stieglitz, February 1907 (The Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O’Keeffe Archive (YCAL MSS 85), Box 8, folder 169-173).

affiliates in a leaflet entitled *Photo-Secessionism and Its Opponents* which was conceived to reveal “the truth” about “the petty intrigue [...] in the photographic world.”²⁴² Brigman voluntarily embraced the strict policies endorsed by the Photo-Secession in order to become a fully acknowledged member, despite her geographic location. These hallmarks of prestige as the Secession’s “local sub-structure,” sought out by other Californian photographers before her, become tangible also in the historiographical framing of Brigman’s work.

The portrayal of binary oppositions in photography – of those who establish “the truth” and those who conduct dishonest business, that is to say, the Photo-Secession versus the rest – has shed a light on Brigman’s museal representation in California. Held in large parts by the Oakland Museum, Brigman’s corpus (including photographs with subject matter other than nudes) was displayed in an exhibition by Heyman entitled “Anne Brigman: Pictorial Photographer, Pagan, Member of the Photo-Secession” in 1974. Much like Genthe and Maurer at the same period, her qualities as individual Californian photographer with strong ties to the New York avant-garde were emphasized. Claiming that “she led the interest in the Bay Area” and her corpus “fills a gap in the understanding of what photography was about in the decade 1903-1913,” the curators took up the Photo-Secessionist labeling for a broader appreciation of Brigman’s artistic worth. Even though the Museum understood itself as “dedicated to the spirit and focus of regionalism in its best sense” – a mission underlined in the exhibition brochure – it applied the contemporary standards of aesthetic appreciation to its photographic corpus.²⁴³ Through this portrayal of Brigman as the Bay Area’s main representative of photography in the early twentieth century, the complex spectrum of photographic practice and reception in the region was denied.

From the numerous instances of discursive affiliation and corpus selection in the period around 1900 and over the 1960s and 1970s mentioned in the previous sections of this chapter, the impact and appeal of the Photo-Secession as an elitist art circle has become clear. It has led to the construction of a history of American Pictorialism in which the dissemination politics, rhetoric, and membership of the Photo-Secession have formed the main criteria of appreciation – as they formed the indispensable guiding principles for an institutional appreciation of the medium. Through these diverging affiliations, Californian photographers like Brigman, Genthe, or Maurer have gained visibility as unmated artist-photographers bringing exotic subject matter and geographic extent to the avant-garde. The analysis of the third San Francisco salon and the sporadic moments of correspondence between the West and the East have demonstrated the powerful reach of these elitist conceptions and their appeal to artists searching for recognition. In the Californian context, the

²⁴² Anne Brigman to F.J. Mortimer, March 18, 1910, in Alfred Stieglitz, *Photo-Secessionism and Its Opponents: Five Recent Letters*, Vol. 1 (New York: 1910), 14.

²⁴³ Therese Thau Heyman, “Anne Brigman: Pictorial Photographer, Pagan, Member of the Photo-Secession,” brochure of the exhibition at the Oakland Museum, September 17 to November 17, 1974.

affiliation with and reception of the New York circle was two-sided. On the one hand, it provided practitioners with hitherto unknown prestige since a nationally acclaimed group decided to partake in its local show. On the other hand, such a showcasing of status was considered by some a pretentious display of exclusivism which hardly corresponded to the local photographers' self-definition and came at the expense of their local representation.

Given these diverging conceptions – alongside the numerous other photographic ventures in which local members were involved at the time – two hypotheses can be confirmed. First, it has become evident that the period of Pictorialism implied a much broader range of discourses and convictions than commonly admitted under the banner of the Photo-Secession. These digressing ideas about photography were developed by a complex assemblage of practitioners who were concerned with much more than just photography as an art form – a development that tends to be obscured in American histories of the medium for this period.²⁴⁴ What follows from this embrace of different voices is the emergence of another strand of photographers, partly embodied by the Salon Club of America. Through this portrayal of elitism versus popularity – without major divergence in style – it can be asserted that Pictorialism as a movement was mainly concerned with “politics and organizational theory.” The question of “an open or a closed system” for the organization of clubs, salons, and eventually admission of the medium to the fine arts dominated the period.²⁴⁵ The parallels, conflicts, and desires for recognition involved in this process are mirrored in the different stances taken by members of the California Camera Club. Their subsequent shaping as artists or neglect as part of the mass among “popular photographers” attests to the persistence of this model.

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Within the framework of this contextualized analysis of photographic salons, their conception, staging, and reception, a history of visibility and omission has emerged. It is a history which rethinks the continuity of aesthetic readings of photographs in favor of a more culturally and historically conscious analysis. Instead of creating ruptures or dismissing the movement of Pictorialism altogether, the aim has been to shed new light on a period whose output is too narrowly defined in terms of photography as art. The idea has been to modify this restrictive outlook on fairly well-known photographers – thereby uncover forgotten parts of their practice – and at the same time allow for other figures to emerge. Striking a balance between what is considered “the valorized realm of the fine arts” and “the culture at large” – in the words of Sekula²⁴⁶ – a new understanding of the salon as an institutional and as a local-popular event has been at the heart of this chapter. The two-fold

²⁴⁴ Research in Europe has confirmed the complexities of Pictorialist practice from early on, see Poivert, “Le Pictorialisme en France, 1892-1914.”

²⁴⁵ Greenhill, “The Outsiders: The Salon Club of America,” 48, 55; Griffin, “Amateur Photography and Pictorial Aesthetics,” 164-167.

²⁴⁶ Sekula, “On the Invention of Photographic Meaning,” 37.

conception of the salon turns it into a particularly rich event to study since its complex visual and verbal output shed new light on photographic practices in the early twentieth century.

The Californian salons furnish an interesting analytical field for several reasons. Given the widespread absence of the events from secondary literature other than catalogs of Pictorialism framed along the lines of a Newhallian discourse, a range of hitherto overlooked sources has been considered to expand the common understanding of the event. By drawing a connection between the salon material and the Northern and Southern Californian camera clubs' agendas, other primary sources as well as secondary readings have surfaced. This material is first and foremost related to the social, cultural, and economic history of a region which would become a powerful booster for tourism and an ideological anchor for imperialist politics in the early twentieth century. The heightened focus on "the dense interweave" of these factors "in the production and reception of aesthetic artifacts" has complexified and enriched the idea of the photographic salon.²⁴⁷ In acknowledging that the salon productions do not stand by themselves, but are embedded in the Club agenda and mirror the local society's desires, the displayed objects gain new meaning. In turn, the sociopolitical and economic factors at play in the early twentieth century have exerted a tangible influence on the production of the salon objects, be they photographs, catalogs, or announcements. The salon material thus reflects the persistent connection between photography, society, and commerce. Accordingly, the search for recognition rooted in the salon's institutionalized form gained a new layer of meaning in the San Franciscan context, where claims for national recognition had been stipulated on numerous occasions. The photographers' insertion into a fabricated narrative of pioneer settlement, enterprise, and photographic exploration provided a fertile breeding ground on which salon productions could grow in significance.

The illustrative use of the salon works in promotional and historical publications – as indexical testimonies of truth to words – further attests to the photographers' embeddedness in the local context. The various dissemination channels of photographs as well as their overlapping discursive frameworks of boosterism demonstrate "the process by which images are absorbed into a society's everyday aesthetic as part of the construction of its visual world-view." It is the elaboration of "an aesthetics of place" which proved appealing to Club photographers in salons, marketing professionals, and booster historians.²⁴⁸ The spatial belonging triggered by these depictions lay first and foremost in the practice which created them. While the photographer's agency was key to the realization of the salon as an art event, his or her individuality was less specifically demanded in the general dissemination of illustrational material of Californian subject matter. However, both the photographer's individuality as well as his theme of choice eventually contributed to the Club

²⁴⁷ Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the Dock*, xxii.

²⁴⁸ Esau, *Images of the Pacific Rim*, 15.

members' main objective – the portrayal of California and its recognition as a culturally refined place. In this adopted strategy of “total emplacement,” the photographs of Club members “fus[ed] with the culture bank of American images” rather than being positioned in art collections.²⁴⁹ This “fusion” constitutes one of the reasons why the corpora of the numerous Club members who contributed to the salon and to promotional endeavors are more difficult to trace. Again, here, the different approaches to the photographic medium boil down to a history of binary oppositions in which “[t]he elegant *few* were opposed to the mechanized *many*,” implying “a strategy of avoidance and denial based on craft production.” This kind of production demanded an “ostentatious display” which disclosed the fruits of “hand labor” in an honorable light.²⁵⁰

Since this imposed opposition is at the heart of the canon for the period, it has necessarily eliminated a broad range of figures who did not fit the former categories. Through the organizational division, exemplified in the opposing views of the Photo-Secession and the Salon Club, the framing of the ensuing corpus according to the Newhallian model of photographic aestheticism has been facilitated. The rare moments of Californian affiliation with New York circle has further shaped a locally propped avant-garde narrative for New York – at the expense of a remarkable number of other figures. It has been reinforced by an oftentimes too narrow conception of photographic literature through which the extent of practice and uses of the medium have not gained sufficient examination. In order to provide new platforms and room for study for the overlooked side of the photographic corpus – which still resides in libraries and local archives – we need to depart from the analytical category of Pictorialism. The re-contextualization of the salon material marks a first step into this direction as it reveals the ideological underpinnings of an institutionalized cultural event in a remote urban center. It likewise mirrors the desires of Club members to be portrayed as a community of shared values, especially when experiencing isolation from the nation's cultural centers, as did practitioners in San Francisco and Los Angeles in the early 1900s. The cultivation of an exchange agenda, a common history, and a belief in the state's future through photographic practice and discourse-formation could “solidify these imaginings” and forge a community-image that had been elaborated from the 1850s onward. As a collective activity, photography implied all of these aspects and thereby contributed to the material and discursive consolidation of a Californian narrative.²⁵¹ Through this analysis of canon-shaping and emplacement, the pressing question of oblivion of diversified corpora, as the one of the California Camera Club, can be partly answered. The attempt has been to work against these processes of selection and neglect by adopting a broader outlook on the production – the same inclusive conception of photographic practice as the Club itself embraced.

²⁴⁹ Hull, “Emplacement, Displacement, and the Fate of Photographs,” 187.

²⁵⁰ Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” 58.

²⁵¹ See Edwards, afterword to *Photo-Archives and the Idea of Nation*, 322-326.

If then – beyond purely Pictorialist aesthetics – the Club’s practices and discourses served to articulate a pioneer history of the community in an appealing landscape, a closer look at the mobilization of subject matter and territory is required. Such an examination will attach yet another layer of meaning to what is commonly labeled as the period of Pictorialism, by seeking out hitherto rarely used categories of historical and sociocultural analysis. Expanding the framework of the salon to the practice, we need to understand how the narrative of the territory was collectively fabricated in the magazine and came to be used as the hallmark of a characteristic Californian practice. In order to do so, a shift from the discarded voices in Californian photography to the minorities of American history is necessary. This implies an analysis of the preferred themes and activities of local photographers, that is, outings to the historical sites of the state, including Native American settlements and San Francisco’s Chinatown. A fresh look at the photographic community in the Western state from this perspective will give insights into the material supports used for its popular narrative. It will allow us to understand how the territory became appropriated for artistic representation and how its history of ethnic diversity and conflict was smoothed out in favor of an attractive, nationally meaningful portrayal.

Chapter 6

Creating “representative Western pictures”: Spanish Missions, Native American settlements, and San Francisco’s Chinatown in the corpus of the California Camera Club

If the San Francisco salons and the photographic history elaborated in the pages of *Camera Craft* contributed to a demarcation of Californian photographers, the state’s geographical and societal features proved most significant in the creation of an idiosyncratic camera practice and output. Scenes that qualified as “Western” in the broadest imaginary terms contributed to this deliberate distinction from other photographic societies. Accordingly, the “representative collection of pictures that can be identified as Western” envisioned, yet not materialized, for the second salon was supposed to include “marines,” “bits of Californian scenery,” as well as “Indian and Chinese pictures.”¹ Since the cultural, historical, and economic importance of Yosemite and sequoia scenes have been amply discussed heretofore, we now need to turn to the photographic depiction of California’s minority groups and their delineated terrains in becoming part of the representative canon the CCC envisaged. It will be argued that the strategic portrayal of Native American life and history as well as the Chinese population of San Francisco served to strengthen and authenticate the discourses of regional distinctiveness on which Californian photographers built their practice. Furthermore, it is through a binary process of selective identification with and rejection – or “othering” – of these groups that the local canon sought to present itself as essentially American.

Just as professional photographers Houseworth or Taber before them, Club members were drawn to California’s native and immigrant populations as well as the American West’s ‘wild’ landscape features. Next to their marketing function, photographs with ‘exotic’ content came to carry sociocultural and historical meanings, especially when attached to the emerging national ideology. The photographic community sought out these themes to bolster “a strong sense of individualism” and make up for their being “novices in the arts.”² The aestheticization of both the territory and its inhabitants in order to depict “the distinctive life and culture of California” was also a common theme of painters who – succumbing to the booster environment – “sought out landscapes with a sense of nostalgia.”³ Parallel to the first Los Angeles salon, painters used the architectural, ornamental, and mythic elements of the Spanish missions to adorn artistic practice with deeper historical meaning. To nurture an appealing and nationally relevant history of the American West at large, various themes were mobilized, be they the ruin aesthetics of Spanish missions, the idyllic backdrop of Navajo settlements, or the unfamiliar rituals of Chinese inhabitants in the heart of downtown San Francisco.

¹ “The Second San Francisco Photographic Salon,” 89.

² Rosenblum, “California Pictorialism,” 64, 67.

³ Landauer, “Impressionism’s Indian Summer,” 36-40.

Since the portrayal of these sites and communities was a major feature of *Camera Craft*'s coverage in the early 1900s, the proximity and accessibility of these spaces was considered a major "advantage" to other photographic societies in the country.⁴

With an agenda oriented toward congenial, purposeful activity, the Club integrated social activities common for the period, that is, "[t]he cultivation of history, the rehabilitation of public leisure, and the promotion of tourism." Increasingly patriotic local histories, a rising interest in preservation, and a nostalgic longing for simpler forms of life all influenced these forms of tourism which – notably through their depictions of minorities – sustained a sense of "cultural ownership."⁵ More specifically, in the case of the CCC, these activities implied the articulation of a photographic narrative which reinforced visual possession by representing aesthetically pleasing and historically selective aspects of minorities. Nourished by a congenial photographic practice, outings became major events for the fabrication of such narratives and accordingly require closer examination. Instead of being trivial leisure or entertainment events, excursions integrated a "packaged" exploration of the landscape through photography and history. Their rallying features, that is, the crossing of railroad territory with Club banners on train cars and the writing of reports on fireside camps and photographic achievements, all played into the "normalization" of territorial appropriation.

As recently argued by Rachel Sailor, the photographic corpora residing in archives in the American West point to the widespread use of the medium for the "construction of community." By integrating "the cultural and geographic site-specific characteristics," the variety of photographic objects displays the ways in which community and self-identification were negotiated through the camera. In order to grasp the extent of material available, the categories of local and regional identity become useful tools that help us trace how photographs "functioned self-reflexively for the immediate public." Here, the collective practice on-site occupies an especially important place as it implied "claiming, constructing, reconstructing, and appropriating the landscape."⁶

The following chapter seeks to deal with these practices of dominant onlookers who fabricate, disseminate, and commodify localized narratives of the American West through photography. The analysis of the Club corpus will be separated in two parts – the first dealing with Native American culture, the second with the Chinese population of San Francisco. It is preceded by a brief overview of recent concepts developed in scholarship on photography with regard to the forging of national and local identities. These can be used as tools to approach the photographic objects and to understand their function within the community. As both topics, Native American and Chinese culture in California and the broader American West, have been amply discussed, the chapter will focus on the

⁴ Mann, *California Pictorialism*, 25.

⁵ Cocks, *Doing the Town*, 181-182.

⁶ Sailor, *Meaningful Places*, xix-xxvii.

place of the state's ethnic minorities exclusively through the lens of the Club and its regional agenda. Even though regular appeals to literature on the state's minorities and on the relationship between photography and race constitute an enrichment to this discussion, the emphasis will remain on practices pertaining exclusively to the sphere of camera clubs. If a new contribution to both the medium's and the state's history is to be made, it is essential to remain within the framework of Club practice and regional identity formation. This restrictive focus allows us to understand how oft-forgotten group activities have shaped a local iconography, popularized national discourses, and led to a broader internalization of "Westering." An examination of the photographers' role in these endeavors reattributes them an agency and seeks to unearth their imagery from what Hull labeled "the culture bank of American images."

6.1 Conceptual tools for approaching a "representative" corpus

If the practitioners' self-identification as Western photographers with a meaningful history was closely related to their preferred subject matter, we need to understand the processes which underlie the articulation of a distinctive Californian narrative of national importance. The formulation of such a history necessitates a closer look at the medium's "solidify[ing]" role and its commonly ascribed veracity around the turn of the century. As argued by Elizabeth Edwards, the overlap of "nationhood" as a mobilizing concept in the early twentieth century and photography as a shared practice does not seem a coincidence, since the two offered "consolidated narrative[s]," strengthened through their participatory dimension. The collectively nurtured belief in truthfulness of photographic depiction enabled practitioners to formulate a "strong history," bolstered by the medium's diverse material forms.⁷ The Californian practitioners, who had manifested the desire for writing a local history on several occasions around the turn of the century, pursued this ambition on various supports, be it in the magazines *Camera Craft* and *Sunset*, in newspapers, or in circulating lantern slide lectures. In this context, the written comment on photographic endeavors proved essential as it validated the images' authoritative claims. The disseminated discourses sought to communicate "stability and authenticity,"⁸ to turn the region into a permanent, legitimate fixture of national history. Both the historical and the aesthetic value of these depictions need to be connected to the striving for authenticity. When seeking to understand how and why specific motifs came to embody California, the double function of the photographs as historic evidence and artistic depictions needs to be considered. The two components of photography overlapped in the search for cultural legitimation and – when disseminated to larger audiences – have to be examined with regard to their ideological repercussions.

⁷ Edwards, afterword to *Photo Archives and the Idea of Nation*, 321-322.

⁸ *Ibid.*

As the region's reputation oscillated between cultural backwater and pioneer community, between a lack of history and a projection screen for the future, a closer look at the photographic depictions and the responses to these assumptions is required. Club members relied on common associations with the region and capitalized on them to forge a nationally relevant vision. In this, the alleged lack of history was rectified both by a turn to nature and an integration of the region's indigenous inhabitants. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the search for national identity was assisted by the camera and its material expressions, not only in the U.S., but also across and beyond the European continent. The ambition to record landscapes, people, customs, and traditions, and to translate the corpora into a coherent whole was especially tangible in the ethnically extremely diverse regions of Eastern Europe and Russia. Here, the compilation of photographs and their assemblage in albums or archives became valuable tools for self-identification and for the creation of a shared heritage.⁹ In the American context, the formulation of a victorious national history also worked through the visual cataloging of its minorities. Here, the attribution of ancientness to Native Americans, their recent conversion to Christianity by Franciscan missionaries, and the Spanish-Mexican period of California, were all mobilized for the narrative of empire-building in the West. At the same time, the ideological function of the region for an American future beyond the Pacific was illustrated through the Asian populations of San Francisco. The depiction of Chinatown lent a form of oriental exoticism to California's past and present, yet – as with Native Americans – without ever granting them agency in the construction of the state and its economy. The proximity to the Asian continent and the city's diverse demographics were positively depicted as a promise of future prosperity with an outlook beyond the Pacific. In order for these visions to become part of both popular culture and historical narration, the aesthetic appeal of both Native American and Chinese culture was sought out.

Through the aestheticized, "packaged" experience of minorities – in urban tourism in general and more particularly in photographic excursions – the landscape and its inhabitants were objectified. As suggested by W.J.T. Mitchell, they became "a marketable commodity to be [...] purchased, consumed, and even brought home in the form of souvenirs such as postcards and photo albums."¹⁰ In the case of the CCC, the materialization of this memory had further repercussions as it moved from the personal to the collective realm. It did not only concern individuals but came in touch with a group of practitioners with more broadly defined cultural goals. For the legitimation of the canon forged by the CCC as well as an acknowledgment of its regional importance, the landscape and its inhabitants

⁹ See Caraffa and Serena, introduction to *Photo Archives and the Idea of Nation*, 3-16, see also Ewa Manikowska, "Before the Museum: Photography and the Construction of the Canon of Polish Material Culture," in *Photo Archives and the Idea of Nation*, 77-94.

¹⁰ Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," 15.

therefore came to embody the “double role as commodity and potent cultural symbol.”¹¹ Through this commodification of minorities and the construction of a stable and attractive urban society, the potential conflicts of ethnicity were to be erased. Here, the demarcation of ethnic origins and cultural customs served a non-conflicting vision. In this harmonious marketing scheme, which had already been embraced on the occasion of the Chicago World’s Fair, “the appropriate ancestors” and their heroic qualities were defined, while minorities were portrayed as “picturesque peasants.” Instead of seeking new means of comprehending the diverse, at times challenging, ethnic make-up of the state’s society, minorities became part of an essentializing, Americanizing model.¹² This portrayal implied the demarcation of a specific past, “belonging to one, unique people” advancing linearly. By declaring the city a site where national histories were staged and celebrated,¹³ the cultural organizations based in San Francisco – like the CCC – need further scrutiny. Since the frontier thesis had been developed by Turner on the occasion of the Chicago Exposition, it became “a cultural artifact” whose potentialities were tested and invested by the “new tools of mass culture.” The circulation of stories, lectures, and images on the American West in the wake of the 1893 Exposition revealed what Ann Fabian has labeled “the fertile proliferation of popular Wests.” Inextricably related to both commercialization and the historical profession, the hence publicized conception of the West generated a large output of material whose ideological function requires close study.¹⁴

Since Western history had become a declared interest of Californian photographers, its alleged “emptiness” was reshaped as if it were awaiting guidance and input. As demonstrated earlier, the image of the pioneer as adventuresome practitioner and community-builder compensated the lack of history and worked in favor of a dominant history. The pioneer account not only “idealized” the history of early settlement in the region in relevant terms for Americans, but also drew on notions of truth and authenticity. In declaring themselves the first settlers of the region, the pioneers would become the “true” Californians and thus “the West’s founding generation.”¹⁵ This narrative of ‘firsts’ and of collectively elaborated ‘truths’ was, as we have seen, largely assisted by the camera and its story-telling capacities. Isaiah W. Taber’s Forty-niner albums and his meticulously recorded biographical accounts sought to establish such an authoritative vision which would be validated by its preservation in local collecting institutions. The desired historical authority, in Taber’s and in many other of such instances, implied a process of selection, exclusion and denial. As argued by Richard White, the fabrication of pioneer accounts was spurred by the absence of “personal roots” in the

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Cocks, *Doing the Town*, 174-176. See also Alan Trachtenberg, *Shades of Hiawatha: Staging Indians, Making Americans, 1880-1930* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004).

¹³ Cocks, *Doing the Town*, 176-179.

¹⁴ Ann Fabian, “History for the Masses: Commercializing the Western Past,” in *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America’s Western Past*, 224-227, 232-233.

¹⁵ Milner II., “The View from Wisdom: Four Layers of History and Regional Identity,” 213-215.

region and therefore required a deliberate demarcation of “peculiarities” which united the community in “a common past and a pattern of shared memory.”¹⁶ This “invention,” the historian acknowledges, was facilitated by the camera as it “impart[ed] an impression of verisimilitude.” The camera’s output then was a modern commercial object which carried a mythic, unifying function for its makers and buyers.¹⁷

When examining the authoritative historical claims made by photographers in lectures and magazines, we need to bear in mind the dynamics of a collectively articulated history. The contours of such an elusive kind of narration – whose results become visible on a variety of platforms outside of the academic realm – have been adumbrated by historian Michel Rolph-Trouillot. He insists on questions of chronology and context when considering the emergence of a collectivity and the factors which enable its narrating potential. The kind of “constructed past” which this group envisions is in and of itself “constitutive of the collectivity,” that is to say, it is imbued with the group’s very own desires and questionings. The “origin story” of “the West,” articulated on the fair grounds of the Chicago Exposition, is symptomatic of such a fancied, collectively invested form of history. It reflected the need of a society in constant flux, to project its future for the next century with the help of a traceable, glorified past. Accordingly, the formulation of history must be seen “as a social process” whose “conditions of production” demand close investigation. The variety of actors, tools, and materials involved in this process reveal the circumstances under which the narrative was produced. The aspiration of this narrative to official history, by relying on integration in learning institutions, then demonstrates that “the overlap between history as social process and history as knowledge is fluid.” Here, close attention must be paid to the “prepackaged narrative” – implying a history which anticipates its outcome.¹⁸

The notion of packaging is particularly relevant when considering histories of the American West which not only manifested contemporary sets of beliefs and desires, but also aspired to truth and authenticity by choosing their very own, limited, source material. Trouillot’s statement that “any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences” is hardly a novel assumption in the historical discipline in general or in the history of the American West in particular,¹⁹ and yet, his insistence on the social and cultural processes which forge and perpetuate specific versions of history represents a very fruitful input to the following investigation of photographic narratives of the region. In this case, the stark contrast between the silenced minority voices on the one hand and their visual omnipresence on the other, make the popular photographic narrative a complex phenomenon to examine. Given the

¹⁶ Ibid., 214-215; White, “*It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own*”, 617-618.

¹⁷ White, “*It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own*”, 620, 627.

¹⁸ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015), 16, 23, 25-27.

¹⁹ Ibid., 27.; see for example Nash, *Creating the West*; White, “*It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own*”; David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country, Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

archival riches of glorifying photographic material as opposed to the conspicuous absence of dissenting voices, the attempt of the following analysis is not to search for these latter sources, but to investigate the processes of photographic silencing through dominant narration within the corpus of the CCC.

In this history through the collective lens, the aesthetic potential of the images and their accompanying rhetoric contribute to and reinforce specific silences. Not only the commercial appeal plays a role in this process, but also the very sociocultural function of the medium as a group practice. In the context of a predominantly bourgeois, white, and chiefly male association, it is necessary to re-politicize the use of aesthetics. If *Camera Craft* declared that “only through photography [...] the beauties of California can be displayed,” these motifs served specific cultural, historical, and economic goals. The underlying ideologies of these photographs surface quite blatantly at times, as demonstrated earlier. It is from this perspective that we can grasp how photography, by the turn of the century, had become a practice by which practitioners could “ennoble” themselves and sustain their privileged position in society.²⁰ In the following analysis then, the preferred motifs – the “characteristic Western pictures” – demand a more in-depth inspection from an ideological point of view. As suggested by Mitchell, the stereotypical landscape creates “false depths, selective memories, and self-serving myths.” In its representation through text and image, it “serves to naturalize power relations and erase history and legibility.” The beauty of the landscape then assists the silence and does not allow for other, more conflicted memories to emerge.²¹ If the photographic narration of the landscape, its history and society, implied cultural and technological claims, the patterns of appropriation, popularization, and perpetuation which animate this narration need to be illuminated.

Finally, the relation of aesthetics to tourism and historical preservation is a vital concept that needs to be introduced in the examination of collectively articulated histories through photography. In this context, a critical discussion of the term “picturesque” imposes itself for further understanding, since the picturesque and its “celebration of the spontaneously ‘natural’ [appear] to be based on the effacement of the political and the social.” By denying the sociopolitical specificity of aesthetic representation, the referent becomes devoid of conflictual meaning and can be looked at, indeed consumed, as a delightful object.²² By then infusing the pleasing motif with glorifying vocabulary on the local landscape, “a localized form of the patriotic picturesque” emerges, which, despite its political overtone, does not add critical questioning per se. Quite on the contrary – the production of artistic, aesthetically appealing objects, paired with a national meaning, rather spurred uncritical,

²⁰ See Pierre Bourdieu, *Photography: A Middle-brow Art*, trans. Shaun Whiteside (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 9.

²¹ W.J.T. Mitchell, “Holy Landscape: Israel, Palestine, and the American Wilderness,” in *Landscape and Power*, 262-263.

²² Stephen Copley and Peter Garside, introduction to *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape, and Aesthetics since 1770*, eds. Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 3, 6-7.

communal “sentiment.”²³ This unquestioning political role of the picturesque has been investigated by Malcolm Andrews and later Elizabeth Edwards, and can be linked to the intertwined historical preservation and tourism industries starting in England in the 1870s. Its forms of “[r]econstructed antiquity” very much reflect “the present age’s version of the past,” and therefore necessarily have sociopolitical underpinnings. More importantly, through the cultivation of local historical interest and leisure pleasures, standard vocabularies of “promotional language” entered the experience of viewing publics.²⁴

The commodification of history through tourism and its seeming trivialization through entertaining excursions therefore have to be connected to the employed aesthetics which made these endeavors popular in the first place. Practices of cultural and historical appropriation through “the gazing eye” – that is, the group of socially dominant individuals with camera at hand – are hence “inextricably connected with imperialism and nationalism,” however attractive or harmonious the visual output may seem.²⁵ These notions of visual and territorial mastery find a fruitful application in the corpus of Club material related to Native American life and history.

6.2 The re-appropriation of the Native American past and the Club outing agenda

In early 1890, in the run-up to the Chicago fair and the formation of the CCC, the Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association held one of its last lantern slide lectures, “Glimpses of California,” in San Francisco and later sent it to Eastern cities like Boston through the Interchange of 1890/91. Out of the 100 slides, some ten dealt with the indigenous history of the state. Despite the exclusive visual display of mission buildings in ruins, the text elaborated on Native American inhabitants, their “very low degree of intelligence” as well as their “master[y] [of] that problem on which most of us enlightened people are still engaged, viz., how to live without work.”²⁶ With such generalizing, disdainful assumptions growing in popularity at the time, the identity and history of indigenous people were denied. The common identification as “Indians” was a label which, according to historian Ramón Gutiérrez, united them under one “subjective legal identity,” and thereby negated “the incredible complexity and diversity of native peoples and cultures in California.” The histories envisioned in this period, “the imaginative products” of the state’s socially well-positioned inhabitants, make extensive use of these “Indian” stereotypes in order to formulate a victorious narrative for purposes of self-identification.²⁷ Circulating in lectures and literature, these popular visions of state history assigned indigenous, Spanish, and Mexican inhabitants a clear anchorage in

²³ Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 128-129.

²⁴ Ibid.; Malcolm Andrews, “The Metropolitan Picturesque,” in *The Politics of the Picturesque*, 292, 296-297.

²⁵ Mitchell, “Imperial Landscape,” 29-30.

²⁶ “Glimpses of California, by the Members of the Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association,” 4-5.

²⁷ Ramón A. Gutiérrez, introduction to *Contested Eden: California before the Gold Rush*, 4-5.

the past. At times denouncing, yet progressively ennobling, they created a narrative grid through which Native American culture could be read, and ascribed meaning for the American nation. Without any meaningful stakes in the present, the intertwining pasts of earlier indigenous and European settler populations then merged in a potpourri of images and verse, in which “Indians,” missions, and Franciscan fathers, became romanticized historical performers whose “day has passed.”²⁸

In Californian culture, a clear shift toward the popularity of imagined Native American and Spanish pasts can be observed. This development concerned photography and its role in history-writing from the start. Fardon’s *San Francisco Album* of the mid 1850s included but one photograph of Mission Dolores – the oldest building in the city dating back to 1776 – that appeared conspicuous for its “quaint irrelevance to the city’s American future.”²⁹ By the 1880s, however, photographers progressively pointed their apparatus toward these eighteenth-century architectural structures and reimagined their histories – as observed in the LACC corpus. Popular writers, whose output and relationship to photographers will be discussed in this chapter, contributed to the construction of a “Mission style,” reflected in architecture, painting, and photography. Serving the elaboration of an ancestral myth, the buildings became travel locations for tourists and locals alike.³⁰ Historian Glen Gendzel has examined this emerging Southern Californian mythology through the prism of “separate regional subcultures based in San Francisco and Los Angeles,” which “looked to separate fanciful versions of state history, each of which clamored for recognition as California’s official mythology.” The Northern myth of Gold Rush pioneers, as amply discussed earlier, would be challenged by an initially less “Americanized” narrative for the state, that is, its Spanish colonial past, linked to Native American conversion and Mexican heritage. While Northern historians like Hubert Howe Bancroft saw these diverse ethnic heritage schemes as a mere precursor to the history of the American state starting with the annexation of the territory in 1846, Southern Californian historical societies started to map out their own “mental territory” which was rooted in the Spanish missionary past. With the majority of the twenty-one missions located in the Southern sections of the state, Northern historians engaged in an effort to render this history irrelevant. United merely by their shared disdain of Native American populations, the two geographic poles and their emerging metropolises hence seem to have elaborated separate authoritative versions of Californian history.³¹

However, given the increasingly widespread appeal of missions as sites for artistic practice and historical reenactment through railroad tourism, we need to reconsider the appeal of the Southern Californian narrative with regard to the camera clubs of the entire state. The case of the LACC is strikingly clear in this regard, as its elaborate outing agenda and preservation work have shown.

²⁸ “Glimpses of California, by the Members of the Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association,” 5-8.

²⁹ Sandweiss, *Print the Legend*, 281.

³⁰ Nash, *Creating the West*, 212-214.

³¹ Gendzel, “Pioneers and Padres,” 57, 60-61, 73-74.

Photographers of the CCC, in close contact with their Southern colleagues, were just as attracted to these sites. As manifested in the photographic displays of the San Francisco salons and the coverage in *Camera Craft*, the North-South divide in Gendzel's terms of "pioneers" versus "padres" does not hold with regard to photographic practice in the state. Since the CCC embodied an extended community of Californian photographers from North to South, especially between 1900 and 1906, the historical and aesthetic appeal of both a "pioneer" practice and a "padre" iconography was mobilized. With the goal to become representative of California – interchangeably used as geographic designation for "the West" – the Club made use of the two mythological paradigms as markers of its remoteness and distinctiveness. By looking at the outing agenda which came to include excursions to Native American territories by the 1900s, the following discussion will engage with the photographers' reports on missions as ancient sites worth preserving and indigenous peoples as "part of the regional landscape," as "quintessentially 'West' without ever becoming 'western.'"³²

With regard to the history of photography and the representation of Native Americans, Edward Curtis' *North American Indian* – a three-decade survey (1906-1930) resulting in twenty illustrated volumes – looms large in the canon. Having embarked upon photographic documentation of Native Americans already by 1896, Seattle-based photographer Curtis aligned with banker John Pierpont Morgan in the early 1900s to create this voluminous "elite production in the strictest sense," coming at a price of \$3,000 to \$4,000. Alongside the high-quality publication form, Curtis' images also circulated more freely in lectures and periodicals, including *Camera Craft*. They were thus made available to viewing publics increasingly sensitive to a "conflat[ion] of the indigenous and the national," not least corroborated by Theodore Roosevelt's stern support for the publication. Alan Trachtenberg has thus explained how Curtis attributed Native Americans "a place as iconic image and a role as national memory" by closely associating "Indian" to "Nature."³³ By the time of publication of the first volumes in 1907, photo-critic Sadakichi Hartmann identified Curtis as "the most talked-of person in photographic circles."³⁴ *Camera Craft* contributed to this notoriety among Californian photographers by featuring his work in early issues and describing his "collection of Indian photographs [as] one of the best in the West." The Club likewise provided a stage for Curtis by displaying a series of fourteen portraits in the first San Francisco salon (the only Western salon in which he participated) and consecrating a solo show to his work in the Club rooms in 1907.³⁵ Genthe's extensive criticism of the first salon probably expresses best the contemporary reception of Curtis's portraits: "They are of immense ethnological value as an excellent record of a dying race, and most

³² Milner, "The View from Wisdom," 215.

³³ Trachtenberg, *Shades of Hiawatha*, 171, 174-175, 191.

³⁴ Sadakichi Hartmann quoted in *Ibid.*, 188.

³⁵ See "Our Illustrations," *Camera Craft* 1, no. 4 (1900): 193; *Catalogue of the First San Francisco Photographic Salon*; Peterson, "A History of Exhibitions of Photography in America, 1887-1917," 164.

of them are really picturesque.”³⁶

Photo-historical research on Curtis has critically engaged with a wide range of these popular assumptions – vividly demonstrated by Mathilde Arrivé – in denouncing the publication’s scientific claims, its exoticizing undertone, and its orchestration of spectacle. What remains important, however, is that this “conscious act of fabrication,” in the photographic and the historical sense, was not dismantled as such but instead widely praised by American viewing publics in the first two decades of the twentieth century, especially for the later much-criticized blending of “the aura of art with the aura of science.”³⁷ As numerous studies have demonstrated, it was through the shifting paradigm from “vanished race” to “first American,” taking place around the turn of the twentieth century with universal expositions as its breeding ground, that Native Americans came to “be hailed as forefathers.” By picking suitable elements from indigenous culture, for example dignity and virility, figures like Curtis shaped them as “first Americans” along the lines of a national Western myth and scientific positivism. Once the indigenous peoples’ hold on the land had been eradicated and the remainders of their culture pushed into controllable entities, they moved from threatening to ennobled figures whose legacy could be easily consumed and re-appropriated for national purposes. In this framework, Native American culture and history came to fulfill a dual purpose, “mediating Americans’ changed perspective of empire,” as they were “pacified,” and at the same time “reminding Americans of some other, preindustrial moment that they could appropriate as an alternative of their own.” The need for such a portrayal was reinforced by the unsettling experiences of early twentieth-century modern life, including immigration, technological change, and imperial expansion. By selecting elements of traditional worship, noble warfare, and of rustic life before modernization, the notion of a more ancient historical tradition and of territorial belonging was nourished. Since the highly selective and yet unspecified adoption of “Indianness” was crucial to an “unquestionably” American identity, it implied the surrender of Native Americans.³⁸

Photographers contributed to these authoritative claims on the land and its people by touring the territory and at times, as in Curtis’ case, adopting an inventory approach. These practices, Elizabeth Edwards has noted, integrated scientific and folkloric elements to shape an origin story. Camera clubs as collectively operating groups were part of “a broader cultural matrix concerned with the ethnographic and archaeological delineation of [...] racial and cultural origins.”³⁹ American

³⁶ Genthe, “A Critical View of the Salon Pictures,” 310.

³⁷ Mathilde Arrivé, “Beyond True and False: The Artificial Authenticities of Edward S. Curtis: Responses and Reactions,” *Études Photographiques* 29 (2012): 29-33.

³⁸ Trachtenberg, *Shades of Hiawatha*, xxii-xxiv; Susan Hegeman, *Patterns for America: Modernism and the Concept of Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 26-27; Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 74-89, 182-183.

³⁹ Elizabeth Edwards, “Salvaging Our Past: Photography and Survival,” in *Photography, Anthropology and History: Expanding the Frame*, eds. Christopher Morton and Elizabeth Edwards (New York: Routledge, 2016), 71, Google Books.

camera clubs with an historical interest would, however, never achieve the same methodological standards as British associations, like the heretofore mentioned National Photographic Record Association. Yet, American photographers relied on specific choices of motif and vocabulary – what James Faris termed “limited photographic registers” – to efficiently inscribe Native Americans into an early twentieth-century national landscape of origins. Shifting between “themes of assimilation, pastiche and adaptation, on the one hand, and preservation, nostalgia, and pastoralism on the other,” a selective vision of the past – literally and figuratively blurred by a soft focus – emerged.⁴⁰ Despite the romanticized, indeed “picturesque,” overtones of the photographs, their underlying registers and often directly accompanying discourses reveal the full range of political and cultural claims made on the landscape. As various historians have acknowledged, photographic practice and the vocabulary related to the camera – acts of “shooting” and “capturing” – became metaphors in the appropriation of the landscape and its inhabitants. In visually “confirm[ing] conquest and proclaim[ing] victory,” they re-nacted territorial seizure – yet this time in aesthetically appealing terms. While many photographers, including members of the CCC, actively engaged in the “symbolic” conquest, they contributed to the “normalizing” views “of conquest, of defeat, of assimilation, [and] disappearance.”⁴¹

When turning to camera club excursions as landscape photography practices, it is important then to infuse their resulting corpora with political meaning. While Curtis’ inclusion in “the aesthetic field of modernism” has obliterated the popular, political, and economic structures of his work, photographic accounts of Native Americans require an approach from “a historicizing or culturalist point of view.”⁴² When admitted to a canon of individual artist-photographers of the West, the images become devoid of their ideological repercussions and material itineraries. In a lineage of “great names” which has been conceived in the art-historical canon of photographers of indigenous peoples throughout the American Southwest, “a pictorial anthology of individual vision” has been created – at the expense of a more critical inspection of the contextual conditions.⁴³ As one of the aims outlined in the introduction to this chapter is the sociopolitical investigation of photographic practices, it seems important to start with the genre of landscape photography. Since both inhabitants and architectural structures became part of the broader Western landscape, they represent a popular subject matter which, as argued by Deborah Bright, “[did] not emerge *sui generis*, but instead reflect[ed] collective interests and influences.” In this regard, it needs to be asked “what ideologies landscape photographs

⁴⁰ James C. Faris, *Navajo and Photography: A Critical History of the Representation of an American People*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2003), 19, 21, 40-41.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 14-15; Trachtenberg, *Shades of Hiawatha*, 170.

⁴² Arrivé, “Beyond True and False,” 33-34, 37-38.

⁴³ See Beaumont Newhall’s introduction to the first standard history of Southwestern photographers: Van Deren Coke, *Photography in New Mexico: From Daguerreotype to the Present* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979), ix.

perpetuate[d]” and by whom they were “consume[d].”⁴⁴

The social dynamics which underlie the photographs’ production further augment their ideological weight. As demonstrated in the first part with reference to the study of camera club activity, the members’ “social structure” and economic situation have an impact on their output and may lead to the “shaping” of specific “aesthetic conventions.”⁴⁵ In this regard, the picturesque – an aesthetically unchallenging and historically harmonious vision – is certainly related to camera club work. Similarly, the members’ background and their being “representative of a more powerful, wealthy, and industrialized culture” plays into the depictions of their chosen subjects. Through their exploration of the landscape with modern infrastructures and technologies, they come to take “a position of mastery, of scopic command.” In this, then, their images are cultural constructions.⁴⁶ If we want to take this position even further, with regard to the specific depiction of Native American subjects by members of a camera club whose work was steeped in an ideology of expansion, we need to consider them as “members of a dominant, colonial, racist social form, however well intentioned the individual photographers might have been.”⁴⁷

The latter aspect – the alleged benevolence of a photographer – is relevant at this point if we are to look at social interactions. Both contemporary accounts and secondary literature have insisted on “friendships” between photographers and Natives, on forms of trust and respect, yet this is a problematic notion, as the images often do not manifest a mutual relationship. The patronizing discourses and pressures of posing for commercial publications further complicate the idea of friendship. Especially in the case of camera club outings, individual relations between specific members and their photographic subjects cannot be reconstructed. In most cases, since the late 1890s, groups of photographers crowded around indigenous settlements, which hardly allowed any kind of trustworthy communication to emerge. Even though several accounts by *Camera Craft* contributors emphatically assert their friendly relationships with Native Americans and their opposition to assimilationist policies, these assertions need to be taken with more than a pinch of salt in the face of the strong commercialization of such “authentic” narratives.⁴⁸

Instead of speculating on potential “benevolent” motivations of photographers vis-à-vis Native Americans, the following discussion rather seeks to point out the use of specific sites and settlements by Club members for adorning and legitimizing their photographic practice. Reflected in this endeavor is the attempt to align with more ancient histories of the region, be they the indigenous peoples themselves or the sites of their conversion by Europeans. As two cases in point, the depiction

⁴⁴ Deborah Bright, “Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men: An Inquiry into the Cultural Meanings of Landscape Photography,” in *The Contest of Meaning*, 126.

⁴⁵ Rosenblum, *Photographers at Work*, 111-112.

⁴⁶ Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the Dock*, xxix-xxx.

⁴⁷ Faris, *Navajo and Photography*, 35.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 77-78, 156-158.

of missions throughout the region, including neighboring states, and the Navajo settlements in Arizona visited on outings, will be analyzed to uncover strategies of historical appropriation, cultural legitimation, and aesthetic adornment. While these strategies served to insert the state of California into a popular history of the nation, they likewise assisted in the demarcation of its photographers as privileged onlookers and representatives of this glorified history.

By the time that the PCAPA held its “Glimpses of California” lecture in 1890, the story of Franciscan fathers who converted “the Indians,” and “set them to work,” had become a standard trope of popular lectures.⁴⁹ The image of an uncivilized, childish, indolent population requiring guidance thus developed in tandem with the notion of erudite European settlers bringing with them “civilizing” instruments of religion and agriculture. Native Americans themselves figured less prominently in these stories, as the PCAPA emphasized: “the Indians are now all gone, leaving no language, history or monument.”⁵⁰ The complete denial of Native American culture and its traces then spurred an imaginative vision of the region’s history before statehood. In this, the spaces which Native Americans were subjected to became symbols of noble pursuits, dating back to the eighteenth century. With full-fledged conversion to Western civilization and its religious practices as backdrop, the missions – and most importantly their ruined elements – embodied a bygone era from which much inspiration could be drawn.

As a case in point, the missionaries’ practices of agriculture and education were two of the main pillars of Stanford University, whose campus, built in the period, was one of the first sites to be modeled upon a “mission style.” The PCAPA, whose prominent member Archibald J. Treat had photographed the campus during construction and corresponded with Leland Stanford several years earlier, did not miss out in this point. The mission walls, raised with “sun-dried bricks from the stiff black soil known as adobe,”⁵¹ constituted an important element of the buildings’ architecture, and inspired the Stanfords to use only original Californian materials for the campus. By referencing the Franciscan fathers’ “philanthropy” and their use of local resources, the Stanfords created a metaphorically enriched campus environment whose “desire for permanence, solidity, and the weight of history” was validated by the mission style. The shaping of “a lineage [of] charitable endeavors,” reaching from European settlers to American philanthropists was envisioned in extremely vague historical terms, thereby effacing any possible reference to conquest or removal. It is exactly this elusive character of the missions and their ruin aesthetic, “[d]rained of historic specificity,” which opened up possibilities for imagining a harmonious, pastoral history of the region prior to statehood.⁵² These associations were cultivated and upheld far into the twentieth century when societies like the

⁴⁹ “Glimpses of California, by the Members of the Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association,” 5.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 7. See Chapter 2 for correspondence between Treat and Stanford.

⁵² Ott, *Manufacturing the Modern Patron*, 228, 232-235.

Native Sons of the Golden West marked out “white space[s]” as historical landmarks related to “the European colonizers” of the state, “whatever their national origin.”⁵³

In order to understand how missions moved from sites of conversion and forced labor to symbols of education and ancientness, their initial history needs to be traced and then connected to the selective elements which were retained by a localized, American culture around the turn of the century. In the period between 1769 and 1823, when Spanish colonists settled in the territory known today as California, twenty-one missions were built between San Diego and San Francisco. Father Junípero Serra, at the heart of this endeavor, established an “absolute authority” for the missions, which implied that “land, livestock, and labor” came under their control and that the grounds were guarded by soldiers. The indigenous population was forced into baptism and labor, whose proceeds they could not share. During these five decades, which constitute the onset of a prosperous Californian economy, the Native American population living in these contact areas decreased massively. Out of the initial number of 65,000 Natives encountering the approximately 150 Spanish settlers of 1769, some 17,000 remained by 1832. While the white and mixed-race population had mounted to 3,400, Natives died from introduced diseases, inadequate sanitation, medical care, and diet, as well as disciplinary measures. This “legacy of genocide” has been asserted in historical scholarship over the past three decades, and yet needs emphasis when considering that indigenous peoples had populated the region for some 15,000 years.⁵⁴ The Native’s situation remained largely unchanged after the missions were secularized and progressively abandoned in 1821, when Mexico gained independence from Spain and the church lost its impact. This process led to a division into parishes whose land was made available to non-Natives. The local *Californio* population, “descendants of the original Spanish colonists in California,” did not grant Native Americans independence or equal treatment, and many remained in subordinated labor relations on ranches. During the same period, the United States cultivated trade relations with the newly independent country, which was first tangible in the borderlands of the Mexican-American territories, and by 1846 resulted in the seizure of the territory including today’s states of California, New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado.⁵⁵

By the 1880s then, when the metropolitan area around Los Angeles rapidly evolved, Southern California came to map out its own past which was inextricably related to the legacy of Spanish missionaries as well as the still-present Native American and Mexican populations. The period, which was marked by processes of “racial labeling” as well as social and ethnic hierarchies, witnessed the

⁵³ Glassberg, *Sense of History*, 193.

⁵⁴ Information taken from White, “*It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own*”, 28-33; James A. Sandos, *Converting California: Indians and Franciscans in the Missions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 1-33. See also Rupert Costo and Jeannette Henry Costo, *The Missions of California: A Legacy of Genocide* (San Francisco: Indian Historian Press, 1987) and Kent Lightfoot, *Indians, Missionaries, and Merchants: The Legacy of Colonial Encounters on the California Frontiers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

⁵⁵ White, “*It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own*”, 37-82.

production of a narrative which relegated Spanish settlers, Mexican residents, and Native Americans to the past. Coming to designate a bygone era rather than a part of contemporary society, they became “artifacts” of a “colorful” past which served to strengthen a distinct Anglo-American future. In shaping these separate identities, the future belonging to the region was “racialized” and covered with “a coat of whitewash.” One of the most important aspect of this fragmentation was the elaboration of a “Spanish fantasy heritage.”⁵⁶ As becomes tangible in the Stanford campus project, the alignment with a European ideal of philanthropy – with “white ethnics” – was the championed element in the fabrication of a Southern Californian past. The construction of a memorial arch in honor of Christopher Columbus and George Washington on campus, as well as the presentation of a statue in honor of father Junípero Serra on the 121st anniversary of his landing in 1891, reinforced this desired “white” genealogy.⁵⁷ Historical research in the first two decades of the twentieth century likewise supported a positivist perception of the missionary past. In assessing the “physical success” of the mission as an institution, its prosperity and expanse, historians of the 1910s praised “Spain’s frontier ‘genius,’” aligned with what the Stanfords had purported and what James Sandos termed “Christophilic Triumphalism.”⁵⁸

Helen Hunt Jackson’s famous novel *Ramona*, published in 1884, represents the vain attempt to write a different story – to imagine an indigenous experience of Spanish-Mexican society shortly after 1846. Envisioning the novel as an equivalent to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by revealing the real-life consequences of injustices perpetrated on Native Americans – disclosed in her earlier non-fictional account *A Century of Dishonor* (1881) – Jackson imagined a romance between a Scottish-Native American girl named Ramona and the Native American shepherd Alessandro. The novel, which was first published as a serial, did not function as a pamphlet arguing for a humane Native American cause, but instead became a sentimental representation eclipsing any kind of potential protest. With its idyllic mission settings in Southern California, it only spurred popular interest in the ruins and their surrounding countryside. As such, the Historical Society of Southern California came to appreciate Jackson’s raised awareness of preservation.⁵⁹ Through this popular shift, Native American stakes were canceled out and the missions became smoothly inserted in the desired, ‘whitewashed’ past and future of the state. Jackson’s work, as argued by John Ott, actually “placed [Native Americans] *back* in the missions” by setting off campaigns for preservation rooted in the conviction of Serra’s philanthropic work. It furthermore tied in with Mrs. Stanford’s engagement in the

⁵⁶ Schroeder Kropp, *California Vieja. Culture and Memory in a Modern American Place*, 5-10. The term was coined by Carey McWilliams in *Southern California Country: An Island on the Land* (1946).

⁵⁷ Ott, *Manufacturing the Modern Patron*, 217-220, 228.

⁵⁸ Sandos, *Converting California*, 174.

⁵⁹ Valerie Sherer Mathes, *The Indian Reform Letters of Helen Hunt Jackson, 1879-1885* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 203-225; Gendzel, “Pioneers and Padres,” 65-66.

restoration of Californian missions, to which she contributed with money and means.⁶⁰

This typically female endeavor of community work, tangible throughout California, is likewise present in the earlier mentioned publications by LACC member Mrs. A.S.C. Forbes.⁶¹ For camera clubs throughout California, however, mission preservation came to represent a valuable commitment which infused the practice with aesthetic novelty and historic weight. *Ramona's* popularity reached the pages of *Camera Craft* in the shape of an article by Southwest lecturer, bookseller and minister George Wharton James, entitled "The Story of Ramona from a Photographic Standpoint." As contributor to popular magazines like *Land of Sunshine* or *The Craftsman*, Wharton James published widely on Native American culture and Spanish missions, forging a harmonious vision of two incongruous histories. *Ramona's* romanticized outlook provided an excellent breeding ground for lecturers and Wharton James tapped the story's commercial potential from various angles. Since the initial publication of the novel had been illustrated with engravings, photographers in the early twentieth century were eager to provide photographic renderings of the geographic locations where the story could have taken place. Appealing to the historic sensibilities of *Camera Craft* readers, Wharton James insisted that the travel to Southern Californian missions and ranches was to be "a revelation to many who deem themselves already familiar with the state." Arguing that local photographers must be aware of the historical and "most picturesque" possibilities of this travel, he also promised them to return with a collection of "rich pictures." While the article speculated on a variety of locations which could have served as inspiration to the novel, the author sought to raise awareness of the most attractive choice of motifs, like genre scenes of outdoor washing, sheep-shearing, and service ("if one can get the priests in their "long gowns" to pose"). The prospect that "there is many an ideal Mexican and Indian face from which a wide-awake amateur might make [...] a Ramona [or] an Alessandro," once again designated the resident populations as real-life props in the reenactment of a fictional story.⁶²

Scholars have repeatedly remarked that these forms of leisure, travel, and consumption have been "used to separate and segregate, to control and regulate, both people and places." In seeking to appeal to the "large influx of white middle-class Americans" around the turn of the century, the tourist industry – and its most prolific writers George Wharton James and Charles Lummis – created an environment which became the stage for the reenactment of a "fictionalized" regional history. In the

⁶⁰ Ott, *Manufacturing the Modern Patron*, 224-226.

⁶¹ For further discussion of female preservation efforts, see Glenda Riley, "Victorian Ladies Outdoors: Women in the Early Western Conservation Movement, 1870-1920," *Southern California Quarterly* 83, no. 1 (2001): 59-80, <https://doi.org/10.2307/41172052>.

⁶² George Wharton James, "The Story of Ramona from a Photographic Standpoint," *Camera Craft* 8, no. 4 (1904): 140-144. On the impact of *Ramona* on the local tourist industry, see Dydia DeLyser, *Ramona Memories: Tourism and the Shaping of Southern California* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 31-136; see also William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of Its Mexican Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

coupling of a romantic past with facilitated travel, former sites of conflict were made available and accessible. They became platforms for essentializing scenarios of the past, validated by tourists who would “perform, do, and practice” this kind of regional history. These consumable performances had a longstanding impact on “national perceptions about the region and national thinking about nature,” that is, that they reinforced assumptions about the roles of indigenous peoples and their history in the American landscape.⁶³ The magazine which Wharton James and Lummis edited, *Land of Sunshine*, considered itself a sophisticated form of regional literature appealing to a cultivated Eastern readership. Their decade-long lecturing on “the Southwest” as a romantic setting to be explored and indigenous cultures to be consumed, turned the region around Los Angeles into a most appealing tourist destination.⁶⁴ Both authors would use the Kodak and, as seen in *Camera Craft*, draw on the increasing number of local photographers to make the missions a ‘must-see’ for those who claimed familiarity with the state.⁶⁵

If the inclusion of picturesque elements in historically inspired tourist literature appeared indispensable to the likes of Wharton James, Lummis, or Forbes, we must now turn to the performative function of group photography in the imagined regional history. The collective exploration with the camera at hand sustained victorious narratives over indigenous peoples and the landscape. Furthermore, the medium’s role in the preservation of mission spaces as historical sites turned the photographers into historical agents. Through their identification with the regional past, their role was extended to that of active preservers. Throughout the calls for preservation, appeal was made to the historic and aesthetic sensibilities of photographers – especially with regard to the Western photographers’ lack of historical motifs. Seizing the missions as ruins of a meaningful Californian past implied a profound photographic examination. In the dissemination of this chosen past, we then need to consider the various channels of distribution and formats which were chosen to convey this history. Articles in magazines, assembled albums, and guidebooks constitute different material supports, which perhaps targeted different audiences, and yet reinforced the perpetuation of an unquestionably positive mission past as a whole. The diversification of material supports for mission imagery, it can be argued, thus contributed to its omnipresence as a marker of ‘Californianness’ and imbued the photographers’ agenda with a purposeful activity.

⁶³ Schroeder Kropp, *California Vieja*, 13-15; Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure: Southern California and the Shaping of Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 7-10; see also William Deverell, “Privileging the Mission over the Mexican: The Rise of Regional Identity in Southern California,” in *Many Wests: Place, Culture, and Regional Identity*, eds. David M. Wrobel and Michael C. Steiner (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997), 235-254.

⁶⁴ Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure*, 37-39; Sherry Lynn Smith, *Reimagining Indians: Native Americans through Anglo Eyes, 1880-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 121-147.

⁶⁵ Neither of the two were members of camera clubs, yet they were in close contact with the photographic community, through magazine contributions and the inclusion of local photographers’ works in their books. Wharton James’ publication *In and Out of the Old Missions of California* (Boston, 1905) reproduced images by former LACC members Pierce and Maude, the latter of whom had shown mission pictures in the Los Angeles salon.

As a first example for popular rallying, consider *Sunset* magazine editor Charles Aiken and his plea to *Camera Craft* readers:

Sense and sentiment enter into the plea for the preservation or restoration, so far as possible, of the old missions of California. They mark the making of history in the eighteenth century; their ruins dot the California landscape from Loreto to Sonoma; they teach, in their mute ruins, of civilization's march — therefore, practical good Sense says, save them. In western America the storied walls are few; all is new except Nature's own creations; all that tell of man, of his loves and his strivings, are the homes of the cliff dwellers and the missions; all that tell of art and architecture and suggest the poetry of life are these adobe ruins of the Franciscans — therefore, Sentiment says, save the missions.⁶⁶

In the photographic exploration of the missions, sentimental attachment was combined with a locally rooted practice and accordingly strengthened spatial belonging. Given the region's much more famous natural vistas which commonly served a stand-in function compensating the absence of historic structures in the American landscape, the missions provided more ancient associations with the history of mankind. In this, the reference to "civilization's march" constituted a typically American phenomenon of the nineteenth century, that is, the "dismiss[al] [of] history to embrace prehistory." The imagination of pre-history anticipated the arrival of great civilizations, evoked here through ruins that could connote any kind of European-inspired architecture. The lack of specificity assisted the process of appropriating the landscape and, as David Lowenthal put it, the act of "stamping 'civilization' on their piece of wilderness." The same paradigmatic shift applies to the imagination of indigenous people as "first Americans," as mentioned earlier. By the turn of the century, when the search for a national past became more palpable, reinforced through the centennial celebrations of 1876 and 1893, the ruins came to fulfill an ideological function.⁶⁷ Some associations, like the Native Sons of the Golden West, accordingly argued that the preservation of the missions necessarily had to sustain the "state of picturesque, arrested decay." The preservation of a ruin, rather than its structural restoration, served to evoke premodern times and densified the local historical texture.⁶⁸

The photographers, who emphasized the missions' regional and national importance, came to take on a purposeful role as citizens and artists. Tying in with Turrill's wish for a historically conscious practice and an avid eye toward the landscape, they would establish a canon of meaningful local images which would serve both the preservation of the space and of their practice. This double function of mission photography is essential with regard to the Club, since the photographer's role as historian was extended to that of the artist. As explained earlier, the preservation of historical sites went hand in hand with an aesthetic appreciation and became much more appealing through this

⁶⁶ Charles S. Aiken, "The California Missions and Their Preservation," *Camera Craft* 4, no. 2 (1901): 60.

⁶⁷ David Lowenthal, "The Place of the Past in the American Landscape," in *Geographies of the Mind. Essays in Historical Geosophy*, eds. David Lowenthal and Martyn J. Bowden (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 101-107.

⁶⁸ Glassberg, *Sense of History*, 185.

alliance. The exploration of the missions with camera at hand implied nothing less than the creation of a corpus of historically and aesthetically pleasing objects. Aiken identified this as “a project that should appeal to all artists of pen, pencil, brush or camera.”⁶⁹ The ornate architectural detail and the historic “aura” of the place then could ratify a more mature artistic practice, as the display of mission pictures at the salons has already demonstrated.⁷⁰ In this process, the historicity of the missions was transferred onto the practice – an idea which becomes tangible in another text by Turrill as local historian of photography. In 1920, in a retrospective reflection on five decades of mission photography in the state, Turrill rallied awareness for “the forgotten past” and designated early Californian practitioners like Fardon and the firm of Bradley and Rulofson as pioneers in the “appreciation of the wonderful architectural heritage the good Franciscan Fathers left us.” Watkins was singled out again as the first true artist in this respect since “he was possessed in a superior degree with the perception not only of the artistic but also of the historic importance of old landmarks.”⁷¹ Here, the practice gains a three-fold importance: first, it documents sites of the nation’s pre- and early history, second, it carries cultural meaning through preserving the memory of these sites for the future, and third, it creates an identifiable canon of Californian photographer-artists.

Since Club members considered themselves successors to both the pioneer practitioners and settlers, the desire to travel to these venues and inscribe them into their output was strong. The ruin motif was particularly powerful as it gave way to “literary and visual” imaginations – thus becoming “picturesque devices that evoked standard enthusiasms.”⁷² Charles S. Aiken proved an important booster of this material, since under his editorship in the 1900s, *Sunset* magazine’s circulation mounted to 100,000 copies in the U.S. and abroad, thereby constantly expanding the market of easily consumable imagery of the West in which the Californian landscape prominently featured.⁷³ The Southern Pacific railroad company’s affinity with mission style and imagery was not only tangible in *Sunset*’s coverage, but also in the company’s architectural choice for its depot South of San Francisco by 1894.⁷⁴ By the same token, the alliance of the Southern Pacific with local photographers for the illustration of travel portfolios in *Sunset* also expanded to the missions.

Probably the most striking of these railroad commissions was carried out by California Camera Club member William E. Dasonville, who went on a sponsored trip to several Californian missions in 1908. Published in a 30-page feature article by Aiken in *Sunset* magazine in December of that year, Dasonville’s photographs – despite their halftone reproductions and the omission of

⁶⁹ Aiken, “The California Missions,” 64.

⁷⁰ For an extended discussion of preservation endeavors and the aesthetic re-appropriation of Native American history and indigenous artefacts, see Peterson, “The Photograph Beautiful, 1895-1915,” 198-201.

⁷¹ Charles B. Turrill, “Early Photographers of the Missions,” *The Redwood* 19 (1920): 187-191.

⁷² Lowenthal, “The Place of the Past,” 98.

⁷³ Orsi, *Sunset Limited*, 159.

⁷⁴ Ott, *Manufacturing the Modern Patron*, 234.

credit – lavishly illustrate the picturesque features of the missions and the Franciscan brothers as characters of a bygone era (**fig. 6.1, fig 6.2**).⁷⁵ The captions either indicated historical dates on the founding of the missions, or, and much more often so, included evocative phrases about the passing of time. Fig. 6.2 is revealing in this sense, as it creates a mirrored view of the past. The likeness of two Franciscan fathers set against a commanding mission façade is reflected in the foreground by a water fountain. The fountain’s monumental stone ornament was, as the caption indicates, “elaborately carved by the Indian neophytes of long ago.”⁷⁶ The newly baptized Native Americans who had created this structure become only visible through their stone-carved work – and the caption which alludes to it. The structure hence becomes a monument whose makers’ ephemerality stands in contrast to the chosen material. The clear positioning of indigenous peoples in an almost forgotten past is emphasized here through the friars’ portrayal which already elicits a bygone era. This kind of “visual construction of the missionary heritage” integrated, as argued by Didier Aubert, a “legendary narrative” in which photographs attested to the “civilizing role” of these structures. The “romance” became particularly appealing when published in the form of storied sequences, or as albums, which shed a harmonious light on the past. For further exploration of these romanticized narratives, Aubert ascertains, leisure photographic practices would need closer scrutiny.⁷⁷

Interestingly, the original corpus of Dassonville’s mission images was presented to officials of the Southern Pacific passenger department in 1908 in the shape of two voluminous albums. Carefully mounted and captioned as a sequence of 68 platinum prints, these albums are stored today in the vault of the Bancroft Library in Berkeley and praised as one of the most exquisite documentations of California missions by curators and collectors alike. *Sunset*, as part of the passenger department’s efficient advertisement machinery, could draw its aesthetic appeal from the material of such portfolios (**fig. 6.3**).⁷⁸ When consulted in their original format, that is, as two voluminous sequences, the photographs’ and the albums’ materiality unfold their full potential as sources for romanticized historical narration. The matt finish and delicate tonal range of the platinum prints very much reflect the desire for longevity and mark of craftsmanship, which Club members had envisaged for historical photography in the early 1900s. What Peter Hales has remarked for the high-quality albums of the Chicago Universal Exposition by Arnold – echoing in their grand style the architecture of the fair – certainly also holds true for Dassonville’s albums, that is, “in their gleaming

⁷⁵ Charles Aiken, “Upon the King’s Highway,” *Sunset* 21 (1908): 689-715. The article’s photographic credits indicate H.C. Tibbitts and “various sources.” The reproductions chosen for this chapter have been verified as Dassonville’s by San Franciscan collectors Paul Hertzmann and Susan Herzig, who edited the sole monograph on his work (see *William E. Dassonville: California Photographer, 1879-1957*). Paul Hertzmann (owner of Paul M. Hertzmann, Inc., Vintage Photographs, San Francisco), e-mail message to author, February 13, 2017.

⁷⁶ Aiken, “Upon the King’s Highway,” 701.

⁷⁷ Didier Aubert, “Surveys and Romance: Methodist missionaries’ photographs of the Southern American ‘field’ in the early twentieth century,” *IdeAs* 6 (2015), <http://ideas.revues.org/1066>.

⁷⁸ Palmquist, “William E. Dassonville: An Appreciation,” 15, 17-18.

platinum perfection, they turned ideology into theology.”⁷⁹ Here, the ideological undertone of the missionary project gained in momentum through pictorial embellishment and sophisticated documentation. It became the creed of an original genealogy of the state, which privileged Californians of the early twentieth century could join. In its combination of cardboard mounts that could be leafed through, the use of soft focus and at times just as enticing captions, the album provided the material stuff for the fabrication of an aesthetically and historically appealing narrative for large publics.

Several examples from the albums attest to this first phase of history-making. The portrait of a father under a ruined arch, his back turned to the photographer and his gaze directed toward the setting sun, was entitled *The Passing of Time – A Composition Arranged at San Luis Rey Mission* by Dassonville (**fig. 6.4**). This *mise-en-scène* embodies exactly the kind of reenacted mission history Wharton James had advertised to local photographers several years earlier. The ruins, as well as the members of the congregation became visual props, which mutually reinforced their historical weight: If the mission lay in ruins and the fathers were still wandering around its physical remnants, both became identifiable elements of a bygone century by whose presence the passing of time could be pondered. The narrative sequence was further embellished through photographs of manuscripts and Bibles preserved in the missions (**fig. 6.5**). The craftsmanship reflected in these documents, their timeworn aspect, as well as the identifiability of Latin scripture turned them into meaningful objects of Californian history. The preservation of these relics at the mission not only increased the value of local collections, but it also extended the lineage of Spanish missionaries into early twentieth-century California.

From this careful selection, a regional mission history was efficiently fabricated. Shifting from platinum prints to halftone reproductions in magazines, Dassonville’s photographs embody the processes of history-making and consumption in the period. As a practitioner, Dassonville is only very rarely connected to the California Camera Club, of which he was, however, an active member from early on. Gaining much of his first-hand experience from Club exchanges and becoming secretary in the early 1900s, he was closely related to Genthe and Maurer, and his corpus underwent a similar monographic framing. Through the dissemination of mission imagery and the cultivation of an outdoor practice, Dassonville needs to be considered an active contributor. It can be argued that through these forms of territorial exploration a persisting Californian iconography was shaped, which did not come about merely through fine art printing or archival preservation but rather through a popularization of the practice and dissemination on a variety of supports.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Hales, *Silver Cities*, 246.

⁸⁰ Palmquist’s essay in Herzig and Hertzmann’s monograph is a notable exception, as it carefully traces Dassonville’s evolution within the Club and as an individual photographer. See Palmquist, “William E. Dassonville: An Appreciation,” 9-32.

Alongside the commissioned railroad works, Club members continued to pursue their outing agenda. The first collective excursion to a mission that was documented in *Camera Craft*, took the photographers beyond the state borders into Arizona, where mission Saint Xavier del Bac was home to one of the few still-active congregations. The report on the outing demonstrates the desire to join the Spanish lineage and imbue the practice with historical weight. Illustrated with images of opulent architectural and ornamental detail, as well as a market scene with three indigenous women, the article praised “the queer, Old World feeling that swept over us [and] left us in that peculiarly sentimental stage where all desire for motion was gone” (fig. 6.6, fig. 6.7). In its description of the site as a seemingly unchanged location from the past, the article creates the impression of a parallel world “of medieval grandeur.” Switching back and forth between romantic associations and the usefulness of the camera for touring the site, the author made the space accessible for a staging of past scenarios. The collective insertion into this history was fulfilled when the group assisted a mass “[u]nder the great roof” in order to celebrate “our ancestors [who] first crossed the plains.” The closing remarks of the article took this alignment with Spanish heritage even further by reenacting the experience of conquest and civilizing measures of the earlier days: in order to take a portrait of the indigenous pupils of the sisters of Saint Joseph, “[t]he boys and girls were marshaled in front of the big white building, and for the first time many of them faced the camera.”⁸¹ The act of mustering indigenous children of the former colonial institution for securing their likenesses represents the position of mastery referred to earlier. Through the use of modern technological apparatus in an old-world setting, the photographers re-appropriated the history of Spanish colonialism and the “civilizing process” of the indigenous population for their own practice. The active alignment with “the best of Spanish colonization, loving gentle efforts to usher Indians into the world of civilized and Christian men,” as promoted by Wharton James,⁸² thus also became a performative element in group excursions. In this, the camera assisted as history-writing tool which authenticated not only the motifs but also the practitioners’ role in this history.

Next to excursions to missions and congregations, outings to Native American settlements were likewise planned and reported in *Camera Craft*. Rather than seeking out vocabulary of ancient grandeur and architectural beauty, the ads and articles for these excursions employed references to exoticism, adventure, and conquest. A packaged tour was proposed to Californian photographers aboard the Santa Fe railway in 1906 – by then in fierce competition with the Southern Pacific. The ad urged participants to “bring your camera” for a two-week roundtrip aboard to the Grand Canyon for a total cost of \$125. The participation in such events, requiring both the financial means and the

⁸¹ Harry Putnam, “Mission Saint Xavier de Bac,” *Camera Craft* 1, no. 3 (1900): 118-121.

⁸² Smith, *Reimagining Indians*, 158-159.

time expenditure, fully discloses the wealthy make-up of the Club.⁸³ Here, the commodification and subsequent appropriation of the landscape were shaped by the photographic gaze of a select group. They would forge an iconography which not only mobilized the local scenery for quests of historical preservation and artistic legitimacy but equally utilized the indigenous inhabitants of these contested territories as consumable, picturesque elements.

The packaged tour to the Grand Canyon in 1906 included a visit to Oraibi, a nearby Native American settlement of Hopi peoples, which in 1882 had become part of the Hopi reservation in Navajo County, Arizona. The same year as the Club members visited the village, its community split due to a longstanding tension between a “pro-Anglo, ‘friendly’” and an “anti-Anglo, ‘hostile’ faction.” As a consequence of the pro-Anglo affiliates’ receptiveness for missionary and cultural influence from American officials, the latter group left Oraibi in 1906 to found a new settlement nearby.⁸⁴ By the time that the Club visited the settlement, the Hopi reservation had become appealing to visitors. Its staging of the Snake Dance was a popular attraction since objections to photographing the ceremony had not been seriously considered. What added to this appeal was the Navajos’ “reputation as picturesque, exotic photo objects” who “lived in small isolated groups and consequentially were less hostile.”⁸⁵ Accordingly, the advertisement in *Camera Craft* guaranteed photographers to “visit every part of the villages” as they were accompanied by a United States Indian agent.⁸⁶ The promise of entry and inspection of all kinds of activities taking place in the settlement strengthened the felt entitlement of the photographers to access these territories at their disposal and, by the same token, consume the sites at their leisure.

Given the widely advertised, privileged admittance to these territories, the sites were fairly crowded. Especially the snake dance was announced as a “wild, exciting, and interesting” experience, and as such, a perfect opportunity to improve one’s practice in a singular setting. As the *Camera Craft* ad put it: “an unequalled opportunity to witnessing the remarkable wierd [sic] ceremony” and “seeing how the primitive people [...] live.” The magazine insisted on the cheerful competing atmosphere for practitioners to both enjoy the company of likeminded photographers and improve their work on site.⁸⁷ The outings provided possibilities to explore photographic vistas, to be entertained as a group, and to elaborate a collective, appealing narrative of the trip. In reality, however, the excursions turned out to be moments of intense competition and at times physical confrontations between photographers to gain the best shot. Wharton James, whose reports on events and “picture possibilities” at Oraibi were regularly featured in *Camera Craft*, warned practitioners of the frustrations involved in these

⁸³ “Santa Fe Trip to Moqui Land and the Grand Canyon,” *Camera Craft* 13, no. 1 (1906): 268.

⁸⁴ Trudy Griffin-Pierce, *Native Peoples of the Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 82-83.

⁸⁵ Faris, *Navajo and Photography*, 158-161.

⁸⁶ “Santa Fe Trip,” 268.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 267.

ceremonies. Oftentimes, once the dance had started, many a photographer would not shrink from “kicking down another fellow’s tripod and sticking his elbow in the next fellow’s lens.” Since the mass of photographers formed a “legion,” as Wharton James put it, their photographic armament became the most important instrument in assuring the best view.⁸⁸ His article was illustrated with several images of the ceremony, one of which allows to clearly identify the elevated position of visitors (**fig 6.8**). Relegated to a slightly elevated plateau, photographers were moved off the ceremonial site itself, yet were still dominating the scene from a comfortable distance, armed with both tripod and umbrella. Another photograph by LACC photographer Frederic Hamer Maude, taken slightly earlier, reveals the conditions of practice without regulatory constraints (**fig. 6.9**). The tripod placed right in the middle of the performing Hopis as well as the company of bourgeois onlookers makes today’s viewers grasp the photographers’ intruding position in the spectacle as well as the tourists’ omnipresence.

The depiction of indigenous peoples as objects of artistic study and exciting performers in public spectacles is part of a complex process in which conflictual relationships were flattened out on the surface of the photographic paper. It inserted indigenous inhabitants into a visual inventory of romantic places of the past. As scholarship has demonstrated, the depiction of Native Americans as mysterious yet peaceful peoples consolidated a promotional narrative. By being used as “authentic relics of another culture, not participants in the struggle” of modern twentieth-century society, their presence was reduced to the ancientness of their existence. Through this reshuffling of historic roles, recent decades of violent conflict and expropriation vanished from sight. Instead, select elements of Native American culture were mobilized for the imagination of a strong American character which was required for the aggressive imperial agenda of the early twentieth century. Reduced in the popular imagination to the mastery of combat and a complex spiritual practice, Native American traditions were appropriated for a narrative in which they served as “figure[s] from whom authenticity might be derived for the nation itself.” In this search for a more ancient history, the picturesque of the missions as well as the traditions of the indigenous inhabitants became part of a visually pleasant, credible story which could easily be adopted by popular culture and the tourist industries of the West. Just like the mission ruins, these peoples were depicted “as if they were features of the landscape.”⁸⁹ Their visibility thus depended on their usefulness for the creation of the myth, that is, their depiction “did not imply recognition or acceptance,” but rather the inclusion as a performative element in the construction of a ‘usable past.’ In this narrative, authors shifted back and forth in their tendencies “to

⁸⁸ George Wharton James, “The Snake Dance of the Hopis,” *Camera Craft* 6, no. 1 (1902): 7.

⁸⁹ Cocks, *Doing the Town*, 174-175, 194-197; Trachtenberg, *Shades of Hiawatha*, xxiv, 13-23, 36.

disdain and yet desire, to reject, and yet possess.”⁹⁰ Exactly this inner conflict becomes tangible in Wharton James’ description of the snake dance in *Camera Craft*:

Some people say they are hideous; others have said with me that the sight is sublime. If one looks merely at the half-nude bodies, made repulsive by a coating of reddish black paint, with dabs of whitewash in several places, their faces painted with the reddish black stuff, strings of white beads around their necks, and snake whips in their hands, then indeed it is easy to say that they are hideous. But if one looks at their faces with the determination to read there exactly what the soul behind shows, he will see intense earnestness, deep solemnity, profound dignity and unflinching belief in the necessity for and power of the prayers about to be offered. And no one can see such evidences of inner belief and character without feeling the sublimity of the human soul when exercising its higher faculties.⁹¹

The conflict was resolved in favor of the “sublime” features of the performance which attributed the indigenous peoples an air of dignity – a sentiment that allowed spectators more easily to identify them as worthy, and likewise photographically consumable, ancestors of the American nation.

The elaboration of such a consensual vision of the nation and the history of its territory was facilitated through outings that combined amusement and artistic ambition. The rhetoric and visual tropes of such excursions articulated a set of historic assumptions and aesthetic-compositional features which were to define the landscape and its inhabitants. This popular exploration and depiction of the local surroundings was further intensified through the alignment of amateur clubs with camera producers, most importantly Eastman Kodak. As has been discussed earlier with regard to Tibbitts’s commissions, Eastman Kodak’s annual promotion budget of some \$750,000 in this period helped shape the uses of the medium in American society in the following decades. In its mission “to redefine amateur photography in terms of ease and simplicity,” the company aimed at turning photography into an enjoyable pastime, to be practiced collectively and out in nature.⁹² Through its inclusive organization, addressing more seriously dedicated as well as inexperienced photographers, the California Camera Club operated along the lines of an enjoyable out-of-doors practice and encouraged an active engagement with the immediate local surroundings.

Collaborations between Western photographers and Kodak became an important strategy of the company to draw new practitioners and consumers to the West. Frederick I. Monsen turned toward such engagements by the close of the 1900s, resulting in a sponsored trip through Navajo County with the accompanying booklet entitled *With a Kodak in the Land of the Navajo* (1909) (**fig. 6.10**). Conceived as a short travelogue followed by several pages of Kodak advertisement, the booklet dealt with a trip to the Navajo territories of Arizona. From the 1890s, Monsen had been a regular lecturer at the Club and was well-known both in San Francisco and New York for his lantern slide shows on all kinds of topics of popular interest, be it an armchair traveling tour of Death Valley or an illustrated

⁹⁰ Schroeder Kropp, *California Vieja*, 7-9.

⁹¹ Wharton James, “The Snake Dance of the Hopis,” 8-9.

⁹² West, *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia*, 15-40.

talk on the Spanish-American War.⁹³ As associate editor, he had not only contributed to *Camera Craft* with the earlier mentioned homage to Watkins as the first photographer of “California’s wonderland,” but had also invented the very name of the magazine.⁹⁴ As a practitioner, who assiduously cultivated his reputation as a masterful explorer, Monsen continued the editorial preference for representative Western work. For his Kodak commission to Navajo County, however, he drastically reduced his equipment to “that of the merest amateur,” as the brochure put it. Despite this deliberate cutback in material, his work was described as “alive, buoyant, receptive, and responsive.” This “Kodak way” of taking photographs was intended to reach a wider public, encouraging those “who care to learn” to become camera travelers as well. By doing away with “[t]he old way [which] is circumscribed by mechanical difficulties and hedged in by superstition,” the Kodak would represent “the open sesame to both nature and art.”⁹⁵ This deliberate facilitation portrayed both the photographic practice and its chosen motifs within easy access. The promise of excellent results, even when the photographer was “converted to the Kodak,” as *Camera Craft* noticed, was fulfilled in the booklet.⁹⁶ The display of Monsen’s results followed by ads for equipment made the production of historically and artistically appealing photographs appear feasible, as it seemed to merely require the purchase of a handheld camera.

From the onset, both Monsen and Eastman praised the instantaneous quality of the pocket camera, which would lend authenticity to the depictions of Native Americans. Through the sharp click of the shutter, capturing a fleeting instant, viewers would find “the grace of naturalness, a freedom from studied poses, the charm of simplicity.”⁹⁷ Monsen would shoot the photographs by fastening the camera to his belt – comparing himself to a “rifleman” who “[hits] the target when firing from the hip.”⁹⁸ In this hunting for credible snapshots, the connection between the ease and efficiency of the pocket camera on the one hand, and the mastery of the subject on the other, becomes clear. As argued by Faris, the use of such vocabulary transferred American occupation of the Western landscape to photographic terms. By shooting from the hip – or, as Monsen would also have it, “with [a] hand on the focusing-screw in an attitude suggesting a cannon about to be discharged” – scenarios of conquest and ideals of manliness were reenacted.⁹⁹ This kind of leisure practice facilitated the internalization of a myth about the landscape and its people, while at the same time de-brutalizing

⁹³ Biographical information retrieved from “The Frederick Monsen Ethnographic Indian Photographs, ca. 1886-1911,” Online Archive of California, accessed December 1, 2017, <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/c869753j/>.

See directory of photographers in bibliography for a complete list of collecting institutions with holdings by Monsen.

⁹⁴ See “Monsen of the Desert,” 114-115.

⁹⁵ Frederick I. Monsen, *With a Kodak in the Land of the Navajo* (Rochester: Eastman Kodak Company, 1909), introduction (n.p.), 25.

⁹⁶ “Monsen of the Desert,” 114-115.

⁹⁷ Monsen, *With a Kodak in the Land of the Navajo*, n.p.

⁹⁸ Frederick I. Monsen quoted in Thomas VanderMeulen, *Frederick I. Monsen* (Tempe: School of Art, Arizona State University, 1985), n.p.

⁹⁹ Faris, *Navajo and Photography*, 152-153.

still recent histories of warfare and their participants. As Martha Sandweiss has argued with regard to Monsen's publication, the accessibility and affordability of the Kodak and the Western regions of the United States would shape a public conception of Native Americans as "benign symbols of America's unique cultural heritage."¹⁰⁰ Through leisure practice, the settlements were turned into a stage with interchangeable props to imagine a linear history, to which the pocket camera contributed as an easily usable instrument.

As a result of these practices, assumptions about the right to the landscape and the qualities of its inhabitants were renegotiated in "picturesque" terms. They implied a satisfactory, historical experience as well as a gratifying, aesthetically pleasing output in the shape of photographs. The truthfulness of the images and the historical narrative they conveyed was further ratified by the impromptu snapshot technique. By abandoning any kind of elaborate *mise-en-scène* comparable to the studio, the photographer would generate an authentic, record. It is for these features that Monsen's book was praised by critic Sadakichi Hartmann in 1909. Portraying him as a "follow[er] [of] the trail of the Spanish pioneers," the photographer would create an intimate image of Native American life. "[T]he stamp of reality" imprinted on his photographs were certified by his working method of strapping three Kodaks to his belt. He would not affiliate "with the Secession method which sacrifices everything to clever decorative use and arrangement," but rather embrace more spontaneous forms of creation.¹⁰¹ To further this historical credibility, the image was accompanied by texts on indigenous traditions. Here, Mosen described the Navajo as "Bedouins" of the American West with great physical strength, diverse handcrafts, and elaborate rituals. Their portrayal as "self supporting and independent" perfectly inserted them into a national ancestry scheme.¹⁰² Furthermore, his careful selection of stereotypical qualities and traditions would "prove that the nation had an ancient heritage" as it relied on "a figure from whom authenticity might be derived for the nation itself."¹⁰³

It is in these terms that we must understand photographs like *A Study in Bronze* which was part of Mosen's repertoire of Navajo images considered for the publication (**fig. 6.11**). The portrait of a naked girl, seated on a rock with an arid landscape as backdrop, would evoke earlier civilizations. Devoid of any specific indications, Roman antiquity was elicited merely through the caption. Yet, as the child's body was placed in a desert landscape, viewers could come to think of early stages of humanity – of civilization in its infancy – developing in the bronze age some 3,000 years B.C. through trade and writing. Through this allusive caption, the Navajo girl herself was turned into an object of

¹⁰⁰ Martha A. Sandweiss, "Dry Light: Photographic Books and the Arid West," in *Perpetual Mirage: Photographic Narratives of the Desert West*, ed. May Castleberry (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1996), 26.

¹⁰¹ Sadakichi Hartmann, "Frederick I. Mosen: The Stamp of Reality," in *The Valiant Knights of Daguerre. Selected Critical Essays on Photography and Profiles of Photographic Pioneers by Sadakichi Hartmann*, eds. Harry W. Lawton and George Knox (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 293-296.

¹⁰² Mosen, *With a Kodak in the Land of the Navajo*, 8.

¹⁰³ Trachtenberg, *Shades of Hiawatha*, 22.

inspection, an archeological relic, and ultimately an art object sculpted by the photographer. The sitter's young age further attested to the purported spontaneity and authenticity of the setting. In this, *A Study in Bronze* became a photographic trophy which was to certify the ancientness of the American continent and allowed viewers to imagine age-old narratives of the landscape. Ultimately, in its picturesque and alleged art-historical interest, it adorned the photographer's practice as well as the aesthetic potential of his apparatus.

Relying on these manifold examples of mission photography and excursion reports, it can be argued that the practices of the California Camera Club as a whole, and of several of its members in particular, reflect the processes of historical re-appropriation from an aesthetic and a societal point of view. Through the support of a modern tourist infrastructure, implying not only facilitated transportation but also illustrated literature and affordable equipment, the photographers expanded on the romanticized popular discourse to create a photographically validated history of the region. For the creation of this accessible and consumable narrative, a process of expropriation took place: Native American territories were seized and the various stages of their most recent history – from mission labor to reservation settlement – refashioned along the lines of a national origin story in the West. For the functioning of this story, its conflictual potential was erased through a selection of aesthetic elements that could be made meaningful and available to larger parts of Anglo-American society. In the framework of the Club, these aesthetic motifs had been chosen from early on to shape a distinctly “Western” corpus of photographs and activities. The ideological underpinnings of this corpus have become clear in its mobilization for public lectures and popular magazines. Within the organization, they have come to shape a canon of local pictures whose aesthetic appeal and ascribed historical weight were destined to ennoble the practice as a whole. The strategic choice of these motifs to mark out a Californian – a Western – photographic practice has gained its most efficient expression in the Club's agenda. Again, it has become clear that not only the visual output, but also the organizational network, its discourses and supportive infrastructure, are vital elements which contribute to the longevity of stereotypes, myths, and patterns of exploitation.

Since these practices oftentimes implied travel over long distances and concerned landscape features, it will now be of interest to look at patterns of urban photography, rising tourism, and the mobilization of San Francisco's minorities for the collection of “Western pictures.” Based in the center of the city, the photographers had immediate access to its most mythologized space in which numerous possibilities for exotic spectacle and, at times, history-making could be envisioned. As an urban space in which desire and rejection merged, Chinatown and its photographic portrayal by Club members around the turn of the century now require further examination.

6.3 *Chinatown before 1906: rejection, visual possession, and commodified aesthetics*

If Chinatown figured prominently in the corpus of characteristic images by which Californian photographers sought to be identified, the diverse representations of San Francisco's probably most densely populated area must be put into relation with their vicinity to the photographers' headquarters. By the time the CCC came to occupy its rooms in the Academy of Science Building on Market Street in 1891, its predecessor, the PCAPA, was about to give up its meeting rooms on Merchant Street – a small lane running perpendicular to Kearny Street of which eight blocks constituted the Eastern flank of Chinatown. The earlier association's lecture "Glimpses of California" included a section on this Chinese neighborhood. From its wording can be deduced two decisive, and yet contradictory, approaches to the city's most visible immigrant population:

There is in San Francisco a Chinese population between 25,000 and 30,000, all crowded together in what is known as Chinatown in the center of the city. They occupy a comparatively small space. There are dwellings, stores, markets, restaurants, temples, theaters and opium and gambling-dens. They gradually crowd the whites out of this neighborhood, as they do out of the various occupations they enter. Tourists all seem to desire to visit Chinatown, but the Californians seldom go there unless on the occasion of the festivals, as at New Year's, or when they have the Procession of the Dragon. At that time, dressed in gorgeous costumes, they carry an immense dragon made of silk, bamboo and paper, through the streets. [...] This is one of the few times when Chinatown looks picturesque even to a Californian.¹⁰⁴

The description of a congested space with a vice-ridden population – illuminated only by its occasional parades – was a common element of the contemporary discourse. The Chinese represented a simultaneously desired and despised community whose impact was inflated even though its population numbers constantly decreased after the Exclusion Act of 1882. Among the earliest arrivals in Gold Rush California in 1848, Chinese (alongside Mexican and African-American) immigrants faced strategies of exclusion and segregation from the onset and were denied access to schooling, property, and citizenship. As railroad workers for cheap tariffs, they became a target of the white working class and were made scapegoats for low wages and unemployment in the city. However, the "dynamic economy" which emerged in Chinatown became indispensable to the San Franciscan service industry as Chinese inhabitants worked as domestic servants, laundries, shoemakers, as well as in garment and tobacco factories. As a secluded community space, partly removed from the hostility reigning elsewhere in the city, Chinatown provided an anchor for the immigrant population where its own cultural institutions and recreational spaces could be built.¹⁰⁵

In San Francisco, where the society's "racial hierarchy" was not established along the lines of white versus black, but rather white versus "yellow, Mongolian, or Oriental," the foreignness of Chinese culture was used as evidence of their otherness and inferiority. At the same time, the city's

¹⁰⁴ "Glimpses of California, by the Members of the Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association," 46.

¹⁰⁵ Issel and Cherny, *San Francisco, 1865-1932*, 71-73, 125-126; Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco, 1850-1943: A Trans-Pacific Community* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 60-67.

demographic make-up, including an urban elite consisting of Italian, Irish, German, and Jewish Americans, drew artists and writers from all over the country to whom this diversity appealed. While the Asian populations, Chinese and, for a smaller proportion Japanese, were not included as equals in this “cosmopolitan” conception, their cultures’ “exotic” appeal nonetheless became a vehicle to portray the Pacific outreach of San Francisco and thus make it an alluring tourist destination.¹⁰⁶ It is exactly this in-between of Chinatown’s population – its integration into an American economy without being granted a legitimate share and its appropriation for an American culture with disregard for Chinese cultural sensibilities – which will be of interest to this last part of the chapter. The portrayal of Chinatown in Anglo-American culture was ambivalent from the onset. On the one hand, it considered the Chinese population as despicable, verging on addiction to physical pleasures of all sorts. On the other hand, there was an undeniable attraction to these places of consumption and foreign tradition. Interestingly, as artist and critic Jason Francisco has argued, the photographic portrayal of the city’s most prominent immigrant population in the early twentieth century did not lead to a documentary practice “linked [...] to causes,” expressed by “the figure of the crusading photographer,” as in New York City. Instead, the Chinese quarters “remained linked to the authorizing activity of independent observation itself.”¹⁰⁷

Accordingly, the focus of this discussion will be set again on the social dynamics of photographic practices and the narratives they generated. When looking at the organization of these practices, it is interesting to notice that – as opposed to the widely announced excursions to Native American settlements – the Club did not propose collectively organized photographic jaunts to Chinatown. Driven by the desire for uncovering secrecy and intruding unfamiliar spaces, the photographers’ ventures in the Chinese neighborhood were either conducted in a policing manner by directly encroaching upon living spaces, or – and more often so by the 1900s – by using concealed pocket cameras. In both cases, by taking the photographic subject by surprise or by covertly capturing a portrait, the authenticity of the photograph was upheld. The acts of strolling the streets of Chinatown or entering its cultural spaces and to photograph without consent turned the neighborhood into an accessible and hence available space. The practice in an area which seemed repulsive to large parts of the population allowed the photographers to frame their work both as adventuresome discovery and as sensitive portrayal of the aesthetics of a foreign culture. In the narrative constructed around these practices, the image referent and the image maker gained authenticity, either as foreign object or as credible practitioner. Xiaojing Zhou recently remarked with regard to such flâneur practices in

¹⁰⁶ Yoko Matsumoto, “Orientalism in the Cosmopolitan City: Constructing Sanitary Exoticism in San Francisco before World War II,” in *San Francisco à l’ouest d’Éden*, 71-75; Glenna Matthews, “Forging a Cosmopolitan Civic Culture: The Regional Identity of San Francisco and Northern California,” in *Many Wests: Place, Culture, and Regional Identity*, 217-219.

¹⁰⁷ Jason Francisco, “Picturing Difference: Documentary Practices in San Francisco’s Chinatown,” n.d., accessed February 18, 2018, <http://jasonfrancisco.net/picturing-difference--documentary-practi>.

popular literature on Chinatown around the turn of the century:

the subjectivity and identity of the white male observer and narrator are constituted by the power of his gaze and superior social position and by the racial inferiority of the Chinese, who are rendered mute objects, part of the Chinatown space that is at once mysterious and transparent to the white male gaze.¹⁰⁸

In the case of photographic practice, notions of transparency and superiority were reinforced through the camera which operated as a disclosing instrument. Photography's assigned indexicality was mobilized here by a socially dominant group in order to mark out its racialized counterpart. Despite this attributed credibility, the mystery was upheld through the picturesque quality of the image which ascribed the Chinese referent aesthetic meaning and yet removed any form of political agency.

Tracing photographic practices in Chinatown from the early 1890s to 1906, the goal of this part is to uncover how images of Chinese inhabitants made their way into the corpus of the California Camera Club and were subsequently integrated as part of a characteristic local canon. The examination of the Chinese community's reaction – what Maxine Hong Kingston termed “the other side of the camera” in her famous critical essay on Arnold Genthe's Chinatown photographs – cannot be subject to discussion here, nor can Genthe himself constitute the core of the Club discussion as his work has been extensively covered by scholars over the past three decades.¹⁰⁹ Even though Chinatown's role in the white American imagination has been discussed in numerous fields, including literature and photography,¹¹⁰ it is important to look at these textual and visual depictions through the lens of a collective of local photographers with a clearly defined goal. Through this yet again restrained focus, the ideological underpinnings of photographic practice vis-à-vis minorities can be more intimately examined. The sociohistorical, cultural, and aesthetic instrumentalization of minority groups in photography gains a new layer through its relation to a locally rooted photographic society. Their practices are infused with not only the dominant social perception but also with prevalent ideas of the picturesque. While Chinatown's portrayal will resurge in Part III of this thesis, in the light of the aftermath of the San Francisco earthquake and fire, the pre-disaster period requires exclusive focus at this point, since post-1906 practices were informed by other notions of history-making. The desires projected on the Chinese neighborhood would remain essentially the same, yet the image practices and accompanying discourses after 1906 cannot be detached from the material caesura and the quest for material recovery that urban destruction generated. What is at stake here, with regard to

¹⁰⁸ Xiaojing Zhou, *Cities of Others: Reimagining Urban Spaces in Asian American Literature* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), 31.

¹⁰⁹ Maxine Hong Kingston, “San Francisco's Chinatown: A View from the Other Side of Arnold Genthe's Camera,” *American Heritage* 30 (1978), <http://www.americanheritage.com/content/san-francisco's-chinatown>. See also John Kuo Wei Tchen, *Genthe's Photographs of San Francisco's Old Chinatown* (New York: Dover Publications, 1984); Quitslund, “Arnold Genthe: A Pictorial Photographer in San Francisco, 1895-1911”; Lee, *Picturing Chinatown*, 101-198; Grace Kyungwon Hong, “Nation and Empire in Arnold Genthe's Photographs of San Francisco's Chinese Quarter, 1895 to 1906,” *Journal of the West* 43 (2004): 8-14.

¹¹⁰ See notably Zhou, *Cities of Others*, and Lee, *Picturing Chinatown*.

the first one and a half decades of Club practice before the disaster, is a material tracing of how Chinatown became a common visual and rhetoric trope in Club practice, and which ideological and aesthetic notions it came to fulfill. In this context, the photographic depiction of Chinese recreational activities and social life in the streets constitutes the pivot from which “cultural dimensions of racial antagonism”¹¹¹ will be elaborated.

During the early stages of Club activity, in the summer of 1893, the *San Francisco Chronicle* remarked in a full-page weekend editorial on “The Camera in California” the particular attraction of Chinatown for local photographers. The allegedly “best collection of Chinatown views in existence” was assigned to Thomas P. Andrews, secretary of the California Camera Club. As business partner of Oscar V. Lange on Montgomery Street between 1893 and 1897, Andrews traded in photographic supply and assisted in Lange’s marketization of the UC Berkeley project. Andrews’ Chinatown views were made, according to the *Chronicle* “with no small risk to himself and to those who went with him to watch.”¹¹² While material on individual Club members in a comprehensive form is very scarce and generally requires an assemblage of various sources, a collection of works by T.P. Andrews, including Chinatown views, is held by the Achenbach Foundation at the San Francisco Legion of Honor Museum. Donated by Andrews’ granddaughter, the collection includes two 9 x 9 cm booklets entitled *Chinatown San Francisco*, which were printed by publisher Henry R. Knapp, and marketed with Kodak advertisement by Andrews’ colleague Samuel C. Partridge – the West Coast Kodak supplier who had demonstrated equipment at the PCAPA in the 1880s (**fig. 6.12**). Andrews’ views, as the *Chronicle* insinuated and his granddaughter confirmed, were taken during police raids in Chinatown in the late 1880s and early 1890s.¹¹³ A group portrait in Andrews’ personal memorabilia attests to this involvement as it shows him next to the sergeant of the Chinatown police squad, Jesse B. Cook (**fig. 6.13**). The latter’s scrapbooks – which document four decades of San Franciscan police history in the shape of photographs, clippings, and ephemera, – hold the same portrait of Andrews, identifying him as “the Kodack [sic] man.”¹¹⁴

As charter member of the California Camera Club and successful supplier, Andrews knew how to efficiently distribute these Chinatown views. His collection (amounting to 2,000 negatives)

¹¹¹ Chen, *Chinese San Francisco, 1850-1943*, 95.

¹¹² “The Camera in California,” 9. Information on Andrews and Lange retrieved from Mautz, *Biographies of Western Photographers*, 77, 118; the Oscar V. Lange Papers, 1887-1913, the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

¹¹³ Muriel Wolverton (granddaughter of T.P. Andrews), telephone conversation with author, November 1, 2016. See Gift of Mrs. Muriel Wolverton, in memory of Thomas Patrick Andrews, Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, San Francisco Legion of Honor Museum. The digitized images can be consulted online, see “Henry R. Knapp,” Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco,” accessed December 6, 2017, <https://art.famsf.org/henry-r-knapp> (the website wrongly states that Partridge was the photographer; the indication was ensured to be revised by the curator, as of December 2017). I wish to thank Jim Ganz, curator at the Achenbach Foundation, for pointing me to this material and providing me with valuable information on other items in the collection.

¹¹⁴ See “Jesse Brown Cook Scrapbooks Documenting San Francisco History and Law Enforcement, ca. 1895-1936,” Online Archive of California, accessed December 9, 2017, <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf129005j4/>.

was indeed popular with the Club and a select number of 26 views were integrated in the Club's first submission to the American Lantern Slide Interchange, entitled "In and around San Francisco." As *Anthony's Photographic Bulletin* reported, Andrews had spent five months in Chinatown to assemble the images which "were all taken by flash light, and show the life of Chinatown with startling fidelity."¹¹⁵ Taken during raids in the neighborhood, that implied the intrusion into private homes as well as bars and gambling locations, they were supposed to furnish an authentic portrayal of Chinese everyday life. The highly selective choice of locations, as well as their public myth-making appeal, becomes clear in the *Chronicle* article, that acknowledged:

Chinatown possesses a strange fascination for the amateur and his camera. He has seen every feature of the loathsome place time and again, but he wants to have it as it looks under the glare of his flash light. He wants to thrust open the door of a crowded, ill-smelling opium-smoked den, and scare the copper-colored inmates into realistic visions of the hereafter. He wants to obtain a picture no one else possesses. His wish is to catch the Celestials as they live, as they eat, work and sleep, and there are collections of such pictures in this city which more fully represent the place than any description ever given. While there are hundreds of pictures, more are always being taken, and Chinatown is a veritable mine for snap shots.¹¹⁶

The vocabulary of conquest and possession, mirroring the wording used for photographs of indigenous people, was used here to highlight the superiority and controlling power of the photographer. Since Chinatown had the reputation of a "polluted" space which posed a threat to "the racial purity of California," its spaces of recreation and amusement, as well as its chiefly male environment, were smoothly inserted into the portrayal of a vice-ridden, immoral culture.¹¹⁷

Andrews' photographs in Knapp's booklets served to authenticate the veracity of stereotypic conceptions of the Chinese, as the last page of the publication stresses: "These views of China Town are perfect reproductions of Scenes in Chinese houses. They show the Chinaman taken by surprise, as the flash light illuminates his den, and the Camera depicts the scene."¹¹⁸ Unsurprisingly then, out of the twelve reproductions, half of them dealt with opium-smoking or gambling, while the other half showed musicians, cooks, or "Chinese beauties." Photographs like *A Quiet Smoke* (fig. 6.14) or *Sleeping-off Opium* (fig. 6.15) were to confirm the accounts by politicians, journalists, and travelers that had existed for more than three decades. The idea of a compressed space in which toxic substances mixed with immoral behavior was conveyed through the representation of delirious consumers in underground settings. As Nayan Shah has shown, the sanitary surveys investigating Chinatown between 1850 and 1900 used "dens, density, and the labyrinth" as the three major factors

¹¹⁵ "The California Camera Club," *Anthony's Photographic Bulletin* 21 (1890): 541.

¹¹⁶ "The Camera in California," 9.

¹¹⁷ Chen, *Chinese San Francisco, 1850-1943*, 85-90.

¹¹⁸ *Chinatown* (San Francisco: Henry R. Knapp, 1889), n.p.

by which “knowledge” about the neighborhood was gained. These categories “provided the canvas for detailed renderings of Chinese living styles, conditions, and behaviors.”¹¹⁹

Photography rapidly turned into an efficient narrating media, as Knapp’s pocket booklets with Andrews’ images illustrate. In their portable format, they could easily be carried around, kept as a souvenir, or used to lure other tourists into the neighborhood. The pocket format of the booklet as well as the circular framing of the images created an impression of intimacy which was to heighten the photographs’ authenticity. The sense of intrusion into concealed living spaces was achieved through the pinhole-shaped photomechanical reproduction that seemed to uncover a keyhole to the spectator. The snapshot moment, illuminated by flash light, provided the breeding ground for elaborate scenarios around the scene. The privacy of Chinatown spaces, its inhabitants’ lifestyle and consumption, becomes further tangible in photographs like *Oldest Inhabitant, 96. Lives on Opium Smoke Only* (fig. 6.16). As Barbara Berglund has argued, the inclusion of personal information on the neighborhood’s oldest inhabitants, next to images of drug consumption, “disclosed tourists’ appetite for being let into private moments, not just vicious ones.”¹²⁰ Far from being spontaneous snapshots, the production of these photographs required substantial organization, and yet still went hand in hand with brute police force, as Andrews’ participation in the Chinatown police squad demonstrates.

San Francisco’s most prolific photography business, that of Isaiah W. Taber’s, likewise recognized the commercial appeal of such intrusive imagery. Using a flash light “to produce dramatic interior shots” which were supposed to attest to the immediacy of the scenery, Taber capitalized just as much on semi-staged scenarios.¹²¹ Anthony Lee, who has widely published on photography in Chinatown, has recently examined Taber’s views, which closely resemble the aforementioned series by Andrews. Instead of touring the neighborhood himself, however, Taber commissioned photographers to take pictures of opium dens. Considering “the orchestration and sheer physical labor needed to get a decent shot,” implying the setting up of a tripod, carrying glass plates, a flash box and blitz-pulver, it becomes clear that the photographs were far from being snapshots taken immediately after doors had been kicked in. On the contrary, in order to make a successful shot, the consumers in opium dens were either lured into negotiations, intimidated, or simply forced into the staged scenery. As Andrews’ inclusion in Cook’s police squad has shown, such a “raiding party” embodied physical force and coercion. The resulting photographs, either with startled subjects caught by surprise or staged scenes of opium pipe preparation and consumption, represented “the supposedly ‘Oriental’ qualities both loathed and desired.” Since the streets of Chinatown had become popular tourist

¹¹⁹ Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco’s Chinatown* (University of California Press, 2001), 17-43.

¹²⁰ Berglund, *Making San Francisco American*, 106. Berglund falsely identifies Knapp as the photographer.

¹²¹ Shah, *Contagious Divides*, 92-93.

venues, the underground imagery provided a new narrative “template.” The actual spaces were portrayed as dangerous for visitors, and thus made the photographer a foremost reporter on vice and crime. Both the photomechanical reproduction format as keyhole, and the depiction of consumers in “cramped, low-ceiling environs,” reinforced this clandestine underground mood.¹²²

If we connect these policing practices as well as the particular attraction of Chinatown to the Club’s self-definition, it becomes clear how photographs of San Francisco’s Chinese population could be ascribed a characteristic local value. It also demonstrates how the Club’s practices were closely entangled with sociocultural developments in the city. To the members, who at the time started to elaborate their reputation as locally engaged practitioners, this subject matter was particularly appealing as it was inextricably related to an exploratory practice. The pioneering venture, sought out as hallmark of Californian photographers, took on a new shape in the inspection of Chinatown’s allegedly criminal, yet strangely exotic surroundings. By portraying the “otherness” of the subject in an aesthetic manner, the photographers could mark out their “pioneering” work on the terrain as well as their superiority as wealthy citizens of San Francisco. Through the circulation of Andrews’ imagery in lantern slide lectures throughout the country, the photographs became part of a process of urban historicization which was a popular element of the tourist industry. Instead of highlighting the friction related to the neighborhood, the photographs showcased superiority and control through photography-police raids and even allowed picturesque pleasure. The city itself hence became an “artifact” which could be consumed. In addition, the chosen minority populations were turned into “sights,” or as Cocks put it – “colorful elements in a great spectacle for the enjoyment of the visitor.” In order to erase the conflict, the agency of the photographic subject was omitted, that is to say, the Chinese population’s “timelessness” was underlined. To display the “ineradicable cultural difference” between Chinatown and the rest of the city implied its becoming a delightful feature of a “cosmopolitan” city. Rather than identifying the Chinese as part of the community, they became an exterior, consumable feature of the city’s geographic connectedness to the Pacific and its ethnically diverse, exoticized populations. The “unchanging quality” of Chinatown, its inhabitants, and their activities, inscribed them into a time and space outside of modern society and thus made them easier to apprehend, appropriate, and consume.¹²³

This lack of historical specificity, of cultural sensibility, and of political engagement shows how the concept of the picturesque operated within the Club. It would shape a consensual, appealing canon. Similarly, the portrayal of the practice itself relied on these notions in order to assert the superiority of San Francisco’s upper classes. Even though the exact membership rollcall is sparsely

¹²² Anthony W. Lee, “Photography and Opium in a Nineteenth-century Port City,” in *A Companion to American Art*, 581-585, 589, 593. For information on cooperation between the police and photographers in the organization of Chinatown’s tourist industry, see Berglund, *Making San Francisco American*, 98-106.

¹²³ Cocks, *Doing the Town*, 187-189; Shah, *Contagious Divides*, 43.

documented, and much of its involvements hence needs to be derived from publications, it can be asserted that the majority of the most active contributors – such as Andrews, Lange, Treat, Tibbitts, and Erwin, or Maurer and Genthe, – belonged to the wealthy citizenry. On the few membership lists of the 1890s, it appears impossible to ascertain ethnic origin from the mere listing of names. However, biographical research on early Western photographers has brought to the fore the case of Mrs. Mary Tape, a Chinese-American member of the Club, active in the first half of the 1890s. While Chinese photographers had set up their businesses in the city from the 1850s, their interactions usually took place in segregated spaces and certainly did not imply equal membership opportunities in photographic organizations.¹²⁴ Mrs. Tape constitutes a case in point here, as the description of her work in the *Pacific Coast Photographer* in 1892 reveals: “Mrs. Tape, the bright and intelligent Americanized Chinese lady, is becoming a slide expert. She probably does what but few amateurs have undertaken – the manufacture of her own slide plates.”¹²⁵ Participating in a print exhibition at the California Camera Club the same year, her work sparked the curiosity of the local press.¹²⁶

Apart from the fact that her work covered landscapes, portraits, and domestic rather than Chinatown scenery, little is known about Mrs. Tape’s photographs. Peter Palmquist’s survey of women photographers in the American West furnishes further biographical information, marking her birth in China in 1857 and her arrival in California at the age of 11. At 18, she would be married to Joseph C. Tape at the First Presbyterian Church in San Francisco, “the first Chinese couple to be wedded there.” She working as a telegrapher and lantern slide maker, and he as employee of the Imperial Consulate of China in San Francisco, the Tapes certainly belonged to the wealthy class of converted Chinese immigrants.¹²⁷ It is exactly this sociocultural and financial background – as “*Americanized Chinese lady*” – which made her eligible to Club membership, where prejudice against San Francisco’s Chinese population otherwise was deep-seated. While Chinatown’s inhabitants were generally portrayed as “unassimilable,” the Tapes belonged to the small minority of Chinese Christians, whose numbers rose from 300 to some 1,000 in the period between 1870 and 1900. The majority of Chinese immigrants held on to their lived religious traditions in the new environment in order to reinforce communal belonging, which is one of the reasons why Christian missionaries in Chinese San Francisco largely failed. In turn, these failed attempts were used to underline the

¹²⁴ Mrs. Tape’s work was first discussed by Peter E. Palmquist in his large-scale inventory of women in photography, see Palmquist, “Mrs. Tape as Wonderwoman!” *Women in Photography International*, <http://www.womeninphotography.org/archive09-Jan02/gallery4/>. For an overview of Chinese photographers in San Francisco around the turn of the century, see Dennis Reed, “The Wind Came from the East: Asian American Photography, 1850-1965,” in *Asian American Art: A History, 1850-1970*, eds. Gordon H. Chang et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 141-144.

¹²⁵ Editorial, *Pacific Coast Photographer* 1, no. 1 (1892): 14.

¹²⁶ “The Print Exhibition,” *Pacific Coast Photographer* 1, no. 9 (1892): 166.

¹²⁷ Palmquist, “100 Years of California Photography,” 205; Palmquist, “Mrs. Tape as Wonderwoman!”

stereotype of an incompatible, repugnant minority society.¹²⁸ The Tape's successful conversion and harmonious insertion in San Franciscan society would then prove the opposite and make them part of the cosmopolitan character with which the city and the Club sought to ornate itself. Even though small in numbers, the Chinese-American elite would occupy a privileged position in the city. Their status allowed them to overcome the barriers imposed by Exclusion Era legislation and to actively participate in urban life.¹²⁹ As an example of this privileged position, the local press even enquired in Mrs. Tape's photographic success, resulting in an elaborate article which celebrated the couple's assimilation to American society and their "refined" household. Noticing the photographs in passing and characterizing Mrs. Tape as "fully equal to any amateur in the State," the article insisted far more on the extraordinariness of an Americanized household, given the widely spread convictions of the Chinese as incompatible to American society.¹³⁰

The sparse information on Mrs. Tape's work and her being probably one of the only Asian American photographers of the Club merely allows us to speculate on the role such minority members took on within the organization. In the light of the absence of further documentation on this question, and with regard to the extant Club corpus of "Western" images, the focus needs to be set once again on subject matter. Indeed, what appeared much more pertinent to the Club's work was not the inclusion of Americanized minorities in its membership rollcall, but the photographic depiction of minorities cultures in an "authentic" manner, that is to say, outside of the familiar boundaries of San Franciscan society.

The children of Chinatown are a case in point in this quest for authenticity. In order to achieve a spontaneous, credible portrayal, photographers were advised to use a pocket camera so as to avoid implication in any kind of negotiation or refusal. As a general rule, Hugo Goldsmith wrote in *Camera Craft* in 1903: "my advice to all who contemplate making pictures of people who do not want to be photographed is to take a Brownie." His article, entitled "A Brownie in Chinatown" could be read as a brief guide for aspiring practitioners. It discloses the yearning for authentic imagery, which apparently could only be captured without the subject's consent. On his experience with Chinese children, he wrote:

No sooner did I point a camera at them than they disappeared, screeching at the top of their queer little voices. Of course, I could have gone to the mission schools and been permitted to photograph Chinese children to my heart's content, but this had little attraction for me. I wanted the little wild children that fled from me in well-simulated horror. As well might I have photographed the farmyard flock when after wild fowl in their native haunts.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Chen, *Chinese San Francisco, 1850-1943*, 131-136.

¹²⁹ See Kenneth H. Marcus and Yong Chen, "Inside and Outside Chinatown: Chinese Elites in Exclusion Era California," *Pacific Historical Review* 80, no. 3 (2011): 369-400. The authors draw attention to the influence of photographs by Taber, Genthe, and others in "reinforc[ing] perceptions of isolation" and the alleged absence of more privileged Chinese inhabitants.

¹³⁰ *San Francisco Call*, 1892, quoted in Palmquist, "Mrs. Tape as Wonderwoman!"

¹³¹ Hugo Goldsmith, "A Brownie in Chinatown," *Camera Craft* 7, no. 1 (1903): 21.

The animal imagery attached to Chinese children in this passage was used to portray them as the desired “wild” objects. When capturing them playing the streets, they were to reveal much more of the sought-after, prejudiced associations than the Americanized children of Chinatown’s Sunday schools. In both cases, however, the availability of the children as photographic subjects was assumed as a given. The excitement to capture some of “the melodramatic life of the Chinese in San Francisco”¹³² then could only be achieved with a veiled pocket camera at hand whose click of the shutter – just like in the case of Monsen’s Native American subjects – was considered a privilege for San Franciscan photographers.

The local photographer most admired for his portrayal of Chinatown and its children was Arnold Genthe. While his output has been extensively discussed in secondary literature, it is important at this point to insert him into the reputation and self-image Club photographers sought to shape. As scholars like Lee and Reed have remarked, pictures of San Francisco’s Chinese neighborhood “speak most directly to the needs, desires, and assumptions of their makers.” In segregating the quarter from the rest of the city and depicting its inhabitants as performing subjects, photographers like Genthe operated within Edward Said’s “Orientalist representations.” This authoritative gaze on the place reveals the photographers’ own ambitions and their self-positioning within social and racial hierarchies.¹³³ Genthe, who portrayed himself and has subsequently been portrayed as a cultivated practitioner, ardent collector, and sensitive enjoyer of Chinese culture, was more involved in Chinatown photography than any other of his Club colleagues.¹³⁴

His methodological approach in walking the quarter and his spontaneous use of a veiled pocket camera were strategies emulated by many of his contemporaries. These included his former studio companion Oscar Maurer, and another Club member of German origin with whom both were acquainted, Dietrich H. Wulzen. A local pharmacist with a Kodak agency in his store, Wulzen was acquainted with many San Franciscan photographers and also provided medical care for Carleton Watkins in the wake of the earthquake and fire of 1906. His output, which is mostly limited to Chinatown and disaster views, illustrates the contemporary assumptions of the local community with regard to the Chinese minority. What Lee analyzed as a desire “to crop the details of a complex Chinese social life to achieve a pictorial effect” would be tangible in many of their commodified works.¹³⁵ Given the breadth of Genthe’s output, his work can be taken as the most efficient illustration

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Lee, *Picturing Chinatown*, 8; Reed, “The Wind Came from the East,” 143.

¹³⁴ Quitslund, “Arnold Genthe,” 37-46, 173-214.

¹³⁵ For further discussion of Wulzen, see Lee, *Picturing Chinatown*, 136-143. The Wulzen collection of the San Francisco Public Library can be consulted online, see “Dietrich H. Wulzen Glass Plate Negative Collection, 1900-1906,” San Francisco Public Library, Historical Photograph Collection on Flickr, accessed April 27, 2018, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/sfplsanfranciscohistoricalphotographcollection/albums/with/72157666757352530>. Information on Watkins and Wulzen retrieved from Turrill, “An Early California Photographer: C.E. Watkins,” 37.

of both the ideological framework of wealthy San Franciscan culture and of a photographic society with aesthetic, historical, and commercial aspirations. As demonstrated by John Tchen, Genthe created a fictional quarter which “never existed.” He selected specific elements of the neighborhood, especially women and children in traditional attire, and also practiced heavy retouching in order to eliminate any kind of Western contemporary presence, like white pedestrians or modern technological apparatus. The resulting representations added to the desired timeless aspect of the quarter and, by the same token, reinforced the presumed inferiority and backwardness of its population.¹³⁶

In this context, the persistence and power of a photographer’s autobiography according to the monographic narrative grid again comes to the fore. The aesthetic framings of Genthe’s work have to be superseded in order to understand how the photographs were mobilized within a broader framework of Californian photography. They are an integral part of a Club whose members were highly attracted to his portraits, and whose magazine provided ample space for “Doctor Genthe’s” eloquently romanticized accounts of jaunts to Chinatown. Again, it is of marginal importance here to search for evidence on whether the photographer held “sympathetic” views toward his subjects, was sensitive toward their culture, or opposed to the anti-Chinese movement in San Francisco, as Quitslund has examined.¹³⁷ Instead, his first-hand account of his practices in Chinatown reveal a much narrower perspective that ties in with the contemporary political mood. Maxine Hong Kingston’s criticism of Genthe’s practices – as the first critical evaluation of his corpus before scholarly publications such as Tchen’s – dismantles his selective viewpoint. She noted that Genthe’s “context for Chinatown” was “white America,” hence the insistence on picturesque details and “primitive superstitions” like the alleged fear of having pictures taken.¹³⁸

One of his first *Camera Craft* publications on “The Children of Chinatown” integrates the Brownie strategy Goldsmith would later advertise to readers, yet in a much more sophisticated style (**fig. 6.17**). Although formulated in a less rushing, more reflected tone, Genthe’s article reveals exactly the same desire for childlike spontaneity, combined with advice for patiently concealed camera work in the streets. The photographic subject’s value for his own reputation as an artist becomes clear in the following:

I do not know of a more picturesque subject for the hand camera than the “Children of Chinatown,” with their clear and smooth olive skin, their mysterious black eyes, and the rick silk dresses worn on festival occasions with such natural grace and wise dignity.¹³⁹

Much like the mission pictures of padres or of Navajos in timeless settings, the depoliticized exoticism of Chinese children was to reflect the maker’s artistic sensibility and thus heighten his

¹³⁶ Tchen, *Genthe’s Photographs of San Francisco’s Old Chinatown*, 9-15.

¹³⁷ Quitslund, “Arnold Genthe,” 173-214.

¹³⁸ Hong Kingston, “San Francisco’s Chinatown;” for discussion of the political dimension of Genthe’s corpus, see Hong, “Nation and Empire in Arnold Genthe’s Photographs of San Francisco’s Chinese Quarter, 1895 to 1906,” 8-14.

¹³⁹ Arnold Genthe, “The Children of Chinatown,” *Camera Craft* 2, no. 2 (1900): 100.

reputation. Instead of directly advising the use of the pocket camera for inhabitants who did not want their picture taken, Genthe insisted on “the art of making himself invisible” and the resulting “charm and grace only to be obtained by a negative stolen,” which would designate the true artist.¹⁴⁰ To adorn his output as an artist of glamorous subject matter, and similarly to appeal to market requests of the early 1900s, the focus on delightful depictions of women and children – of Chinese tradition and domesticity in the broadest sense – was to appeal to an increasing tourist industry. The disproportionately large number of women and children did not correspond to the reality of the neighborhood which, in Genthe’s time, had a female and child population of less than 10%. And yet, two-thirds of his corpus depict these persons.¹⁴¹ Just like the Navajo children Monsen captured with a Kodak, Genthe’s representations of Chinatown children and his encouragement for a field trip to the neighborhood created an impression of availability. The photographer’s access to seemingly intimate and thus all the more credible scenes did not make him a voyeur in the eyes of contemporary publics, but instead were taken as indicators of his interest in artistic study. The individuals taking part in these scenes were devoid of any personal meaning beyond the labels of beauty or exoticism the photographer would attach to them.

Genthe’s eloquent wording adds significantly to the sophisticated conception of this practice. It is only in the choice of vocabulary that his article differs from Goldsmith’s Kodaking advice. In this, the latter’s article, published three years after Genthe, can be considered a more direct “translation” of the practices which, by that time, had become a common theme. By the turn of the century, the policing raids through the underground territories of the neighborhood were largely abandoned in favor of “street photography” which *Camera Craft* came to define as “that most delightful of all hand-camera work.”¹⁴² For this practice, the premise of availability and appropriation along the lines of the Club agenda remained the same. The inclusion of Genthe’s Chinatown street photographs in the San Francisco salons – as well as Goldsmith’s submission of Chinese prints to the Oregon Camera Club’s exhibition in 1905¹⁴³ – demonstrate how both delightful subject matter and well-framed flâneur practice in the street, were appropriated for Pictorialist display and the quest of photography as a legitimate art form. By the time of the photographic salons, the various discourses on the neighborhood merged into a broader appreciation of Chinatown as “characteristic” of the West.

It is from this discriminatory perspective that we need to understand the Chinatown photographs as essential to a collection of Western pictures. Interestingly, the Club member who joined Genthe on the jury of selection of the third San Francisco salon was F.E. Monteverde. The latter’s prize picture *The Fish Cleaner* (see **fig. 5.8**), shown at San Francisco, Chicago, and

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 102, 104.

¹⁴¹ Tchen, *Genthe’s Photographs of San Francisco’s Old Chinatown*, 95-96, 107.

¹⁴² “The Coming Celebration,” 263.

¹⁴³ See “Tenth Annual Exhibition of Oregon Camera Club,” *Camera Craft* 10, no. 1 (1905): 46.

Philadelphia, can be seen as part of the Chinese subject matter which local photographers came to embrace. As opposed to portraits of children or scenes of drug consumption, these images of street life and business were to depict the more familiar and accessible trades of San Francisco's most visible minority. At the same time, the portrayal of the neighborhood in economic terms can be seen as another strategy of appropriating Chinese lifestyle and "tak[ing] possession of the quarter's economy."¹⁴⁴ Lee has further argued that depictions like Charles Weidner's *The Cobbler*, which was the frontispiece of *Camera Craft*'s first issue, came to embody a more straightforward application of studio portraiture to the streets of Chinatown (**fig. 6.18**). This kind of practice also implied a more direct engagement with the photographic subject, as opposed to Genthe's concealed approach. In more general terms, Lee considers these two contrasting approaches as a dividing line among Club members about questions of photographic portraiture, applied to the inhabitants of Chinatown.¹⁴⁵

While his analysis provides useful insights into the Pictorialist credo and its relationship to Chinese politics in San Francisco, the close of this chapter rather seeks to understand the sheer presence of a Chinese portrait in the first issue of *Camera Craft*. Weidner's *Cobbler* can be taken as an indicator of how widely spread, representative, and appealing depictions of Chinese life had become to Californian photographers. In a magazine, whose contributors considered themselves representative of the West Coast, its landscape, and inhabitants, the choice of a Chinese portrait as forerunner to the pages of the here-to-fore discussed, highly programmatic inauguration cannot be seen as a coincidence. Rather, it sets the tone for the ensuing appropriation of the state's diverse society and particular geography in order to fashion a Californian style. This self-image of harmonious cosmopolitanism and Pacific outreach would be further augmented in *Camera Craft* through selective coverage – not only of Chinatown jaunts, but also of reports on Japanese photography.

Despite the widespread discrimination against the small Japanese population of San Francisco around the turn of the century, the culture of Japan was highly appreciated within Club circles. Both the *Pacific Coast Photographer* and *Camera Craft* regularly published travel accounts by members, which attest to the fascination with Japanese aesthetics and lifestyles. These accounts were formulated from the safe tourist perspective in the country itself – not as close neighbors in San Francisco – and hence expressed admiration for sights of the city and the countryside, architecture, and customs. A photographer's conclusion in *Camera Craft* that "Japan – the very name will ever be associated in my mind with all that is artistic, aesthetic and refined," certainly held true for a large number of Club colleagues, for example William E. Dassonville who experimented with Japanese papers.¹⁴⁶ The

¹⁴⁴ Lee, *Picturing Chinatown*, 46.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 101-143.

¹⁴⁶ Herbert G. Ponting, "Impressions of the Orient – Japan," *Camera Craft* 6, no. 3 (1903): 102. See also Palmquist, "William E. Dassonville: An Appreciation," 15-17.

Pacific outlook and voluntary adoption of Japanese aesthetics was likewise expressed in the *Pacific Coast Photographer's* coverage on the Photographic Society of Japan, founded in 1889. One of its most prominent members was William K. Burton, a British professor hired by Tokyo Imperial University, whose reports were regularly published in the San Franciscan magazine. His belonging to the “urban elites” reflected patterns of bourgeois activity and aesthetic concern similar to the late PCAPA and the early CCC.¹⁴⁷ By the 1920s and 1930s, Japanese camera clubs would spring up along the Pacific Coast, notably in Los Angeles, Seattle, and also in San Francisco. The *mélange* of Pictorialist and Modernist aesthetics they employed became highly appealing to Californian photographers of the period, showing the longstanding fascination with Japanese two-dimensional shapes, flattened surfaces, and *ukiyo-e*. Yet, as the political climate and social conditions of this period differed from the late nineteenth-century context, these clubs and their relationship to American photographers cannot be considered in detail at this point.¹⁴⁸

In the light of the diverse examples of photographic work in San Francisco's Chinatown, from police raids to leisure strolls, it becomes clear how Club members stamped their own statement upon the neighborhood in order to shape the desired image of their practice around the turn of the century. The depiction of the space as providing a taste of adventure, timelessness, and exoticism, served to mark out the Pacific outlook of Western photographers. San Francisco, as a city by the Pacific Ocean whose future lay in the extension of the Western empire, was portrayed as a meaningful location for the nation, which was just as attractive to tourists interested in consuming exotic vistas. In order to shape these scenes, a controlling power had to be demonstrated, which would put Asian peoples in a clearly inferior position to American society.¹⁴⁹ The aesthetic appeal of these cultures provided the framework for an idiosyncratic and consumable narrative. The sixteen years of photographic work preceding the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906 set the tone for such a depoliticized – and yet somewhat deeply political – photographic portrayal of minorities. Accordingly, the study of camera club members and their relationship to minority spaces in the proximity of their headquarters shows how photographic practices served to perpetuate racial and social hierarchies. At the same time, it allows historians of photography and of urban history to understand how the “doubleness” of a city's portrait – its “self and other,” its “difference and desire,” – has emerged.¹⁵⁰ An understanding of these social dynamics and photographic yearnings in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century

¹⁴⁷ Ross, *Photography for Everyone. The Cultural Lives of Cameras and Consumers in Early Twentieth-century Japan*, 102-103. See also W.K. Burton, “Japanese Life and Customs,” *Pacific Coast Photographer* 2, no. 11 (1893): 449-455.

¹⁴⁸ For further discussion of Japanese photographers in California and the American West in the 1920s, see notably Dennis Reed, *Making Waves: Japanese American Photography, 1920-1940* (Los Angeles: Japanese American National Museum, 2016); David F. Martin and Nicole Bromberg, *Shadows of a Fleeting World: Pictorial Photography and the Seattle Camera Club* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011); Sailor, “‘You Must Become Dreamy:’ Complicating Japanese-American Pictorialism and the Early Twentieth-century Regional West.” See also Chapter 9.

¹⁴⁹ Matsumoto, “Orientalism in the Cosmopolitan City,” 74-75.

¹⁵⁰ Lee, “Photography and Opium in a Nineteenth-century Port City,” 595.

is necessary when approaching the vast output of images and narratives in the wake of urban destruction in April 1906.

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With regard to the corpus of images that was designated by the Club as representative of its work, perhaps even of its identity, we can detect strong patterns of selectivity which served to fit the desired self-image as both Californian and as American practitioners. Belonging to the nation meant carving out a portrayal of the local photographer who operated within an idiosyncratic environment with meaningful elements for the country and its history. The choice of ancient ancestors – indigenous inhabitants or civilizing padres – and their sites of settlement provided an illustrious, perhaps legendary, quality. At the same time, the selection of exotic vistas in Chinatown embodied San Francisco's geostrategic anchorage, its allegedly harmonious cosmopolitanism, and served a promising outlook on imperial expansion toward the Pacific. The photographers' terrain came to combine landscape and cityscape, sites and people, along the lines of an easily legible narrative. In this process, the photographic subjects, be they individuals or built environment, were emptied of sociopolitical meaning. This flattening harmonization – this erasure of more complex historical and social developments – facilitated their transformation into objects.

These objects came to partake in the dissemination channels of the Club and its network. When disseminated then, they would display what the privileged contributors to Californian culture considered the state's distinctive features. The representational quality of these images and their distribution in a variety of media mirrors the general phenomenon of the 1880s and 1890s as a period in which the belief in the indexicality of photography was strengthened. Nicholas Mirzoeff has argued that this belief in the medium's authenticity went hand in hand with "a wider move to exhibit difference of all kinds at fairs, slideshows, cinemas, and so on, that created and sustained a desire to see racially."¹⁵¹ This racialized gaze, circulated by the Club, reflected the practitioners' preconception of the landscape, the city, and the assigned roles of its inhabitants. The costly activity of photography, its staging and display in select social circles, led to the perpetuation of hierarchical assumptions among contributors and consumers. As circulating images, then, they would be inserted into the "new and homogeneous terrain of consumption and circulation," that is, they became exchange objects in "a new cultural economy."¹⁵² Furthermore, the mastery of the technology went hand in hand with the other infrastructures used by the Club, notably the railroad, which served as a central vehicle to articulate the vision of a new, profoundly American culture in the West.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Nicholas Mirzoeff, "The Shadow and the Substance: Race, Photography, and the Index," in *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self*, eds. Coco Fusco and Brian Wallis (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003), 112.

¹⁵² Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991), 13.

¹⁵³ See Nye, *Narratives and Spaces: Technology and the Construction of American Culture*.

The underlying and most important aspect of this internalization of privilege and appropriation of scenery was the photographic work on site. Through the practice, the rather abstract idea of “landscape” was turned into a verb in the present continuous – “landscaping.” Landscaping as an act implied the deliberate forging of a view that moved beyond the actual environment. It created “social and subjective identities” of the local.¹⁵⁴ The inscription of minority populations as fixtures into the local culture and environment required exactly this kind of active relationship with the landscape through exploring, photographing, and narrating. Since the practices reveal at a micro-level how racialized visions of society were integrated and disseminated, we need to examine collective photography practices more critically, and especially shrink from dismissing them as trivial leisure. The desire of the Club to create a “representation” through practice must be connected to the performative value of such representative corpora within their social class. With regard to artistic production – as the Club considered its output as characteristic Californian art – we can analyze these aspirations through Craig Owens’ critical evaluation of the term “representation.” If art works carry meaning and are made to operate within a specific culture, this process functions through “attribution” which implies possession. This “desire for *property* [...] conveys a man’s sense of his ‘power over things,’” which eventually leads to “appropriation.”¹⁵⁵ That is to say, the appropriation of selective elements of indigenous and Chinese cultures for the articulation of a Californian practice – and the creation of a material corpus – implies the asserted ownership of its makers. Through residential segregation and aesthetic objectification, the minority populations were turned into accessible sites and could be attributed specific roles in the canon. Eventually, then, we need to consider the ensuing representativeness of the photographs as “the founding act of power in our culture.”¹⁵⁶

If the Club undertook photographic ventures into Navajo settlements or the streets of Chinatown in order to demarcate the specificity of its regional practice, the resulting material must be ascribed a performative role within the society, culture, history, and geography it came to be a part of. The narrated scenarios within which the images were published have to be identified as key additions to an understanding of photography’s ideological value. The combination of practice, image production, and narration have to be taken together so as to grasp how the coming-of-age of a group of local photographers was intertwined with the development of a nation.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 5; Mitchell, “Imperial Landscape,” 1.

¹⁵⁵ Craig Owens, “Representation, Appropriation, and Power,” in *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture*, eds. Scott Bryson et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 95-96.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 91.

Conclusion

In the process of maturation taking place in the first years of the twentieth century, the Club photographers' self-identification as "pioneers" resurged as a central theme. The demarcation of 1849 as the ideological birthdate of a Western American community would inform the Club members' portrayal of their own history as photographers, of their contemporary artistic works, of the local landscape, and of its inhabitants. To understand how the pioneer theme became meaningful in this period – fifty years after Californian statehood – means to trace the ideological and sociocultural developments interwoven with the Club. In its self-definition as a community with deep-seated local attachment, the prevalent framings of California as a territory with a unique history and a glorious future made their way into the practitioners' agenda. This interweave becomes evident in three dimensions of the Club's practice.

First, as mature practitioners looking back to one decade of photographic activity, the year 1900 constituted an ideal moment to link the history of the Club to the history of photography and the state, both commencing in the West in 1849. Photographers like William Shew or Carleton Watkins, whose arrival in California instigated the onset of a dynamic photography market, were designated as living historical figures whose careers embodied both the progress of the medium over five decades and attested to its artistic value. The hardships involved in their early practice were sought out to validate to the photographers' heroic quality and as such, bestowed on them the image of first Californians. The Club members aligned with these precedents by publishing biographical portrayals of early photographers and by insisting on their inspirational value for contemporary workers. Creating a lineage also implied the characterization of their own practice as historically valuable, for example by initiating an inventory collection of city images in the line of the historical surveys conducted in Europe. Despite the largely futile nature of these endeavors, the photographers came to express their own vision of local history in which they could clearly position and recognize themselves.

Second, in the search for artistic legitimacy, the pioneer ideology not only served the demarcation of Club members' works, but similarly historicized and mythologized the institution which was to support them. The choice of the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art as a singular cultural institution of the American West constituted in itself a powerful assistance, linked to the University of California at Berkeley and the San Francisco Art Association. Its founder's belonging to the railroad patrons – the controversial yet by the photographers unanimously praised "Big Four" of the Central and Southern Pacific – provided a second layer of prestige and pioneering spirit. Due to the economic success and tangible impact of the railroad infrastructure all across the region, the photographers shaped an institutional and historical validation of their works. To align with the

railroad company as an originally Californian enterprise implied a celebration of state-produced works and their “independence” from Eastern institutions. It furthermore situated the photographers within a canon of local artists, who pursued the same subject matter and were sponsored by the same institutions. Hence was created a framework which furnished the local photographers with a voice that compensated their lack of visibility in the nation’s affirmed art centers of the East Coast.

As a third step, the photographers appreciated the pioneer legacy more concretely by using the travel on railroad lines as strongest impetus to an exploration of the territory. Here, geographic remoteness could be singled out as an asset for an idiosyncratic practice. Exploring the Yosemite and the Mariposa Grove, or touring the Californian missions whilst voluntarily absorbing their romantic histories, once again provided a fertile ideological framework for the practice of photography. The privileged access to these sites led to a constructed visual narrative in which the photographers could be portrayed as artists, local historians, and foremost Californians. Being a pioneer implied here the adventuresome exploration of the state and its outskirts. At the same time, it created a selective vision of society, culture, and history by designating specific sites as nationally relevant and creating a genealogy of “firsts.” From this perspective, minorities of Californian society and their segregated spaces could be turned into aesthetically pleasing and historically meaningful venues, whose picturesqueness further adorned the Club’s work. In this historicized outlook, minority spaces became consumable sites of the past which were relegated to an outsider position. Instead of carrying political meaning, they were made to validate and to aestheticize the self-image of wealthy Californians.

The search for ancientness in the landscape and its people, and the desire to establish links to earlier civilizations, became a particularly Northern Californian endeavor in this period. By reviving the communal myth of the Gold Rush, which itself echoed the formation of prosperous societies in remote epochs, and by choosing a set of idiosyncratic landscape features, like the sequoias, as “surrogates for historical heritage,”¹ the photographers inserted themselves in this regional history. Through the shared vocabularies with local historical societies like the Native Sons, and the appropriation of booster discourses to their own corpus, Club members developed a strong awareness of their role in the shaping of a regional canon. Through these varied strategies, the commonly associated “thinness of California’s soil for nurturing historical consciousness”² was reversed, as its very own community and landscape were designated as main agents in the forging of an historical understanding.

The pioneer imagery and its multiple inflections – in the writing of local history, in the institutionalization of photography as an art form, or in the portrayal as privileged photographers in a multi-cultural society – provided a powerful tool for the California Camera Club in its period of

¹ Lowenthal, “The Place of the Past in the American Landscape,” 101.

² Glassberg, *Sense of History*, 168-169.

maturation. As both vocabulary and practice, the pioneer label was instrumental in the creation of a self-image as purposeful practitioners who were deeply embedded in the dominant societal structures of the state. Its ideological underpinnings could be bent to the needs of a photographic society which sought to define its practice as unique while at the same time mapping out a legitimate place for Californian culture on the national scene. Interestingly, in the history of photography over the course of the twentieth century, the pioneer label has come to carry a similar, strongly ideological meaning. In this canon, the designation of pioneer artists has led to the establishment of an avant-garde lineage which deliberately detached the individual practitioners from their community. Rather than examining associations of photographers with shared goals, this paradigmatic shift in the history of the medium has obliterated the context of production and its societal ramifications. The turn toward to an individualized narrative has led, especially with regard to photography around the turn of the century, to a marginalization of collective photographic *practices*. It has developed individualized aesthetic criteria, necessary for institutional preservation, which have yet reinforced patterns of selection and, ultimately, oblivion.

As has been demonstrated in the historiographic discussion of this second part, the focus in the art-history of photography on “pioneers” or “masters” has denied the social and economic side of production so as to embrace formalist qualities, devoid of broader cultural or political meaning. Within this monographic scheme, the bulk of images, the diversity of supports, and the multiplicity of practices generated around the turn of the century has become dismissed as an impenetrable archival mass. It is true that the accumulated bulk of “amateur” or anonymous material in local archives appears too extensive to articulate a definitive statement, too diverse to be labeled under one specific genre. In this context, indeed, the diversity of material supports works against the archival capacity, especially because the corpora of societies like the California Camera Club are not available as a whole, but dispersed over a vast array of institutions and stored under myriad labels. This material heterogeneity, mixed with the great number of practitioners, certainly has made comprehensive research challenging. The photographers’ desire for nation-wide circulation and their embrace of a panoply of material supports to distribute their works has complexified photo-historical research. And yet, it is exactly this heterogeneity, this incongruity with existing categories, and this resistance to classification, from which the corpus draws its historical riches. The complexity of the material reveals the reality of the archival situation and thereby mirrors photography’s embeddedness in the sociocultural tissue of its time. At the same time, conversely, it is exactly this interweave of the photographic object and its performance in local culture, which the photographers affiliated with the Photo-Secession sought to remove. By selecting a limited number of photographs as unique objects, they would separate the medium’s artistic expressions from its sociocultural, political, and commercial ramifications. Through this selection process, the photographer came to stand out as an

individual artist, or as part of an avant-garde movement, rather than as a versatile actor within a community or a collective. It is this restricted perception of the practice, its appliances, and its results which allowed photographers of the Secession to rally for institutional representation and preservation amid the fine arts.

As the institutional appreciation of photography – and the legacy of the Photo-Secession – have been confirmed in scholarship throughout the second half of the twentieth century, this part has sought to demonstrate the importance of rethinking the tools for photographic research in the twenty-first century. This revised approach appears particularly fruitful in the Californian context, where a strongly contextualized analysis, as the one undertaken in this second part, brings to the fore hitherto unexplored corpora. By enlarging the scope of archival material, by rethinking the categories under which photographs are encountered, we can come to understand out of which contexts photographic aesthetics have emerged and for which purposes they have come to function. In the Californian case, this analysis has clearly revealed the political underpinnings of photographic practices and writings, that is to say, the widespread assumptions about California's mythic role in the national imagination, the normalization of occupation and conquest, as well as the longevity of a picturesque landscape aesthetics. Even in the context of fine-art events like the photographic salons of the early 1900s, we can detect micro-moments of ideological perpetuation, notably in the assemblage of a corpus of “representative Western pictures.”

If the perspective is shifted to the shared ideas about region and nation that are expressed in these events, we come to grasp photography's instrumental function in the creation of a communal self-image. Since the pioneer paradigm continued to loom large in the Club corpus and was strongly endorsed by San Franciscan society after the earthquake and fire, it has been essential to demonstrate its societal, material, and aesthetic functions in this discussion of the Club's evolution in the run-up to the transformative event of 1906.

Part III : Rupture (1906-1908)

Like most of the clubs in old San Francisco, this organization suffered materially by the last disaster; indeed, it may be said to have lost all of its possessions. Nothing was saved. The early hours at which the great catastrophe occurred precluded any possibility of the major portion of the members reaching the rooms in time to save even their individual property. The few who were able to reach the building and climb up those seven flights of stairs, through plaster and debris to the club rooms, did not have a chance to tarry there long, the conflagration soon suggesting the advisability [sic] of a hasty departure with such of their belongings as they could easily carry. Only four members out of a membership of nearly four hundred, saved anything. [...] In times, such as the city has just been, and is still passing through, one can hardly expect an art, which is cultivated as a pastime, to absorb much of one's attention. There are two [sic] many weighty material problems to be solved and that of a means of livelihood suggests to many, no doubt, that as far as photographic art is concerned, one had best "forget it" for the time being. But the period of "forgetfulness" is already passed with the members of this prominent organization. Soon after the disaster, the members were called together, and such as had not temporarily left the city, bestirred themselves in the work of placing the club again in working shape.

"The California Camera Club," *Camera Craft* 13, no. 1 (1906): 259.

The probabilities are that never since cameras were first invented has there been such a large number in use at any one place as there has been in San Francisco since the 18th of last April. Everyone who either possessed, could buy or borrow one, and was then fortunate enough to secure supplies for it, made more or less good use of his knowledge of photography.

Edgar A. Cohen, "With a Camera in San Francisco," *Camera Craft* 12, no. 5 (1906): 183.

Photographs are about memory – or perhaps about the absence of memory, providing pictures to fill voids, illustrating our collective memory. So they are an excellent means with which to trigger concern and soothe anxieties about history and place.

Lucy R. Lippard, *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society* (New York: The New Press, 1997), 20.

More than just instruments that mediated between an event and a viewership, visual imagery acquired a degree of cultural agency when tropes crystallized and, appearing to take on a life of their own, eclipsed competing portrayals of the disaster. In this regard, the photographic eye was profoundly influential in shaping general perceptions of the event, having an impact beyond its mimetic capabilities. Optical technology could serve as a weapon of control, whether through the commanding strategic vision of aerial photography used in disaster management or the dominating gaze of the camera that imposed order in the face of violent chaos.

Gennifer Weisenfeld, *Imaging Disaster: Tokyo and the Visual Culture of Japan's Great Earthquake of 1923* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 6.

To be a Californian was to see oneself, if one believed the lessons the place seemed most immediately to offer, as affected only by "nature," which in turn was seen to exist simultaneously as a source of inspiration or renewal [...] and as the ultimate brute reckoning, the force that by guaranteeing its destruction gave the place its perilous beauty.

Joan Didion, *Where I was from* (London: Harper Perennial, 2003), 66.

Introduction

On April 18, 1906, at 5.12 a.m., the earth shook for fifty-five seconds in and around San Francisco with an estimated magnitude of 7.9 on the Richter scale. Its epicenter situated some thirteen kilometers South of the dense urban conglomeration, close to Daly City, the earthquake was generated by lateral movement in the San Andreas Fault which runs 1,200 km through the state of California. By 5.30 a.m., breaking gas pipes in buildings and homes led inhabitants to report over fifty fires, which in the following days, would amount to more than 28,000 burning structures, caused by numerous flawed mechanisms. Perhaps, by the 1900s, San Franciscans had become “accustomed to” seismic phenomena and recurrent fires – not least due to the mytho-historical narrative of the city whose resilience was ratified in its seal with a Phoenix rising from the ashes. In its brief existence of a little more than five decades, the city had already established a considerable record of fires in the early 1850s, and an earthquake in 1868. However, what would follow the intense early morning tremor in April 1906 were three days of firestorms, aggravated by changing winds, which destroyed 75% of the city and left more than half of the population homeless, that is, some 250,000 out of 410,000 people. It has been widely confirmed that the fire caused the most considerable damage, which could have been prevented, had water supply been functional, and fire-fighting measures with explosives correctly employed. The death toll, first largely miscalculated, is estimated today at around 3,000, yet cannot be precisely determined due to lack of documentation.¹

Situated right at the center of the most violent zone of destruction, at 819 Market Street, was the Academy of Science Building. Housing not only the offices of the California Camera Club on the sixth and seventh floors, but also the offices of *Camera Craft* right below the Club headquarters, the building was severely shaken and, by midday, consumed by fire. A photograph by Club member W.J. Street, taken down Market Street probably before 10:30 a.m., shows the Academy, located next to the Emporium Department Store, still intact without any signs of exterior burning. One block further, however, the Call Building was already thickly enveloped by smoke (**fig. 7.1**). Accounts transmitted via telegraph that morning described the Call Building by 10:30 a.m. “in full blaze,” and four hours later as “burned out entirely.”² By midday, the Academy followed suit. Among the rare sources of post-earthquake material recounting the Californian photographers’ experience of the event is an eyewitness testimony of Fayette J. Clute, editor of *Camera Craft*. Woken up by the earthquake, Clute rushed the several blocks from his home further up on Market Street down to the Academy of Science

¹ Information derived from Fradkin, *The Great Earthquake of Firestorms of 1906: How San Francisco Nearly Destroyed Itself*, 8-12, 52-55, 69-77, 187-192. As the Richter scale did not exist in 1906, the magnitude was calculated later on, see “The Great 1906 San Francisco Earthquake,” USGS Earthquake Hazards Program, accessed January 3, 2018, <https://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/events/1906calif/> 18april/.

² Quoted from the chief operator telegraph service on April 18, 1906, in Fradkin, *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906*, 85.

to inspect the offices' condition. When *Camera Craft* took up publication anew in May 1906, operating from Sacramento, Clute's account communicated the first official information to local photographers. It was similarly the first news item for national audiences on the situation of San Franciscan photographers. It is worth citing his testimony at some length, as it epitomizes the experience of a local photographer and allows us to grasp the extent of damage.

Entering the Academy of Science building by a key which unlocked the iron gates, I stumbled up the stairs which were littered with large masses of plaster work which had been thrown down. The building must have been shaken most violently. A large iron bridge which spanned the space between the front building and the one in the rear containing the Museum was thrown down and had crashed into the handsome two story connecting passage way below. Entering my office I found a general wreck. Everything was covered with plaster, hardly a vestige [sic] having remained on the ceiling. [...] The two dark rooms still further in the rear could not be reached on account of the mass thrown down and against the door. At this time I felt little fear of fire, but wishing to be on the safe side, gathered together a few of the most important books and the subscription list and started for home and breakfast. My own cameras were either in the dark room or at home, but there happened to be a small camera belonging to a friend, lying handy with a carrying strap, and it was taken along.

A visit to the rooms of the California Camera Club on the floor above showed the tall clock thrown down, the contents of book shelves and lockers sharing the same fate, and a strong smell of gas pervading the place. Descending to the street I found fire coming towards Market Street from the south and made two snaps looking down both Third and Fourth Streets. It was not yet six o'clock, and as the camera was devoid of finder and loaded with slow plates the pictures, one of which is shown herewith, were not a perfect success. They, however, show the beginning of the conflagration which raged for so many following hours.³

Using his improvised equipment, Clute toured Market and California Street that morning – a circuit that resulted in a densely illustrated portrayal of the early moments of the disaster (**fig. 7.2**, **fig. 7.3**, **fig. 7.4**, **fig. 7.5**). No pictures were taken by him inside the Academy, which could not be entered a second time since “the building was expected to be dynamited to prevent the flames crossing Market Street.”⁴ A photograph taken by an anonymous person on the morning of April 18, however, suggests the substantial amount of damage to be witnessed in the interior (**fig. 7.6**). After spending the night outdoors, Clute found shelter at a friend's house close to Golden Gate Park. In the process of grasping the extent of the disaster in the following weeks, he expressed the hope that such an event would not be reproduced and adopted a positive outlook, despite the material loss. His conclusion reads as a call to action destined to the photographer audiences among his Western readership:

It is hard indeed to lose the books, pictures, papers, negatives and the like which have been accumulated during many years and which cannot be duplicated. At the same time, regrets are useless and one can do no better than imitate the good example set by others who suffered as greatly if not more, and in doing so, start anew with a firm determination to display one's confidence in the future of the city at the Golden Gate, and do one's share in the rebuilding, which will soon result in a greater and grander San Francisco.⁵

³ Fayette J. Clute, “With Earthquake and Fire,” *Camera Craft* 12, no. 4 (1906): 149-151.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 154.

As the wording suggests, it appears that the experience of disaster and its accompanying feeling of helplessness were rapidly reshaped through the lens of a newly imagined city. Through the reactivation of a long-established myth of the urban community, its desired history and anticipated future, the material caesura could be alleviated and a new corpus envisioned.

Covering the period of April 1906 until the official end of relief with the closing of the last refugee camp in June 1908, the aim of this third part is to examine how Club practices and discourses evolved over a two-year period and were embedded in the construction of the city's new self-image. It will be of interest to examine personal accounts shared within Club circles and their impact on collective projects of photographing the destroyed and soon-to-be reconstructed urban space. The process of shaping a new corpus will be looked at from a variety of angles, thereby disclosing how the photographers' network remained closely interwoven in the city's promotional campaigns. The imagination of a "grand San Francisco" will be more specifically examined in its relation to ideas about photography's role in reconstruction. In this context, the material reproduced in photographic magazines and popular histories of the disaster will be connected to the social side of the practice which, in its collective and celebratory exertion, allowed to produce new images of both the city *and* of the practitioners themselves. The photographers' contribution to a visual history of the catastrophe, their definition of an iconography of destruction and its diverse mobilizations for commercial and artistic purposes, constitute the main focus for this discussion.

If the experience of earthquake and fire generated a "communal fable about San Francisco," as argued by Rodger Birt, it needs to be asked how this account was photographically enriched and sustained. Since Birt suggests that during the aftermath a process of re-appropriation was instigated, which turned "the idealized narrative" into "the accepted history," we need to understand the strategies of idealization employed by Club photographers.⁶ A recent study on the role of photographic societies after the Messina and Reggio earthquake of 1908 has provided insight into the shaping of disaster accounts through photography. What Tiziana Serena termed "patriotic participation" in the post-earthquake context is an especially important factor for the photographic reconstruction of a catastrophic event, since images could target the emotions of the nation as a whole and thereby "symbolically and imaginatively [united] geographical extremities of the country and the nation." The imagined community in the Andersonian sense was to be reinforced by circulating photographs, which provided the connective tissue between the disaster population and the rest of the country.⁷ Whereas neither San Franciscan officials nor the California Camera Club published a

⁶ Rodger C. Birt, *History's Anteroom: Photography in San Francisco 1906-1909* (Richmond: William Stout Publishers, 2011), 18.

⁷ Serena, "Catastrophe and Photography," 138-140.

comprehensive history of the event,⁸ the Italian Photographic Society contributed to a celebratory outlook on the 1908 earthquake in a widely published and translated monograph whose benefits were used for charity. The participation in this publication put the collective of photographers into the light of a nationally renowned, civically engaged organization.⁹

Despite the lack of such a publicized illustrated history in San Francisco, the bulk of material with semi-official character published in the wake of the disaster represents similar patterns of celebration on the part of the CCC. From the Californian perspective, it is important to grasp the particular motivations for a “patriotic participation,” which were modeled upon early attempts at gaining a meaningful place in the history of the nation. However, the photographers’ self-understanding as Californians, and more particularly as San Franciscans, would be used to distinguish the community from the nation. The isolation from the rest of the country became more painfully tangible in the aftermath of the earthquake and fire, when obstacles of long-distance communication slowed the transmission of news to government officials, and relief donations were to traverse vast expanses of land before reaching the Bay Area. With the focus of national attention shifted toward the West Coast and its ideologically most fertile terrain, an opportunity to overcome the distance through a celebratory history presented itself. The irrecoverable losses suffered in San Francisco proved even more striking for a young nation keen to chronicle its past. As Edwards writes, “local loss stands for the diminution of national textures of the past.”¹⁰ Accordingly, the aftermath of the catastrophe added a new impetus to the creation of a history written from the Californian perspective. Here, the overlapping discourses of local uniqueness and demand for recognition cultivated in the decades before the catastrophe came again into use. The process of reformulation of the San Franciscan calamity demonstrates how smoothly the local mythology could be molded to fit the circumstances.

As the articulation of a local narrative gained new dynamics with the disaster, the bonds that were forged and the ensuing community portrayal require critical questioning. As the tabula rasa of the destroyed city demanded to be rapidly filled with both material and familiar symbolic meaning, the story of a rising metropolis was re-appropriated by city officials to whom photographers cultivated close ties. The two main tropes that ran like a red line through the accounts were the sight of ruins and the call to a pioneer past. Both elements furnished a smooth historical fabric for the events and were mobilized as a shared reference by photographers and officials. Even though a disaster might

⁸ See Fradkin, *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906*, 248-254: The collection assembled by the Committee on History (supervised by John S. Drum and UC professor of history H. Morse Stephens) consisting of eyewitness reports, newspaper clippings, reports, and ephemera, was destined to provide the basis for an official history, yet was eventually lost by the late 1920s due to the absence of proper institutional preservation.

⁹ Serena, “Catastrophe and Photography,” 145-148; Club photographers could have been familiar with the publication by the Italian Photographic Society since *Camera Craft* advertised it as a charitable project, see “The Messina and Reggio Catastrophe,” *Camera Craft* 16, no. 4 (1909): 126.

¹⁰ Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 163.

reshuffle the cards of a community, and thus generate a shift in power relations by creating moments of unity, the accounts of such “extraordinary communities,” in the words of Rebecca Solnit, mainly concerned the middle and upper classes of the city, and for the most part excluded the poor and immigrant populations. Despite moments of deep compassion and an overall emotive communal reinforcement, structures of inequality at the heart of San Franciscan society persisted – and, as a result, pervaded in the national rhetoric of the disaster narrative.¹¹ The post-disaster vocabulary similarly presented these forms of obfuscation and de-politicization. If the “rhetoric of the frontier” was used to describe the “hostile” living conditions in the city,¹² we need to examine how these patterns of history-writing were reenacted in the local photographers’ circles.

As an examination of camera club photographers in a complex post-disaster space, this third part emphasizes the role of photographic materiality and communal agency. In the face of the massive output of material, it seeks to discard the simplistic impression that the event gave way to a uniform bulk of material by “snapshotters” destined to end up as mere illustration. While the 1906 corpora reside in archives and consist of correspondence, photographs, a number of silent films,¹³ and newspaper clippings, more recent catastrophes like Hurricane Katrina – which in its expansive damage has been oftentimes compared to the San Francisco earthquake and fire – have generated new forms of visual culture informed by the panoply of technological means available. In both cases, in archival deposits and in digital databases, researchers need to remain alert to strategies of photographic representation, the photographs’ trajectories, and the ways in which the material is encountered.¹⁴ In the San Franciscan case, it can be argued that despite the overlap of the Kodak Brownie’s increasing affordability and the strong appeal of the event to local practitioners, the resulting corpus is far from uniform – either in subject matter, or in material support.

It is worth pointing out the conditions of archival research undertaken for this third part, as it covers a vast corpus mainly organized according to subject matter and location, instead of authorship. This form of archival classification furthers the impression of a large number of unknown contributors, whose sheer mass appears somewhat impenetrable at first sight. As an example, the

¹¹ Rebecca Solnit, *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities that Arise in Disaster* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009). Solnit only briefly touches upon patterns of social and racial injustice which persisted after the San Francisco disaster, see 35-45.

¹² Susanne Leikam, *Framing Spaces in Motion: Tracing Visualizations of Earthquakes into Twentieth-century San Francisco* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2015), 259-265.

¹³ This footage is available via the Prelinger Archives on archive.org. New archival footage is regularly added to the corpus, see most recently, Niraj Chokshi, “Found Footage Offers a New Glimpse at 1906 San Francisco Earthquake,” *New York Times*, April 14, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/14/us/san-francisco-earthquake-film.html>. The Miles Brothers’ well known footage of San Francisco several days before and immediately after the disaster figures prominently in this corpus. No connection between the CCC and the Miles Brothers could be established, and *Camera Craft* did not discuss the making or screening of the film.

¹⁴ For a recent discussion of photography after Katrina, see Maude Oswald, “Photographier la catastrophe, témoigner de l’humain. La Nouvelle Orléans après Katrina,” *Image & Narrative* 18, no. 2 (2017): 49-61, <http://www.imageandnarrative.be/index.php/imagenarrative/article/view/1555/1237>.

1906 San Francisco Earthquake and Fire Project, including thousands of digitized images from collecting institutions throughout California and launched on the occasion of the centennial in 2006, is of immense riches to researchers and laypersons alike. It assembles photographs, maps, eyewitness accounts, next to personal and official correspondence.¹⁵ Yet, this digital collection tends to reproduce a pattern which has been encountered on numerous occasions during the research on Californian photographers for this thesis. Classified in terms of subject matter (streets, institutions, cities, and counties), the photographs are reduced to “factual content rather than [...] functional origins,” as Joan Schwartz writes.¹⁶ Admittedly, it is challenging to grant space in such a vast collection to individual photographers. And yet, works by Club members like Charles Weidner and W.J. Street represent useful additions to the scope. Instead of being listed in a separate section of photographers, however, their names are solely added to the image as author.

A case in point of this preference of visual content over context and agency can be found in the use of Weidner’s photograph *San Francisco – One Year After* that illustrates the introduction on the project’s website (**fig. 7.7**). The caption of the photograph, referring to “[t]he beginning of new and greater San Francisco” and the “[m]illions of dollars spent,” hint at Weidner’s contribution to the city’s promotional portrayal. As professional photographer and as Club member, Weidner produced a remarkable corpus of before-and-after images, series of postcards, and an album treating the relief effort, later held in the estate of ex-mayor James D. Phelan. All of these sources – which will be discussed in detail later on – can be consulted when searching for “Charles Weidner,” yet one has to be familiar with his name in order to gain this more comprehensive overview. An extended section for “photographers” or “institutions and societies” which would include these practitioners, or even the California Camera Club, could add to the historical density of the project and encourage more insightful cross-referencing. The entwinement of photographers in the reconstruction effort could be greatly enriched through the fusion of image-content, authorship, and written source material – especially in such an easily accessible digital format.

Interestingly, and yet unsurprisingly, the only practitioner listed under “Photographers-Biography” and “Photography-Artistic” is Arnold Genthe and his account of the event taken from *As I Remember* (1936). His *Looking down Sacramento Street* (**fig. 7.8**) having become both the historical textbook illustration and aesthetic disaster depiction par excellence,¹⁷ it represents a standard

¹⁵ “The 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and Fire Project,” The Bancroft Library, accessed January 3, 2018, <http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/collections/earthquakeandfire/about.html>. Digital collection with material assembled from the Bancroft Library, the California Historical Society, the Society of California Pioneers, the California State Library, the Huntington Library, and Stanford University Libraries.

¹⁶ Joan M. Schwartz, “Coming to Terms with Photographs: Descriptive Standards, Linguistic ‘Othering,’ and the Margins of Archiviv,” *Archivaria* 54 (2002): 143, <https://archivaria.ca/index.php/archivaria/article/view/12861/14092>.

¹⁷ Two early moments of exhibition and preservation contributed to Genthe’s longstanding appearance in the art history of photography: Alfred Stieglitz acquired six prints of his, including *Looking down Sacramento Street*, at the

reference for any collection. However, his appearance as the only person in both of these categories yet again confirms the impression of a fine-art monopoly embodied by Genthe in the San Franciscan photography scene of the 1900s. It perpetuates an individualist vision, while discarding the riches to be explored in other photographers' corpora of the same period. This authoritative representation is consolidated by a "descriptive terminology," which, at a closer look, discloses "structures of meaning-making" in the archive.¹⁸ In the digital archive assembled for the 1906 earthquake and fire, the binary structures of "fine art versus anonymous" dominate the attribution of agency and the favoring of content over context. This process has led to the solidification of a photographic history which yet again denies the Club practitioners a visible stance.¹⁹ As Birt rightfully observed, in the face of the many well-known earthquake and fire depictions – like Genthe's – numerous are the overlooked photographers who "still await their chroniclers."²⁰

If we want to argue in favor of "instrumentality" as opposed to "indexicality" when looking at the material, this shift in approach demands a turn away from the fixed archival reading grid.²¹ It has been acknowledged by research in American history that an increased sensibility toward the making, function, and publication of photographs heightens "the value of historical inquiry" at large.²² Operating in this vein, recent disaster studies have taken into account the visual culture and, in the San Franciscan case, have drawn on material from *Camera Craft* while also mentioning the California Camera Club in passing. Even though this research has partly overcome rigid forms of archival classification and instead opted for a re-contextualization, it still employs all too readily the Newhallian model of photographic history. Accordingly, studies on the earthquake and fire have tended to frame the CCC from a Pictorialist standpoint aspiring to Stieglitz's ideals, that is, despising both commercial work and "snapshooting."²³ To counter these simplistic depictions of photography in the disaster period, and to exceed the amateur/professional/snapshot division, this part discloses the complexity of Club material, discourses, and members' engagements after April 1906.

International Exhibition of Pictorial Photography at Buffalo, 1910, see Bochner, *An American Lens*, 44-45. Ansel Adams' first show at the Museum of Modern Art in 1940 also included the photograph, see Wyatt, *Five Fires*, 122.

¹⁸ Schwartz, "Coming to Terms with Photographs," 156-157.

¹⁹ Despite – or perhaps because of – the continuous presence of Arnold Genthe's disaster depictions in research and exhibitions, this part does not deal with his output. His work has been analyzed at length by historians over the past three decades. Furthermore, by 1906 Genthe had practically disappeared from the Club's network, with *Camera Craft* mentioning him only once during the two-year period outlined for this chapter. For research on Genthe, see Quitslund, "Arnold Genthe: A Pictorial Photographer in San Francisco: 1895-1911"; Birt, "Envisioning the City: Photography in the History of San Francisco, 1850-1906," 317-385; Jacob Birken, "Die Kalifornische Institution. Fernwestliche Weltbilder um 1906" (PhD diss., Staatliche Hochschule für Gestaltung Karlsruhe, 2018), 62-150. See also "The California Camera Club," *Camera Craft* 14, no. 9 (1907): 423, on Genthe's print exhibition in the rooms of the CCC in July 1907. It is not known which photographs were shown on this occasion.

²⁰ Birt, *History's Anteroom*, 10.

²¹ Schwartz, "Coming to Terms with Photographs," 155.

²² Joshua Brown, "Historians and Photography," *American Art* 21, no. 3 (2007): 12.

²³ See Fradkin, *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906*, 241-288; Nick Yablon, *Untimely Ruins: An Archeology of American Urban Modernity, 1819-1919* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 191-242. For a notable exception, see Birt, *History's Anteroom*, 12-25.

Given these pressing questions of instrumentality and agency, the understanding of the city's photographic reconstruction will be enhanced by a study of the period's material culture. Since fear of loss had guided the Club's projects of historical photography prior to the earthquake and fire – in which all of this material eventually vanished – members were eager to embark on a revitalization of their corpus by reassembling numbers of *Camera Craft*, negatives, prints and lantern slides, and most importantly, by actively engaging with the city space. The counterbalancing of loss through purposeful material creation was meant to remedy the damage. The idea of catastrophes as “occasions for extraordinary cultural production” can be validated in the face of the bulk of material produced from the morning of April 18, 1906 onward. From this perspective, the disaster is seen as a source of “renewal” which allowed inhabitants to focus on future progress instead of lamenting past losses. The eradicated city therefore represented a scenario of “creative destruction” from which new accounts, images, and ideas could be derived. This creational impetus allowed the local community to re-imagine the event as a nationally relevant tale of hope.²⁴

In order for this more optimistic vision to emerge, the event had to be rendered tangible and comprehensible. Material forms of dealing with destruction, for example the return to specific sites with a camera and the assembling of images in narrating sequences, were an efficient means to give the event a corporeal, legible dimension. This “act of therapy” represented a form of memory-making through photographs which had become omnipresent by the turn of the century. The “cultural expectancy” with which photographs were endowed attests to their role in history-making. In shifting from content to form, “the performative material culture with which photographs merge, such as frames and albums,” as well as their mechanical reproductions in the public context, point to their function and desirability in a post-disaster society.²⁵ These material forms fused with the idea of creative destruction and have thus become multi-layered historical, material, and aesthetic documents, demanding close examination.

Given these diverse conceptualizations of the source material, this part will be divided in two chapters. The first chapter engages with the CCC members' experience of the event and their contribution to the narrative of reconstructing a “grand” San Francisco. Starting with an overview of the material situation of local photographers, the chapter then focuses on the produced works and their discursive framing. To this end, reproductions, eyewitness accounts, and announcements of promoters in the post-disaster issues of *Camera Craft* are subject to close examination. As a second step, the members' participation in the articulation of popular histories is traced. In this, the formulation of a “collective memory” through photography and the commodification of the past

²⁴ Kevin Rozario, *The Culture of Calamity: Disaster and the Making of Modern America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 3, 20, 75-77.

²⁵ Elizabeth Edwards, “Photographs as Objects of Memory,” in *Material Memories: Design and Evocation*, eds. Marius Kwent, Christopher Breward, and Jeremy Aynsley (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1999), 221-224, 232.

become tangible. This process will be further exemplified in the Club's relation to the California Promotion Committee, a San Francisco-based organism, which circulated brochures on the rebuilding of the city. Engaging with the disaster's material culture, the chapter also sheds light on the CCC's new corpus and its divergence from or continuation of earlier practices.

In the light of the mass of material generated by the catastrophe, works drawn solely from the network of the California Camera Club cannot represent the exclusive focus of this part. Since the affordability of the medium sparked a desire to possess the image of rapidly changing urban spaces, the notion of "possessive spectatorship," that had arisen at the Chicago Fair of 1893, has to be reconsidered. When "visuality" became key to explore and understand the city, a form of control was exerted through the camera.²⁶ To that effect, the second chapter will deal more concretely with the material culture of the disaster expressed in photographic albums, which allowed compilers to both control the view and possess a material trace. Comparing and contrasting albums assembled by members of the California Camera Club with individually conceived souvenir albums by middle class San Franciscans, the discussion will trace the creation of a personal disaster narrative. By opposing commissioned productions to private memory-making, it is hoped to draw a more differentiated picture. The question will be to what extent the individual use of the camera allowed to fabricate a personally intelligible history. In this, the persisting reference to a communal "spirit" as an idiosyncratic San Franciscan phenomenon will be subject to close scrutiny.

²⁶ Gordon, *The Urban Spectator*, 3-4.

Chapter 7

The California Camera Club after the catastrophe: losses and forms of material recovery

The morning when *Camera Craft* editor Fayette J. Clute rushed down Market Street, one of his colleagues – co-editor and Club member, Dr. Henry D’Arcy Power – woke up in his house right across City Hall.¹ The doctor, who was a professor at the College of Physicians and Surgeons, was widely appreciated for his regular contributions on photo-chemistry and technical matters. The question as to why only a few reproductions of his photographs from the magazine and the catalogs of the first and second San Francisco salons persist, can be answered by looking at his account in the May 1906 issue. Feeling as if the house “was seized in the hands of a Colossus,” “accompanied by a pandemonium of sound that will stay in my ears forever,” Power was obliged to leave in a hurry and move to the Western parts of the city. He writes: “Before I left, I saw the house I dwelt in go up in flames, and with it most of my property, all the results of my labors in photographic art, and over two thousand negatives.”² Around the same time, a few blocks further North, Archibald J. Treat verified the condition of his attorney offices on Sacramento Street, and upon return to his house on Hyde Street, had to make a decision as to which possessions to save. In a letter to his sister, nine days later, he remembered:

As I looked about the rooms I couldn't bear to see the pictures left behind. I cut from their frames that little marsh scene of yours, the Wm. [William] Keith, the Tom Hill and the little sketch of Matilda Lotz. The thought that all my negatives were at the Sunset Press, which had burned, aroused my conceit and I brought away about a half dozen prints of them. By easy stages we walked to the Ferry and after a wait of about an hour reached Sausalito.³

In the prevailing chaotic conditions and the communicational cut-off from the rest of the country, rumors ran high, some of which Treat recounted in his letter, hearing that Los Angeles was “in ruins” and Chicago had “slipped off the map.”⁴

Despite their already tangible dramatic tenor, these eyewitness accounts constitute a mere glimpse of the losses suffered by San Francisco-based photographers. The frontispiece of *Camera Craft*'s May issue shows the Academy of Science on April 19. Razed to the ground, the sight of the “former home” of Club and magazine furnishes an impression of the desolate scenery surrounding the photographers (**fig. 7.9**). Personal accounts and secondary sources suggest that large bodies of

¹ This chapter constitutes an extended version of my recently published article “‘Des cendres à la nouvelle métropole’ : Le California Camera Club et la reconstruction photographique de San Francisco au lendemain du tremblement de terre et l’incendie de 1906,” trans. Pierre Von-Ow et al., *Transbordeur* 2 (2018): 186-199.

² Dr. Henry D’Arcy Power, “Earthquake and Fire: From a Photographer’s Viewpoint,” *Camera Craft* 12, no. 4 (1906): 155, 158.

³ Archibald J. Treat to his sister Eleanor Treat, April 27, 1906, 3 (Archibald J. Treat, Correspondence (MS2170, Box1) California Historical Society).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

work by hitherto discussed photographers Treat, Dasonville, and Maurer were destroyed at the Club, their studios, homes, or elsewhere in the city. Added to this list can be Genthe, who had yet stored an entire collection of pre-earthquake Chinatown views in a vault. A vast collection of William Shew, the daguerreotypist deceased a few years earlier, was destroyed when Kearny Street – where his wife maintained his studio – burned down. At the same time, a 76-year-old, half-blind Carleton Watkins had to escape his burning studio, leaving behind a collection of daguerreotypes, prints, and negatives which, only a few days later, would have been transported to a safer storage location for “immediate preservation” (fig. 7.10).⁵ Grasping the historical value of such photograph collections, the *San Francisco Call* briefly reported on the losses of “priceless” material, stating that “[i]n all San Francisco there remain but a few hundred photographic negatives of the countless thousands taken of persons prominent here in all walks of life for the past half-century.”⁶

The afore-mentioned Isaiah W. Taber, not a Club member yet the most prolific photographer in the city, saw his firm go up in flames, and with it, more than 100 tons of negatives. His loss was probably the most dramatic, and the most significant with the regard to the historic record of San Francisco. After his death in 1912, *Camera Craft* emphasized and lamented again the destruction of his firm as “an irreparable one, not only to him but to the world.”⁷ In a letter to his friend George Winslow of New Bedford shortly after the disaster, Taber recounted his intimate relationship with the city’s disaster history. When working for Bradley and Rulofson in the early 1850s, he had already caught a glimpse of the destruction potential. He remembered:

In 1850 I saw the town swept by fire. I saved my blankets and camped on the side of Russian Hill amongst the poison oaks. The howl of the coyote was a familiar sound at night in those days. The town was built of light material and was soon swept away. In May 1851 San Francisco was again destroyed by the devouring flames, fanned by a high wind and could not be controlled. The burnt district was three-quarters of a mile long. The June fire soon followed and the people thought the City was doomed.⁸

As he counted among the “few [...] left to view the ruins of today,” he underlined the unprecedented expanse of destruction and its “terrible fury,”⁹ and at the same time remained truthful to his self-portrayal as local pioneer. The meticulous description of his losses provides us not only with a more detailed impression of the irrecoverable historic material, but also furnishes an insight into the immense physical and psychological challenge imposed by the catastrophe:

⁵ Information on losses retrieved from correspondence and secondary literature: Archibald J. Treat, Correspondence; Palmquist, “William E. Dasonville: An Appreciation,” 16-17; Herny et al., *Berkeley Bohemia*, 77-78; Genthe, *As I Remember*, 87-97; Cunkle Calmenson, “Likenesses Taken in the Most Approved Style,” 17; Palmquist, *Carleton E. Watkins*, 82-83.

⁶ “Priceless Negatives Destroyed by the Fire,” *San Francisco Call*, May 5, 1906, 11.

⁷ “I.W. Taber At Rest,” *Camera Craft* 19, no. 4 (1912): 169.

⁸ Isaiah W. Taber to George Winslow, quoted in *Taber: A Photographic Legacy*, 142.

⁹ *Ibid.*

My photograph gallery on Post Street was entirely destroyed. I had just completed a new studio in the next building to my old quarters. I had furnished it entirely new and up to date. It took nine men four weeks to move my portrait negatives, eighty tons, containing portraits of celebrated people from all parts of the world. Many were of historic value as the people have passed away. The negatives are not only a great loss to me, but to my patrons. Three and four generations were represented in this collection. Besides the pioneers of the state and the early businessmen of San Francisco whom I have taken in the past forty years, my view negatives, about twelve tons, contained views of San Francisco as far back as 1849 and up to the present time, showing the growth and progress of the City. After the shake up and the flames were subdued, I took account of stock and found that I had just \$8 in my pocket to start life anew.¹⁰

Inevitably, the material caesura imposed by the catastrophe obliges researchers to rethink their tools, to expand the frame of inquiry to potentially surviving sources, so as to draw as completely a picture as possible. However, it is undeniable that the losses have created gaps in secondary literature on San Franciscan photography – which is perhaps one of the reasons why photographers of the California Camera Club have remained absent from histories of the medium and of the city. The moment of rupture would have a profound impact on the San Franciscan art scene in its aftermath and cause a “southward migration” toward Los Angeles in the long term.¹¹ Furthermore, the ensuing absences dictate academic research conditions until this day. And yet, as the previous chapters have demonstrated, despite the material losses suffered by a majority of photographers, several parts of their corpora can be reassembled. Due to the absence of inventory records, it remains impossible, however, to assess the entire quantity of loss for each member and the amount of material that had been stored at the headquarters.

An impression of the CCC headquarters before the earthquake can be gathered from the Club Notes section in *Camera Craft*'s April issue of 1905. Having undergone a redecoration, the rooms would gleam in “Old Mission style furniture” for about a year on the last floor of the Academy of Science (**fig. 7.11**).¹² It is probable that within these walls, the collective photographic project of 1901 which systematically covered San Francisco, had also been preserved. President Erwin's announcement that “there is no nook or corner in the San Francisco of today which will not be open for inspection long after the actual scenes have disappeared,” however, did not become true since both the actual scenes and their documentation vanished.¹³ It is remarkable to note that, for the most part, the available Club members' corpora in archives today do not include pictures of urban street scenes prior to the earthquake – apart from professional views of the late nineteenth century, marketed Chinatown scenes, and views of the Bay. While the focus had been set on the mainly rural features

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Miottel speaks of a “diaspora” of photographers following April 1906, see “Rebellion in Photography,” 26; see also Wilson, “Northern California: The Heart of the Storm,” 12-17; the southward move of painters is discussed in Stern, “Landscape of Light: Impressionism in California,” 40.

¹² “The California Camera Club,” *Camera Craft* 10, no. 4 (1905): 245.

¹³ Editorial, *Camera Craft* 4, no. 1 (1901): 30.

of the Bay Area and the Californian landscape at large before 1906, the catastrophe generated a shift in focus and directed the photographers' attention toward the immediate urban surroundings. It can be argued that, by late April 1906, Erwin's earlier prediction of "a photographic army to impress San Francisco on a thousand plates"¹⁴ would become true – and constitutes an archival reality to this day. As tangible in Clute's account, local photographers felt encouraged to stride the streets of their destroyed city and actively shape a new corpus of images to be added to their post-earthquake library. The military-related vocabulary used by Erwin gained a more concrete dimension in the city after April 18, 1906, when armed forces patrolled the streets and enforced "shoot-to-kill orders" to which some 75 people fell victim, mostly from the poor or ethnic minority population.¹⁵ It is in this policed post-disaster space that the photographers, for their part, were armed with photographic apparatus to once again assert the vision of a harmonious community space while at the same time mark out the distinctive character of their own practice.

The aim of this chapter will be to explore how, under conflictual and tiring conditions, the photographers came to imagine and to *image* a "grander" San Francisco. In this framework, the evocative vocabulary used by members in their testimonies would come to provide a metaphorical and visual input for photographic representations of the aftermath. Treat's memory of the burning city as "a sight which makes the pictures of Pompeii look small indeed,"¹⁶ and D'Arcy Power's description "of that great destruction, the greatest the world has ever seen since Alaric sacked Rome,"¹⁷ point to the mythological repositories which would be mobilized by photographers to situate the event in a historical context, and – at the same time – to infuse their work with historical depth and Neoclassical aesthetics. D'Arcy Power's depiction of City Hall, the first full-page reproduction of a disaster photograph in *Camera Craft*, is a precursor of the highly allegorical imagery which was to follow (**fig. 7.12**). The Corinthian pillars and dome, still standing majestically amid the rubble, suggest a new beginning. By evoking the nobleness of ancient civilizations, they constitute a timeless, moral impetus. As the building had been home to a corrupt administration, its collapse was considered a natural, perhaps even desirable, result.¹⁸ The only sign of resistance to political maneuvers and forces of the earth were indeed the Neoclassical elements, which then allowed the structure to "redeem its ruins and thereby reclaim the civic authority it was intended to embody." It was only through the disaster and the ennobled retrospective depiction that City Hall could then regain its grandeur, and, by the same token, become a symbol for reconstruction.¹⁹ In order to understand how the catastrophe was turned into "the photographic opportunity of their lives," as

¹⁴ See Erwin, "A Photographic Army to Impress San Francisco on a Thousand Plates," 237-238.

¹⁵ Fradkin, *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906*, 64-68, 140.

¹⁶ Archibald J. Treat to his sister Eleanor Treat, April 27, 1906, 3.

¹⁷ D'Arcy Power, "Earthquake and Fire: From a Photographer's Viewpoint," 160.

¹⁸ Fradkin, *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906*, 240-241.

¹⁹ Yablon, *Untimely Ruins*, 231-233.

Power announced for San Franciscan photographers,²⁰ these and other mythologized representations of the city space and its inhabitants have to be examined.

To this end, this chapter traces the photographers' evolution between April 1906 and the summer of 1908. The first part is going to deal with the relief efforts undertaken for the community of photographers by looking at the various funds made available for Californian practitioners. This will provide an understanding of how a new practice was materially supported and encouraged. An additional look at the coverage of the event in nation-wide photographic literature will then complete the picture as to trace how photographic societies all over the country reacted to the event – and whether this implied greater visibility for Californian practitioners. Once the material support ensured, the members could turn to the terrain and engage in the visual reconstruction of the city which came to assist the actual material rebuilding. This second part is going to interrogate the specific tropes of ruin imagery and pioneer community, and their uses to fabricate a locally meaningful and nationally intelligible narrative. The source material for this discussion will be based on *Camera Craft*, illustrated histories published in book-form, as well as other circulating images. A discussion of the Club's return to its agenda of local activities, as a last step, is going to complete the picture by analyzing how an outing to the Yosemite in 1907 allowed for material recovery and emotional back-up, by returning to the vistas which had constituted the core of Californian photography from its onset.

7.1 “*Placing the club again in working shape*”: nationwide relief efforts for local revitalization

By July 1906, when *Camera Craft* announced that the CCC had found new headquarters, it seemed that photographic businesses in San Francisco were thriving anew. While the first two post-disaster issues in May and June included short announcements of suppliers reopening their stores, the July issue published more detailed information on a relief fund for California photographers. As has been demonstrated in historical research on the catastrophe, relief for San Franciscans came from the entire country and from foreign governments, adding up to a total of \$9.5 million. From these donations, three million were sent by the city of New York alone, and 2.5 million from Congress. The Southern Pacific Company, which transported most of the goods to the Bay Area, donated \$200,000. The total property loss – excluding what had been stored at the numerous libraries since no inventories persisted – was estimated at one billion dollars. San Franciscans had to rely on a provisional federal effort, as no effective relief system had been put into place for the city or the country at large prior to April 1906. In the rebuilding process, little attention was paid to the improvement of structural and fire-proof measures. Instead, it was advanced at fast speed so as to

²⁰ D'Arcy Power, “Earthquake and Fire: From a Photographer's Viewpoint,” 158.

celebrate a new metropolis.²¹ Accordingly, the wording of the first suppliers advertising their reopened businesses seized this fast-paced climate to lure new customers into their shops. Hirsch & Kaiser, one of the main suppliers for amateurs and professionals in San Francisco, boasted: “The ruins [...] had not yet cooled before a new store was leased and carpenters at work on the interior alterations.” Similarly, the C.P. Goerz Optical Works promised “prompt action” so as to provide photographers with lenses – an equipment used by at least two Club members who published their ruin photographs in the June 1906 *Camera Craft*.²²

A more systematic and widespread effort was then made by the relief fund for California photographers, which primarily targeted professionals, yet was also extended to camera clubs. Widely read Eastern magazines, notably the *American Amateur Photographer*, *Photo-Era* and *Photo-Beacon* circulated the announcement, deeming it “proper that the fraternity all over the country should hasten to relieve their distress.” The relief for both professionals and for camera clubs was represented in the membership of the committee, including Theodore C. Marceau, whose earlier San Franciscan business had expanded to Los Angeles, Cincinnati, and Indianapolis, and Curtis Bell, who had started the Salon Club of America in 1904.²³ In early June, it was announced that the committee had accumulated “\$4,047.85 in money and professional goods,” which was yet considered insufficient.²⁴ In addition, camera clubs from the East Coast, including the cities of New York, Newark, Buffalo, Philadelphia, Pittsburg, and Chicago, held “special entertainments,” giving lantern slide lectures on California with slides still circulating in the Interchange, and cashing in some \$300 for the CCC.²⁵ At local level, the relief fund committee was managed by the city’s professionals, including Isaiah W. Taber, Oscar V. Lange, and George Knight White, then president of the Club. Working systematically, they announced that “the name of every possible loser by the earthquake or fire was listed and their address sought out and listed.” Donations furthermore included \$1,500 from Eastman Kodak and \$500 from the New York Photographers’ Association.²⁶ Given this generous assistance, professional photographers soon took up business and the Club strove for re-organization. By early 1907, the *American Amateur Photographer* estimated the CCC to be “in a position to continue its influence in the new city that is to spring up from the ruins of the old. May it have success is the wish of all fellow clubs.”²⁷

In order to become operational in this short period, Club officials reacted rapidly, with the first meeting taking place at president Knight White’s home on May 6, 1906. It was decided to

²¹ Andrea Rees Davies, *Saving San Francisco: Relief and Recovery after the 1906 Disaster* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012), 42-44, 112-122; Fradkin, *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906*, 184-188, 197.

²² “Notes and Comment,” *Camera Craft* 12, no. 4 (1906): 176-177.

²³ “California Photographers’ Relief Fund,” *Photo-Era* 16 (1906): 354.

²⁴ Editorial, *American Amateur Photographer* 18 (1906): 255.

²⁵ “The California Camera Club,” *American Amateur Photographer* 19 (1907): 79.

²⁶ “The Relief Fund for California Photographers,” *Camera Craft* 13, no. 1 (1906): 255-256.

²⁷ “The California Camera Club,” 79.

postpone the lecture series for several months and to channel all efforts toward the establishment of new headquarters.²⁸ After a brief interval in the Club secretary Miss A.K.A. Voy's home (which would earn her honorary life membership later on), the Club rented a house in the residential district at 2206 Steiner Street by July 1906. It was not until early 1909 that they moved back to Market Street into a new office building located where the Academy had stood. To furnish the new rooms at Steiner Street, a call was sent to members and readers of national journals to send in copies of old photographic magazines.²⁹ The American Lantern Slide Interchange donated \$25 to the new rooms, and its affiliated societies from Chicago, Pittsburgh, and Buffalo sent between eight and twelve dollar each.³⁰ Thanks to this material assistance, the photographers relaunched their lecture series in October 1906, and by January 1907 submitted a collection of slides to the Interchange. These activities were advertised in the local newspapers so as to direct the city's attention toward the Club's new agenda.³¹ The set of slides for the East would consist of earlier California views that had been circulating through the Interchange prior to the catastrophe and was extended by scenes of destruction. The only surviving slide, most probably belonging to this set, shows the omnipresent pillars of City Hall. Detached from the dome, the pillars resisted and resided above the rubble, and were hence easily integrated in the narrative of a resilient San Francisco which circulated nation-wide (**fig. 7.13**).

The Club's relatively prosperous situation can be traced not only in the renting of a house in the residential district, but is further corroborated by regular announcements in the local press. In March 1907, it was publicized that the initiation fee for active membership was to be suspended for a month so as to attract new practitioners to the ranks. At the same time, locals were invited to an exhibition of "Indian pictures" by Edward Curtis, thus continuing the characteristically Western iconography endorsed before the disaster.³² Strategies of outreach were equally embraced by editors of *Camera Craft*, who targeted a new readership. The June 1906 cover, showcasing the Mechanics' Monument with hollow façades of Market Street in the background, urged: "Now is the time to subscribe" (**fig. 7.14**). The appealing ruin imagery, combined with announcements of articles by acclaimed Eastern photographers "in the foremost rank" alongside "the most pictorial and artistic work," was made to lure local audiences. As subscribers, they could immerse in aesthetic pleasures on a regular basis. As citizens of a post-disaster space, they were perhaps stimulated to take photographs of the quickly disappearing destruction scenario themselves. Since the issue featured illustrated eyewitness accounts, a form of self-identification for the local readership was established.

²⁸ "The California Camera Club," *Camera Craft* 12, no. 4 (1906): 178.

²⁹ Editorial, *Camera Craft* 13, no. 1 (1906): 257-258; "The California Camera Club," *Camera Craft* 13, no. 1 (1906): 259.

³⁰ "American Lantern Slide Interchange," *American Amateur Photographer* 18 (1906): 401.

³¹ The first lecture of the Club was on India, given by UC professor William A. Setchell, see "Gives Illustrated Lecture," *San Francisco Call*, October 20, 1906, 5; see also "Camera Club Gathers Slides for the East," *San Francisco Call*, January 27, 1907, 25.

³² "Exhibit of Photographs," *San Francisco Call*, March 3, 1907, 41.

The press seized exactly this aspect by declaring the magazine “an exponent of artistic photography,” and saw the latest number as addition to “the long list of performances that are creditable to itself and to San Francisco.” Notably, the advertisement appeared in the *Sunday Call* whose cover featured a story on the “rebuilding of San Francisco told in figures,” imagining the amount of steel and iron for reconstruction to be used by an “army” of local manufacturers.³³ On the whole, the subscription to *Camera Craft* was more extensively advertised in Bay Area newspapers after the catastrophe. During the second half of 1906 and the year 1907, special offers were made to Northern Californian readers, proposing for example a dual subscription to both *Camera Craft* and *Sunset*.³⁴ With the latter considering itself representative of a “Western empire” and the former appealing to the aesthetic sensibilities of a post-disaster community, the readership of both magazines was encouraged to, once again, actively experience, travel, and capture the local scenery.

From these relief measures and publication strategies, it can be deduced that both the Club and its communication platforms efficiently reconnected to once again promote practice and territory. As announced, the CCC’s “period of ‘forgetfulness’” concerning questions of “photographic art” in the face of “weighty material problems” rapidly came to an end as members set out to photograph the city.³⁵ However, the renewed attempt by contributors to impose an amateur/professional distinction – to divide the scene into “noble” artists versus spectacle-thirsty advertisers or “snapshotters”³⁶ – does not hold. The tendency among Club members to make photographs available for promotional literature of the city and the state, as amply demonstrated in the previous parts of this thesis, continued after the disaster. In this regard, *Camera Craft*’s June issue included a revealing note to readers: “While none of the gentlemen have authorized us to advertise them as professional view photographers, they have all consented to our publishing their addresses for the benefit of readers who might wish to duplicate prints.”³⁷ It cannot be traced how many of the photographers were contacted for duplicates, yet images of both “gentlemen” – or those framed as such by secondary literature – and professionals, made their way into easily marketable disaster literature which would rely on photographs “where words failed.”³⁸

As a critical addition, it can be stated that the advocated return to “photographic art” and its results were merely visible within the members’ own geographic limitations, that is, in *Camera Craft*

³³ See *San Francisco Call*, July 22, 1906: Barton W. Currie, “Rebuilding of San Francisco told in Figures,” 3, and “Notes Gleaned from Literary World,” 27.

³⁴ Survey conducted through the California Digital Newspaper Collection, searching the appearance of *Camera Craft* in advertisement columns. Between May 1900 and April 1906, eight ads were published – as opposed to the period between May 1906 and December 1907, during which 38 ads were published (notably in the *San Francisco Call*, the *Sacramento Union*, the *Pacific Rural Press*, and *Sausalito News*), representing a twenty-fold increase in advertisement for the post-disaster period.

³⁵ “The California Camera Club,” *Camera Craft* 13, no. 1 (1906): 259.

³⁶ Secondary literature has upheld this claim, see Yablon, *Untimely Ruins*, 223-227.

³⁷ Editorial, *Camera Craft* 12, no. 5 (1906): 218.

³⁸ Fradkin, *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906*, 280.

and in promotional literature. Apart from the slides submitted to the Interchange, none of the “artistic” or “Pictorialist” images were reproduced in photographic-society literature elsewhere in the country. It is clear that the designation as a non-profit artist opting for ruin iconography appeared necessary to revitalize a Californian photographic art. However, the specific local conditions of image demand – as well as the absence of San Franciscan disaster imagery from photographic society literature – corroborates the impression of continued isolation from the East Coast network. Yet, what this situation underlines in turn is the prominent position occupied by local photographers in the shaping of Californian imagery. In order to disclose the circulation of locally produced photographs within their own community, the following two sections are going to treat *Camera Craft*’s illustrated accounts by members as well as their participation in a popular history of the disaster. In looking at text and image, attention will be paid to the strategies used by members to combine ruin allegories with the early beginnings of the state. It is in these expressions that we can trace the CCC’s input to the visual reconstruction of a “grander” San Francisco.

7.2 Practitioners amid ruins: the rehabilitation of an on-site practice in Camera Craft

To understand how a celebratory history of the event was developed and local photographers came to contribute to it, we need to return to San Francisco’s geostrategic emplacement and ideological value for the nation, cultivated especially during the 1890s and 1900s in world’s fairs and semi-centennial celebrations of California’s admission to the Union. It is from this sociopolitical perspective that we can grasp the full impact of ruin iconography and “frontier” living conditions, which came to form a parable of the American West in the post-disaster period. Through the reactivation of a long-lived fascination with ruins and the frontier myth, the rallying potential of these imagined histories became evident. A study of these motifs reveals the persistent exclusivity of the myth, fabricated by a dominant class with specific interests in society, culture, and economy. Looking at the photographs produced by Club members in the wake of the event, this analysis does not consider the corpus merely as an artistic homage to the destroyed city, but rather as multi-layered objects which circulated in a specific spatiotemporal context and hence became subject to various uses. The emphasis will be put on members’ activities in the city space, its photographic aestheticization and thinly veiled politicization.

A photograph by Oscar V. Lange, professional photographer and longstanding Club member, exemplifies the allegorical function of locally disseminated ruin imagery (see **fig. 7.14**). Adorning the cover of *Camera Craft*’s “Now is the time to subscribe” June issue, the photograph depicts Donahue Fountain on Market Street, also known as the Mechanics’ Monument. In the foreground, on the edge of the fountain, sits a resigned-looking man with a cap. Behind him, to the left of the photograph, the relatively unharmed monument resides. In its background, stretching to the right, the

ruined city imposes itself, showing half-destroyed brick walls, hollow façades, and smoke ascending to the sky, which envelopes the entire scene in a thick grayness. To the right, the viewer can make out another man seated on the basin's edge. His contours are overlapped partly by what seems to be a makeshift first-aid tent. The scene, which is otherwise devoid of human presence, communicates an atmosphere of desolation and disorientation as the ruins block out the rest of the horizon. In this moment of emotional gathering, the Mechanics' Monument which towers above the seated man – perhaps a worker or technician himself – draws the focus of attention. The monument, in its calm endurance, transmits the cherished values of hard work, united manpower, and commerce. Onlookers easily remark the persistence of the monument, which the man seated at its foot cannot see. It extends an invitation to him, to rediscover the foundations of the city, which stand unshaken in their grandeur. Granting space to disillusionment while at the same time providing stable reference points to orientate and identify with, the photograph represents the hope for renewal and reconstruction expressed in the pages of the magazine of which it was the cover.

Inaugurated by mayor James D. Phelan in 1901, and later backdrop to a speech by Theodore Roosevelt on his visit to the city in 1903, the monument celebrated the brothers James and Peter Donahue. As immigrants from Ireland, they founded the first ironworks of the state during the Gold Rush, later on becoming the Union Iron Works. The brothers became extremely wealthy citizens and their firm played a major role in the expansion of Pacific trade, leading to the construction of battle ships by the 1880s. The monument was part of mayor Phelan's civic agenda, carried out with the help of sculptor Douglas Tilden, and, in the words of Gray Brechin, was supposed to "heroize the past, ennoble the present, and enrich his future." Phelan, who was a businessman first, had envisioned a new urban plan for San Francisco modeled upon the City Beautiful Movement. Inspired by Rome and Paris under Napoleon III., it imagined "a system of majestic boulevards slashing through San Francisco's existing grid," revolving around a civic center, and one-third of the city space consecrated to parks. Notably, the plan was to be realized by architect Daniel Burnham, who had already designed the "White City" for the 1893 Chicago Fair. His appeal to grand historical monuments for envisioning an imperial future pleased Phelan's "triumphal views of history," expressed for example in a colossus to be erected at Twin Peaks gazing out into the Pacific.³⁹ None of these grand urban projects were realized in the aftermath of the catastrophe when functionality and rapidity were embraced at the expense of style and beautification. Nonetheless, during his administrative years around the turn of the century, as well as in the aftermath of April 1906, Phelan exerted a considerable influence on the city's ideological space, erecting for example an Admission Day and a California Volunteers Monument, the latter only four months after the catastrophe. As an homage to the soldiers fighting in

³⁹ Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco*, 121-126, 151-154.

the Spanish-American War, it not only endorsed a “westward march of the master race,” but likewise celebrated the incoming wealth which military operations represented for local merchants. Such public sites of glorification infused the city space with a visible ideology. It could easily be reused in the search for historical continuity and economic stability after the disaster.⁴⁰

Around the turn of the century, as discussed in previous parts, expressions of art and popular culture became instrumental in the solidification of this expansionist ideology. Since the 1870s, intersecting interests of politicians, businessmen, and intellectuals had shaped urban culture and its various distribution platforms. Around the turn of the century, the cultivation of leisure, of reading, traveling, or practicing photography constituted an expansion of these interests to the private and public realm. As amply demonstrated, magazines like *Sunset* – considering itself the mouthpiece of the “Western empire” – infused activities of local culture with a purposeful patriotic discourse, all the while capitalizing on the increased numbers of travelers on its extensive infrastructure. Similarly, the expansion of the national territory was taken up by literary magazines like *Overland Monthly*, which happily embraced the idea of bringing America’s “civilization” to other countries and thereby creating domestic prosperity. Certainly, discordant voices emerged in more sophisticated forms of literature and journalism, yet the popular culture to which photographers contributed was strongly imbued with these ideas.⁴¹ It is in this politicized public space of commerce and leisure that the photographers reoriented their practice toward the city rather than the countryside. Having found a fertile terrain in the Californian landscape to adorn and historicize their practice, they now turned their apparatus on the urban space and its specific condition to the same end. The Club’s anchorage in the city, and its delight in street photography on the occasion of local festivities like Admission Day, was revitalized along the lines of the announcement in 1900 “to perpetuate the historical occasion for the benefit of generations to come” in the form of “pictures peculiarly characteristic of the West.”⁴² Club members must have been familiar with Phelan’s urban idealism, not only through the organization of festivities, but also through his position on the board of directors of the San Francisco Art Association, which co-hosted the Photographic Salons between 1901 and 1903.⁴³ On the whole, citizens of Phelan’s San Francisco around the turn of the century were made highly sensitive to the celebration of historic events. As Brechin has remarked:

⁴⁰ Ibid., 133-135; see also Starr, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915*, 288-298; Robin, *Signs of Change: Urban Iconographies in San Francisco, 1880-1915*, 15-17. For a broader discussion of this period, see Judd Kahn, *Imperial San Francisco: Politics and Planning in an American City, 1897-1906* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979).

⁴¹ Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco*, 136-138. For an overview of literature in this specific socioeconomic and political setting, see Walter Benn Michaels, *The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism: American Literature at the Turn of the Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

⁴² “The Coming Celebration,” 263.

⁴³ Phelan is listed among the directors of the SFAA in the catalogs of the second and third San Francisco Photographic Salons in 1902 and 1903.

The century closed in a rapture of material triumph conducive to rebuilding San Francisco in a manner less like a gigantic Nevada mining town. Its citizens never tired of ceremonies that linked themselves with a past growing steadily more fantastic, its players more heroic. The recent war happily coincided with the semicentennials of the conquest of California, the discovery of gold, and California's admission to the Union, thus offering numerous opportunities for parties and parades. [...] San Franciscans missed no opportunity to compare their city with the other on the Tiber.⁴⁴

When two-thirds of the city were erased in the earthquake and fire, thus bringing to the surface a scene of destruction and bygone grandeur, comparisons to Rome became a standard element in news coverage, popular magazines, and the arts. San Francisco's "place in the constellation of great cities," which had been professed from the mid nineteenth century, was considered strikingly visible in the destroyed yet ennobled urban panorama. The most sought-after edifice of this mystified representation was City Hall which "fulfilled the popular yearning for encounters with picturesque landscapes and their peculiar instructive value."⁴⁵ The Club members, who published their works in *Camera Craft*, made use of this educational value so as to study the narratives ensuing from this site.

In order for the ruins to become easily legible, nationally meaningful, and eventually sites of renewal, their depictions were emplaced in a genealogy of tragic events. The Chicago Fire of 1871, which had distressed the nation as a whole and subsequently became a marker of urban renewal and grandeur proclaimed in the Chicago Universal Exposition of 1893, constituted the onset of this chain into which San Franciscan officials labored to insert their city. This "strategic framing," as exposed by Susanne Leikam and other historians, was commonly used by investors and politicians to downplay the risk of unpredictable natural disasters and to shift the focus of attention on improving safety measures instead. The narrative was communicated "from the top down," beginning with governor George Pardee, followed by executives of the Southern Pacific, and the real estate board of the city. Economically, this reframing was beneficial as it helped insurance companies and stockholders develop credible reports on the necessity of raising preventive measures instead of having to cede to an incalculable risk. Historically, the reformulation of the event into a "great fire" could slide smoothly in the chronology of local conflagrations during the 1850s, with the vast expanse of the 1906 disaster representing only "minor challenges for the resilient and resourceful metropolis of the American West." On a national level, the fires at Chicago, Boston (1872), or Baltimore (1904), still vividly recalled, likewise became meaningful antecedents. The relief and reconstruction put into place after these events had been strongly applauded and furnished a degree of optimism in the face of the damage of April 1906.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco*, 145.

⁴⁵ Birt, *History's Anteroom*, 20-23.

⁴⁶ Leikam, *Framing Spaces in Motion*, 234-239; Davies, *Saving San Francisco*, 143-144. For the first academic account of the disaster to focus on its reshaping as a fire, see Gladys Hansen and Emmet Condon, *Denial of Disaster: The Untold Story and Photographs of the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire* (San Francisco: Cameron, 1989). For a recent study

The insistence on fire instead of the earthquake was rapidly taken up by *Camera Craft*. A keyword search in the 1906 volume generates the term “earthquake” a mere seven times, and is completely absent in the 1907 volume. Coverage on the event was from the onset referred to in general terms as “the catastrophe” or “the recent conflagration.” Those were employed when discussing the losses suffered, while “the fire” would often be used so as to clearly demarcate the event as situated in the past – and hence part of a larger chain of events happening throughout the country. Again, O.V. Lange contributed to this discursive depiction in the June 1906 issue with an image entitled *The fire as seen from Berkeley, ten miles distant, on the second day* (**fig. 7.15**). Depicting the extent of the fire from the East Bay, with houses still intact in the foreground and a cloud of smoke illuminated by sunlight in the background, made the event appear less monumental. This representation corresponds to the editorial choice of placing Lange’s photograph in the issue, where it would illustrate an article by a Southern Pacific manager, who insisted on rapid reconstruction of the metropolis while downplaying the expanse of “the fire.”⁴⁷

The railroad company’s material and metaphorical stakes in the reconstruction process being subject to discussion later on, it is important at this point to highlight the difficulty of visualizing catastrophe in the first place. As proposed by Solomon-Godeau, it is the “distance” to the event created by the camera and the “dose of beauty” oftentimes instilled in the photographic print which turns the medium into an ambiguous tool for disaster representation – always dominated by its context and uses. Marked rather by its absence than by a multiplication of viewpoints, photography in times of catastrophe somewhat underlines the ‘invisible’ nature of such events.⁴⁸ Other than questions of aestheticization and political context, the specific case of visualizing earthquakes has historic precedent reaching back to the sixteenth century. As Leikam has argued, an earthquake is “rather to be felt and heard than seen” and, as such, “constitutes a creative challenge but also provides freedom to take up agency and to assume ‘ownership’ of a particular disaster narrative.”⁴⁹ The invisibility of the fifty-five seconds of earthquake and the subsequent emphasis on the three days of highly visible fires have further obfuscated the role of seismic conditions. With its only visible trace tangible on seismographic paper, the earthquake itself would become overshadowed by photographic imprints which narrated a different story.⁵⁰ In this process, the impossibility to capture the tremor, the historically and economically beneficial reshaping as fire, and the appeal of an unfamiliar ruinscape in the city led to the construction of a dominant visual history of April 1906.

of the catastrophe from an environmental perspective, see Joanna L. Dyl, *Seismic City: An Environmental History of San Francisco’s 1906 Earthquake* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017).

⁴⁷ See Charles S. Fee, “Men, Material and Money here for Greatest City,” *Camera Craft* 12, no. 5 (1906): 215-216.

⁴⁸ Abigail Solomon-Godeau, “Photographier la Catastrophe,” trans. Gérard Lenclud, *Terrain* 54 (2010): 57-65, <https://doi.org/10.4000/terrain.13962>.

⁴⁹ Leikam, *Framing Spaces in Motion*, 5-6, 27-28.

⁵⁰ Yablon, *Untimely Ruins*, 219.

Rapidly, in *Camera Craft*, the focus on the strikingly visible aftermath – with ruins and refugee camps – gained ascendancy. By the time the firestorms were ravaging the city, Club members were not necessarily absorbed by photographic work, which in any case proved extremely challenging under such conditions. Given the members’ personal preoccupations and loss of equipment, it is unsurprising that a more extensive study of the ruin scenery, rather than the immediacy of the fire, would manifest itself in the post-disaster issues. In these depictions, the usefulness of the ruin as aesthetic object and historical allegory gradually unfolds. While the United States did not possess vestiges of passed centuries pointing to historic achievements and instructing its viewers on the lessons of past conflict, it is worthwhile at this point to briefly sketch the place of ruin imagery in the American imagination of the turn of the century. Through a discussion of the ruin’s role as edifice, popular attraction, and ambiguous national symbol over the course of the nineteenth century, the varied uses the urban ruins of San Francisco can be further contextualized.

The American fascination with ruins can be traced in art, architecture, as well as politics and education. From the creation of the national capital in the 1780s to the time of the Civil War, politicians and learned citizens had expressed a sensitivity toward a ruin iconography, for example in Volney’s translated writings or Thomas Cole’s canvasses, as well as in emerging forms of popular culture and tourism.⁵¹ What was considered the “ennobling spirit of antiquity” became a major institutional pillar in the early republic and implied “seeking in the remote past new guides for modern life.” The modeling of the nation upon a vocabulary and an iconography derived from ancient Greek and Roman civilizations was instrumental to understanding civic life and politics.⁵² Similarly, the shaping of a national architecture with explicit reference to Neoclassicism marked the independence from a British colonial style. Here, the allusion to antique ruins “evocatively recall[ed],” as one architectural historian put it, “the entire social and political structure of a once-great civilization, a powerful stimulus to those with a historical sense who were in the process of creating a new social and political order.”⁵³

A representational shift can be observed, however, with regard to the ruins resulting from battles of the Civil War. Recent research has demonstrated that while Neoclassical styles inspired by antiquity’s ruins could be used as educational tools, the ruin scenes imposed by the secession conflict could not be as smoothly inserted into this instructive moral setup. In the face of the suffering that citizens of the same nation had inflicted upon each other, the “immediacy” of the destroyed Southern

⁵¹ Megan Kate Nelson, *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2012), 4-6.

⁵² Caroline Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life, 1780-1910* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 1-7.

⁵³ Pamela Scott, *Temple of Liberty: Building the Capitol for a New Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 25-26. For a broader discussion of the influence of antiquity and European history on American urban planning, see Carolin Görge, “Between Fascination and Reluctance: American Travelers in Paris, 1785-1835” (unpublished Master thesis, Université Paris VII Denis Diderot, 2014), 11-65.

cities would evoke notions of grandeur that were more ambivalent. Reflecting the conflict and the eventual demise of a degraded society, rather than a presence due to “natural” causes, these ruins demanded different strategies of meaning-making.⁵⁴ In this regard, Megan Kate Nelson has argued that in the wake of the Civil War, a “tremendous symbolic flexibility of the war’s many kinds of ruins” – architectural, human, and ecological – was developed so as to shape a narrative “to explain and contain them.” To become a unifying site, the rupture that the Civil War ruin represented would be reframed. Its ephemerality and eventual physical removal led to the emergence of new forms of contemplation. Through this process, the confrontation with a destroyed scene was avoided and rechanneled in imaginative ways so as to “repurpose” its function.⁵⁵

It is in this flexibility and re-adaptability of the ruin iconography that we can determine the specificities of its uses in San Francisco. Since the landscape of the West had been portrayed “as simultaneously awe-inspiring in its grandeur and immensity, and as malleable, ready to bend to the iron will and technological prowess of the American people,”⁵⁶ its symbolic reshaping along the lines of an ideological reconstruction in the Neoclassical sense was easily evoked. The combination of a malleable ruin landscape, on the one hand, and the city’s long-asserted role as projection screen for national grandeur, on the other, proved particularly powerful in the fabrication of the post-disaster account. Not only were the ruins historically flexible props, it was also their very background – the Pacific port city of the nation – which provided ideological input. The tabula rasa of the city, which only a few decades earlier had embodied “the frontier,” then again spurred the imagination of “potentialities.” Commonly, it was the landscape itself which served a stand-in function to compensate the lack of more ancient built structures. In comparing nature’s glacier and mountain formations to architecture, the “scenic grandeur” of the American landscape was made to represent its civilization’s value.⁵⁷ In the case of California, this projective dimension of the landscape was reinforced by its climate, leading to comparisons with Italy, Greece, Morocco or Sicily from the mid nineteenth century. The identification of the state as what Kevin Starr labeled “the American Mediterranean” served to lure tourist and settlers by popularizing health benefits, viticulture, and open-air leisure. It also functioned to demarcate the alleged uniqueness of its population – as the Club had ventured to claim in its practice from early on. Speaking to aesthetic pleasures and cultivation of the arts, the state’s landscape embodied the antidote to the Puritan past of the East Coast.⁵⁸ In the spring of 1906, the longstanding attempts of establishing a lineage to European civilizations of the Mediterranean (as on the grounds of Stanford University or in the excursions to Spanish missions

⁵⁴ William Gleeson, “Les lieux de la désolation : évènement, espace et destruction dans la photographie de la guerre civile américaine (1861-1865)” (PhD diss., Université Paris VII Denis Diderot, 2012), 342-351, 375.

⁵⁵ Nelson, *Ruin Nation*, 3-9, 234-236.

⁵⁶ Sandweiss, “Photography, the Archive and the Invention of the American West,” 45.

⁵⁷ Lowenthal, “The Place of the Past in the American Landscape,” 96, 101-103.

⁵⁸ Starr, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915*, 365-414.

discussed heretofore) were reinvigorated. The destroyed urban space provided an opportunity to mingle references to a select part of Southern Europe, its architecture and civilizations, and apply them to the history of the Western port city.

A perfect advocate for this renewed portrayal of an “American Mediterranean” within San Francisco was Arthur Inkersley, a Club member whose illustrated essay “An Amateur’s Experience of Earthquake and Fire” of the June *Camera Craft* has been widely cited in secondary literature. Inkersley, whose actual profession is not known, regularly contributed to *Overland Monthly*, *Sunset*, and other leisure magazines on literature, outdoor sports, and automobile travel. A conspicuous example of his writings can be found in an article on “Olive culture in California,” published in the *New England Magazine*, in which he sketched agricultural conditions in the West by emphasizing a clear advantage of “the newer, stronger soil of the Pacific Coast,” as opposed to “the old countries of Southern European.”⁵⁹ Given the promotional setup of California as the new – and superior – Mediterranean, it is not surprising to find his name among the fervent supporters of the Burnham Plan to rebuild San Francisco. Before the rapid rejection of the proposal by the end of the year, a rallying campaign was initiated by upper class officials in the spring of 1906, among whom ex-mayor Phelan and members of the city’s leisure organizations such as the CCC and the Bohemian Club. As Yablon has recognized with regard to these groups, their endorsement of the Burnham Plan to beautify the city in the wake of the disaster went hand in hand with the sight of ruins. By providing historical depth and useful allegories, the ruins were to supplement the already envisioned references to Rome and Paris of the project for urban embellishment. Inkersley was among the staunch supporters of these measures, highlighting its advantages in *Overland*, and more indirectly illuminating its aesthetic possibilities in *Camera Craft*. The “selectivity” required for this portrayal is noteworthy, as San Francisco’s ruins diverged from the Romanesque iconography the author envisioned. Beyond theoretical questions of embellishment, it was for practical reasons of investment and property that the Plan was abandoned, so as to render the business district operational as quickly as possible.⁶⁰

In these conflicting perceptions of San Francisco’s destroyed scenery, we come to understand the challenges of ruins in a modern city. In an extensive study on the 1923 Kantō earthquake in Japan, Gennifer Weisenfeld has analyzed that visual depictions of urban ruins would not persist for long, as reconstruction efforts were rapidly undertaken. In their evocation of “the fragility of modernity’s gamble,” the ruins pointed to the failures of industrialized societies. They had to be replaced by a “rhetoric of urban renewal,” “to rationalize and modernize,” and to clearly anchor the event in the

⁵⁹ Inkersley cited in “Olive Culture in California,” *The Sacred Heart Review*, February 25, 1905, 8.

⁶⁰ Yablon, *Untimely Ruins*, 228-229; the author cites from Arthur Inkersley, “What San Francisco has to Start with,” *Overland Monthly* 47 (1906): 483. For the rejection of the Burnham Plan, see also Fradkin, *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906*, 226-229.

past.⁶¹ This struggle was similarly at the heart of San Franciscan society, which on the one hand sought to seize the ruin imagery to historicize the event and contemplate its lessons. On the other, the material core of the city's rubble – consisting of iron, concrete, and glass rather than marble – could not possibly “[acquire] an aura of antiquity.” Their “day-old” or “untimely” character could hardly be infused with notions of nostalgia, and thus required more expansive reframing if they were to be made meaningful. Yet, exactly this sudden appearance of the ruins allowed for them to be “consumed immediately,” and to be remodeled according to the needs of a specific community.⁶² Therefore, it can be argued that in spite of their twentieth-century material core, the visual and editorial mise-en-scène of the ruins was made to lend authenticity to both the urban space *and* to photographic practice from a historical point of view. Inkersley's account is exemplary in this regard, as he employs vocabulary to situate the event within a relevant national setup, while at the same time urging fellow photographers to contemplate the aesthetic potential of the scenery. Both *Camera Craft* and the CCC provided a fertile frame of reference for these patriotic and artistic claims, which had dominated exchange platforms for years.

In his account, Inkersley played on “the dialectic of destruction and construction,” a characteristic ingredient of representations of “the sublime.” The concept's “aesthetic duality,” wedding anxiety and allure, proved particularly fruitful in disaster depictions. Disturbing and yet attractive, these narratives of destruction were to construe the event in a different light.⁶³ In the case of Californian photography, it meant to ponder the possibilities of artistic exploration in an unprecedented eradication of the city space. Inkersley, as Club member, could remedy his material shortcomings with a Graphic Camera and five plates left in his home, while the rest of his equipment had been stored at Charles Weidner's photo studio. Inkersley's office on Mission Street, including some thousand prints, alongside albums, correspondence, camera equipment, as well as his personal library, went up in flames. In the face of these immense losses, he considered the few plates he had on April 18 – as well as the dozens of plates with which he would return to the city from Oakland in the following days – as precious devices on which to capture what he called “the ruined city, [...] Pompeiian in its desolation.” Dotted with political commentary, Inkersley's account reflects on the badly constructed old San Francisco and its politicians whom he identifies as “a species of licensed brigands.” The “striking and conclusive evidence” of their failure would be City Hall, which was “shaken down,” except for “the figure of Liberty with upraised torch.” Notable exceptions in this series of administrative corruption were the city's churches, as well as the chapel at Stanford University and the Fairmont Hotel which “still crowns Nob Hill.”⁶⁴

⁶¹ Weisenfeld, *Imaging Disaster*, 133-137, 217.

⁶² Yablon, *Untimely Ruins*, 8-11, 191-242.

⁶³ Weisenfeld, *Imaging Disaster*, 133.

⁶⁴ Arthur Inkersley, “An Amateur's Experience of Earthquake and Fire,” *Camera Craft* 12, no. 5 (1906): 195-199.

The juxtaposition of allegedly corrupt versus more solid structures was realized visually in the magazine, with the first page setting two photographs side by side (**fig. 7.16**). On the left, the windowed façade of the Mercantile Library, with City Hall's figure of Liberty faintly shining through, strikes the readers in its expansive damage. To the right, a photograph of Fairmont Hotel shows a rectangular structure residing in far distance, high above the rubble of the destroyed city. Like the Parthenon, majestically overlooking the city from the highest point, the Hotel reflected the monumental vista of the Pacific port city envisioned in the Burnham Plan. Built by Irish immigrant and "silver king" James Graham Fair, who had made a fortune in Nevada's Comstock Lode in the 1860s, the Hotel's depiction can be seen as a metaphorical extension of the Mechanic's Monument on the cover of *Camera Craft*. The photographic contemplation of structures built by the West's first engineers provided – alongside the figure of Liberty – solid points of reference so as to remember the values of its entrepreneurial, "pioneer" society. The grand civic agenda envisioned by these patrons, Stanford ranking first among them, was used by Inkersley to remind readers not only of the moral value of their architecture, but also to envision a more solidly constructed city space with money gained from the region's first enterprises.

Even the photograph of the burned down Mercantile Library, of which only the outer wall remained, could be mobilized to support the idea of a "grander" city. The slightly curved shape of its wall, the three stories of superimposed arcades, the appearance of a pine branch to the right, as well as the inclusion of pedestrians strolling in front, inevitably brings to mind Rome's Colosseum. As supporters of the Burnham Plan sought to deliberately include the moral value of San Francisco's ruins in the new city, the Romanesque sight of the destroyed Mercantile Library could have been used as an aesthetic instruction. Furthermore, since the Library had been the meeting place of the city's first business patrons and artists, its important status within local society would be regained by referencing Roman culture. Indeed, as Inkersley admits himself, "these reflections [...] are scarcely photographic,"⁶⁵ and yet they would mirror the general tenor of what was discussed in *Camera Craft* by Club members.

Within this framework, the role of the "amateur photographer" again comes under close scrutiny. Far from independent artistry for the sake of aesthetic contemplation, the San Franciscan amateur in this case perhaps did not make money out of his photographs, and yet his photographic works and writings would strategically enrich the position he held within local society. Inkersley's endorsement of the Burnham Plan therefore cannot be seen as divided from his photographic treatment of the event. His advice to fellow photographers, with which the article concluded, can be read through this prism as well. Reminding readers of the fast-paced reconstruction process, he urged:

⁶⁵ Ibid., 197.

“The hammer of the workman is sounding the knell of the artistic photograph, which, if it is to be made at all, must be made quickly.”⁶⁶ If reconstruction proclaimed the end of artistic photography – and the eventual rejection of the beautification project – the local practitioner would be responsible to preserve these sites. It was a moment of historical awareness, which had to be efficiently seized so as to produce a new corpus of urban photography. As Inkersley put it:

So, my good brother photographer, before the halycon [sic] days in which we are living pass away, never return in our time, get out with your “picture-box” and record some of the wonderful sights of the modern Herculaneum. And, when you have done so, let the Editors and readers of *Camera Craft* see the pick of your work.⁶⁷

While it can only be speculated which magazine contributors or Club members endorsed the Burnham Plan, it is fairly clear from reading the summer issues that the Romanesque features of the city provided the championed subject matter for local practitioners. Be it to support a project of embellishment or to adorn their own practice as art photographers, the ruin iconography constituted a persistently powerful motif in both processes. Club member Edgar A. Cohen’s account in June’s *Camera Craft* represents another example of this photographic historicization. Acknowledging the unprecedented use of cameras in the city (“The probabilities are that never since cameras were first invented has there been such a large number in use at any one place as there has been in San Francisco since the 18th of last April”), Cohen rapidly made a case for the sophisticated amateur by affirming that “[o]nly those equipped with the best lenses had much chance of securing good results.” In his extravagantly illustrated, eleven-page article, Cohen sought to turn the visual treatment of the ruins into a debate on principles of photographic practice. Despising commercial photographers and their fervent run for “smoke pictures,” most of which were “of mediocre quality,” the author was strongly opposed to the marketization of his own pictures without his consent. His embrace of qualitative equipment (he himself worked with a Series III Goerz and a Zeiss wide-angle lens) and well-pondered composition, independent from market demand, was to underline his status as an amateur photographer. As he stated: “I believe it is true that in out of door photography there is much more artistic ability among amateurs than professionals.”⁶⁸

Cohen reported on the specificities of out-of-doors work in California, recalling an encounter with a female photographer he observed wandering amid the rubble. Proposing to accompany her lone excursion, Cohen recommended locations to take photographs. From the unfolding conversation, he remembered:

⁶⁶ Ibid., 200.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Edgar A. Cohen, “With a Camera in San Francisco,” *Camera Craft* 12, no. 5 (1906): 183-192.

I commented on the characteristic independence of the American girl in accepting the company of a strange man and added that I presumed our both having cameras constituted a good reason, in California at least. In response I was informed that she belonged to the California Camera Club, that before she joined that institution she would not have done such a thing, but now, conventionalities were not allowed to count if a good picture were in sight. This was not said in disparagement of the club, but to show the enthusiasm engendered by membership in that body.⁶⁹

Club affiliation, as depicted in this extract, was reaffirmed in the disaster period as a sign of independence from commonplace outdoor practices. It would be framed as an adventure into nature, which, in this case, somewhat resembled the adverse living conditions on the frontier. Under these circumstances, unsurprisingly, the female photographer was considered in need of male company and guidance to achieve her venture. Even though no disaster images of female photographers (Club-affiliated or not) appeared in *Camera Craft*, this passage nonetheless demonstrates the general encouragement created by affiliation. Photography in the Californian surroundings, be it the Bay Area, the Yosemite, or the destroyed city, was portrayed as a quasi-obligation to the California Camera Club member who sought to actively explore and constantly challenge his or her practice by adopting to the environment.

Cohen's use of this pioneer legacy and its relation to urban ruins can be illustrated in two examples from his article. The building of the Society of California Pioneers, which had burned down entirely, was designated by the author as "[t]he most pathetic sight among the ruins" (**fig. 7.17**). Reproduced on the same page as a photograph of the destroyed Tivoli Theater – in style and name again reminiscent of Roman culture – the destruction of the Society's library "wipe[d] out that which never can be replaced." The use of the camera helped to cope with this experience, as Cohen said: "In making my picture of it I felt as if I were saying farewell to the old era."⁷⁰ The sense of closure was gained from the act of photographing the building. At the same time, despite the historical losses of material, the pioneer legacy would be kept present. The maintaining of this memory becomes tangible in Cohen's photograph of the Towne home on Nob Hill (**fig. 7.18**). Built by Southern Pacific second vice-president Alban N. Towne, the house was well-known for its Greek portico made of white marble. It was one of the less ostentatious mansions in the neighborhood occupied by the railroad patrons. Unoccupied after Towne's death in 1896, the house continued to represent the style of "high art villas" which was much desired to demarcate San Francisco's cultural refinement.⁷¹ The architectural ruin of the Towne mansion consisted of ancient building- and sculpture material instead of modern-day rubble. Its Greek design, which had persisted seismic shock and firestorms, could be

⁶⁹ Ibid., 190.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 194.

⁷¹ Information derived from Robert O'Brien, "The Portals of the Past," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 8, 1948 (File #VMSF-0049 in The Virtual Museum of the City of San Francisco, accessed January 24, 2018, <http://www.sfmuseum.net/hist12/portalsofthepast.html>).

used to attest to this form of resilience. The fact that it had been built by a Californian entrepreneur added a layer of local meaning for reconstruction.

Unsurprisingly, the ruins of the Towne mansion would become subject to numerous artistic depictions, from photographer Arnold Genthe to painter Charles Rollo Peters, who were attracted by the portico's elevated position and its pillars' framing of the ruined city below (**fig. 7.19**). So popular were the marble columns that they were moved to Golden Gate Park by 1909, where they are known as "Portals of the Past" to this day.⁷² As one of the rare ruins which in shape and material lived up to the ideal of a Mediterranean architecture, they could be easily appropriated to establish the sought-after "mythical reputation of being amongst the most long-established, culturally refined, aesthetically evolved, and morally reflective civilizations," as Leikam put it. The linear narrative from Athens and Rome to Paris and London would then terminate in the American West. In their numerous artistic depictions from photography to painting and literature, the Portals of the Past and other strategically framed ruins served a process of cultural restoration, necessary for San Franciscans so as to assert once again the historic value of their city.⁷³

After the May, June, and July numbers of *Camera Craft* which extensively covered the disaster, the magazine continued its usual course with announcements of club activity, articles on technical questions as well as subjects of artistic interest. The disaster was only briefly referred to when justifying delays in publication or informing readers on the reconstruction process. By early 1907, however, one last disaster account made its appearance in the magazine. It is worth examining this final contribution to the memory of the disaster, as it exemplifies the Club's stance on the event. Written by local journalist and photographer Louis J. Stellmann, the heavily illustrated article traced a jaunt "through the ruins with a Premoette." It was only after the earthquake and, more importantly during the 1910s, that Stellmann's name became associated to the CCC, to whose corpus he would then actively contribute with illustrated articles and lectures. Originally from Baltimore, he had moved to Los Angeles in the late 1890s and settled in San Francisco by 1902 to advance his career as a writer. In his autobiography, he linked the experience of his first journey to "the Far West" with what he called "the early years of my camera infatuation." Accordingly, his memory of the morning of April 18 was marked by "a cheap little camera" that he was "clutching" while escaping with his wife "six flights of stairs in a burning rooming house, uninjured." After straying around the city for several hours – during which perhaps a series of photographs of the burning city was taken (**fig. 7.20**) – Stellmann and his wife left for Berkeley by ferry. On the way, he met an editor of *Sunset* magazine,

⁷² Birken, "Die Kalifornische Institution," 147-148. Genthe's photograph of the portals reached further fame in a 1956 retrospective on the earthquake, as Ansel Adams was commissioned by the California Palace of the Legion of Honor to make prints from Genthe's negatives. The negatives were originally acquired via the James D. Phelan Bequest Fund (see "Frame|Work," Blog of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, accessed January 24, 2018, <https://www.famsf.org/blog/framework-untitled-portals-past-arnold-genthe>).

⁷³ Leikam, *Framing Spaces in Motion*, 248-255.

of which he was a regular contributor. The editor provided him with a free travel pass on Southern Pacific lines to seek shelter, as was the common procedure by the company during the aftermath.⁷⁴

By the third day of the fire, Stellmann had returned to San Francisco in an effort to capture the city more extensively. Struck by the great number of photographers around him, seeking “to secure the photographic impossible” with their improvised apparatus, Stellmann himself had to rely on a pocket camera, a Kodak Premoette No. 1, left coincidentally in his coat from an earlier trip. The Adjutant General who had facilitated Stellmann’s return to the city via the East Bay was amused by the size of the apparatus, to which the photographer “grimly” explained that all photographic supplies in Oakland, Berkeley, and Alameda had been sold or rented. Having to improvise with what he called “a lump” of a camera, Stellmann embarked upon a journey through the destroyed city which not only became the motif for his lens, but also the very material foundation of his practice. In need of a tripod, he used bricks from the destroyed buildings to construct his own camera stand, thereby creating a direct connection between the physicality of the disaster space and his photographic subject matter. This active engagement with the destroyed city served as impetus to the practice, much like for the female photographer whom Cohen encountered at the same period. Considering San Francisco in ruins as “the greatest sight that ever invited a photographer,” Stellmann combined photographic reconstruction with material exploration. Through this physical engagement, mingling camera and brick, he started to visually rebuild the city, first as an allegory of Athens and Rome with “picturesque [...] fallen temple[s],” then along the lines of “the new San Francisco” in which street cars were already running.⁷⁵

As such, the portfolio published in *Camera Craft*, which combined images of destruction with scenes of communal rebuilding, can be seen as a veritable embodiment of the process of “creative destruction” described earlier (**fig. 7.21, 7.22**). The losses suffered and the pain felt were remedied and actively rechanneled through the creation a new corpus. This series of images would be created not only by pointing the apparatus at the scene, but also by remodeling the debris for the construction of something new. Again, here, the physicality of the space and the practice on site provided powerful tools so as to envision a possible future. The camera was the necessary instrument for this process, with its backward- and forward-looking potential, as Stellmann concluded: “[T]hough I have partially

⁷⁴ Cited from autobiographical sketch in the Louis J. Stellman Papers (Box 1, folder 1, 6-17, 28, 31-33, California History Room, California State Library). NB: During World War I, Stellmann, who was born to German parents, dropped the second ‘n’ in his family name; throughout this thesis, he will be referred to with the initial spelling as his works were referenced as such in *Camera Craft* and other Club-related publications. For further information on Stellmann, see also Richard Dillon, introduction to *Chinatown Photographer, Louis J. Stellman: A Catalog of his Photograph Collection*, ed. Gary E. Strong (Sacramento: California State Library Foundation, 1989), 11-18. The author insists on the value of photograph collections by understudied figures like Stellmann in the face of figures like Genthe or Weston, who were active in the same period and with whom he was acquainted.

⁷⁵ Louis J. Stellmann, “Through the Ruins with a Premoette,” *Camera Craft* 14, no. 1 (1907): 3-7.

restocked my photographic equipment, the Premoette remains ever close at hand and I cherish it both for memories of what it has done and confidence in what it can do in the future.”⁷⁶

Given Stellmann’s involvement in San Francisco’s literary and artistic circles, his photographic works did not remain unnoticed. A series of more carefully composed images taken throughout the reconstruction period gave way to an illustrated publication with local editor Paul Elder in 1910. The title of this elaborate coffee-table book with tipped-in prints read in gilded letters *Vanished Ruin Era: San Francisco’s Classic Artistry of Ruin*. The “classic” aspect of this disaster account, “depicted in picture and song,” was made unmistakably clear through the choice of the cover showing the portals of the past with the City Hall dome faintly visible in the background (**fig. 7.23**). In this publication, the potential of the ruins’ “untimely” character for purposes of narrative-fabrication is disclosed. Their immediate consumption, as described above through Yablon, becomes tangible in Stellmann’s account which identified the ruins as an ephemeral “feature of San Francisco’s recent history,” “carv[ing] shapes of classic dignity out of structural atrocities.” The referencing to “that modern Acropolis which the Fire God created” was used to guide the viewer toward the desired interpretation of the event as a fire, instead of an earthquake, and as an insertion into grander schemes of history to which ancient populations had proven resilient. Indeed, Stellmann’s idea of “the spirit of our citizenship, which flame could not destroy,” were to be reflected in the Neoclassical shapes derived from the damage. The juxtaposition of a poem to a photograph on each double-page spread in the book further channeled this interpretation of a natural process of monumentalization (**fig. 7.24**). The ambition to “preserve” that which is “worthy of perpetuation” through the lens of the camera attests to the process of selectivity mentioned earlier. His foreword reinforces this notion as he refers to reconstruction as a rapid process coming at the expense of “our esthetic quality.” However, this “surely [...] was to be called a virtue, not a fault.”⁷⁷ In the light of the rejection of the Burnham Plan, endorsed by elite circles with whom Stellmann socialized, this insistence on the preservation of San Francisco’s ruin iconography gains new importance. As Yablon has argued, Stellmann’s ruin photographs were “aesthetic objects to inspire, edify, and culturally legitimate” San Francisco. They “substantiated the notion of a westward course of empire,” which city officials like ex-mayor Phelan had vividly embraced and wished to see mirrored in the city space.⁷⁸

Stellmann’s publication provides ample room for discussion of ruin imagery, its relation to literature, or to works by other photographers like Genthe, as recently demonstrated by Jacob Birken.⁷⁹ By the same token, Elder’s illustrated publications of the 1910s, which will be subject to

⁷⁶ Ibid., 7.

⁷⁷ Louis J. Stellmann, *Vanished Ruin Era: San Francisco’s Classic Artistry of Ruin Depicted in Picture and Song* (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Son, 1910), vii-viii.

⁷⁸ Yablon, *Untimely Ruins*, 229.

⁷⁹ Birken, “Die Kalifornische Institution,” 142-150.

examination in the last part of this thesis, certainly represent an excellent terrain to explore intersections of promotional and fine-art publishing. Yet, to conclude this analysis of *Camera Craft's* ruin coverage, it is deemed more important to retain the *practice* which lies at the heart of these shared disaster narratives. The intention has been so far to understand how photographers took up their work on site, in the streets of the city. As the walking and traveling aspect of photographic practice was at the core of the California Camera Club's activities from the onset, the moment of material rupture urged the local practitioners to return to the basics of the practice. In this process, the shared narrative space of *Camera Craft* and the common identification ground it represented allowed the photographers to cope with the catastrophe verbally, visually, and materially.

Certainly, given the aesthetic potential provided by the ruin, the amateur/professional division resurged in the period. These tendencies, however strongly expressed in the summer issues of the magazine, cannot be taken as the sole extant document on photographic work in the period. Instead, the claims expressed by Inkersley or Cohen should be seen as part of the longstanding demarcation process by which Club photographers had sought to single out the uniqueness of their work. Furthermore, the impression of a classic Pictorialist narrative can be revised when once again expanding the source material to other circulating sources of the time in which Club members had their share. The book format, as briefly shown through Stellmann, needs closer examination in the following section, so as to trace how photographic material by Club members provided a visual frame for popular (and commercial) disaster accounts. In doing so, we return to the premise of photographic practice set by magazine editor Fayette Clute. His urging of fellow practitioners to overcome the suffering and contribute to the reconstruction of a "grander" San Francisco leads us to the books in which the city was heralded as such.

7.3 "Thank God for such calamities": illustrated disaster accounts and a renewed communal myth

In the wake of the disaster, by late April 1906, dozens of publications circulated throughout the country. As Ted Steinberg has noted, by the end of the year, 82 illustrated books were published, supplemented by magazine and newspaper coverage, as well as individual photographs and postcards. Undoubtedly, this extraordinary treatment in contemporary culture has turned the San Francisco disaster into "the event that defines calamity in the popular imagination."⁸⁰ It is due to the large number of "instant publications," mixing semi-scientific with semi-spectacular content, that a legible tale of the event was fabricated. In some of these booklets, sensationalism ran counter the booster

⁸⁰ Ted Steinberg, *Acts of God: The Unnatural History of Natural Disaster in America*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 25-26. As the focus in this part remains on traceable contributions by Club members, the production of postcards is not discussed. While Street and Weidner produced postcards, only few examples of these survive and their circulation cannot be traced. These few items can be found notably in the collections of the Bancroft Library and the California Historical Society.

discourse which advertised immediate rebuilding. The more elaborately illustrated accounts usually featured a spectacular narrative, heightened by maps and photographs, which yet left enough space to imagine a rebuilt city and community, so as to encourage future tourism.⁸¹ A closer study of these sources discloses the search for an understanding of the recent past, with the goal of prompt insertion into national history. A strategy in this process – common to the history of the American West – was to extend the “sense of the past by incorporating within it things that have scarcely ceased to breathe.”⁸² In the summer of 1906, this meant to formulate an instantaneous historic account while the ruins were literally still smoldering. This dashing for history-making tied in with the rapidity of reconstruction, as proclaimed in Stellmann’s *Vanished Ruin Era*: “While the flames were yet devouring one end of the city, the other end resounded with the hammer-blows of reconstructive workmen.”⁸³

By July 1906, when rebuilding was in full motion, the Berkeley poet Charles Keeler published with editor Paul Elder an account of the disaster, entitled *San Francisco Through Earthquake and Fire*. Its illustrated cover featured a drawing of Market Street in ruins, while its frontispiece showed a fold-out photograph by commercial photographer H.S. Hooper of “the sweep of the fire” (**fig. 7.25, 7.26**). The panoramic photograph, which was also marketed by Hooper as an individual 33 x 62 cm print entitled *The Burning of San Francisco*, was a fabricated image (**fig. 7.27**). The highly contrasted clouds of smoke engulfing the city from the entire coastal line did not exist in the original negative, and were artificially added to the print.⁸⁴ While such an example of spectacular retouching is anything but rare in instant publications and in the widely circulating postcard imagery of the time,⁸⁵ it does set the tone for the following discussion of Keeler’s account. The unfolding of a manipulated panoramic image alerts the reader to the written content, which at times, proved just as fabricated. However, instead of pointing out shortcomings and misinformation in Keeler’s account, the focus in this discussion will be set on the specific use of Club members’ photographs and their relation to Keeler’s communal narrative. The photographs by O.V. Lange and Oscar Maurer used in the book hence can be related to what was being discussed in *Camera Craft* in the same period.

It can be argued that, inasmuch as the fire became an instrument to frame the damage economically and historically, the subsequently shaped account of the community constituted an addition to reunite the fragmented post-disaster space. Such rapidly publicized accounts manifested

⁸¹ Leikam, *Framing Spaces in Motion*, 239-243. See for example, Will Irwin, *The City that was: A Requiem of Old San Francisco* (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1906); Charles Morris, *The San Francisco Calamity by Earthquake and Fire: A Complete and Accurate Account of the Fearful Disaster* (New York: Scull, 1906); Charles Keeler, *San Francisco Through Earthquake and Fire* (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company Publishers, 1906).

⁸² Lowenthal, “The Place of the Past in the American Landscape,” 110.

⁸³ Stellmann, *Vanished Ruin Era*, vii.

⁸⁴ Information derived from “Guide to the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and Fire Digital Collection,” Online Archive of California, accessed January 3, 2018, <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/hb8779p2cx/>.

⁸⁵ See Hansen and Condon, *Denial of Disaster*, 78.

a desire for unity in an otherwise “corrosive community” whose tensions were often worsened by disaster. The history created in illustrated books represented a counter-model, which relied on an allegedly collective experience of the event used for positive identification.⁸⁶ As argued by Roland Barthes with reference to the Paris flood of 1955, the collaboration of press and photography as publishing organs served to reactivate myths of communal life in times of crisis. Anticipating the height of catastrophe, publishers were eager to emphasize the climax as a powerful moment for the community to stand in unity. Next to providing a “refreshed” perspective of the city, photographs of the inundated urban environment – and specific scenes that would be visually repeated ad nauseam – permitted locals a delightful immersion in the “spectacle.” Just as the vast expanse of the disaster became visible, a “euphoria to reconstruct” was installed. On the one hand, it alluded to the solidarity among the community and, on the other, reminisced in “the myth of ‘48,” when barricades were constructed as forms of civil resistance. The reliance on nineteenth-century narratives of hardship, strongly related to a specific date (‘48 or ‘49 respectively), became infused with a Biblical vocabulary. As in San Francisco half a century earlier, this combination strengthened the portrayal of the catastrophe as a festive occasion of communal rallying and remembrance of older virtues.⁸⁷ Interestingly, the belonging to and the mastery of the disaster space were asserted exactly through references to commonly known tales of resilience with a strong identity-shaping dimension, as well as a unification under the banner of collective rebuilding. In the San Franciscan case, where the high-spirited character of the catastrophe’s aftermath was likewise tangible, unity among the city’s inhabitants was articulated in words rather than in actual photographic representation. The photographs, in their aesthetic distance and editorial framing, served to emphasize a pioneer legacy, which eventually served its makers.

In order to trace Keeler’s strategic use of photographs and understand the proclaimed vision of the local community, his background and involvement in the region’s cultural circles needs to be highlighted. The rapid employment of the emptiness paradigm of the Western imagination to “reconstruct or invent the vanished past,”⁸⁸ as used by the writer in the disaster narrative, stems from his earlier implications in the promotion of an idiosyncratic Californian art scene. His acquaintance with local photographers like Lange and Maurer, and with editor and gallery owner Paul Elder, was an essential component of his work as a poet. Rediscovered in the 1970s when historical research on the Arts & Crafts movement took up, Charles Keeler would rapidly be identified as the protagonist of a “Berkeley Bohemia,” an unconventional artistic community of the East Bay involved in art, performance, and outdoor activities. This network was frequented by a great number of well-known

⁸⁶ Weisenfeld, *Imaging Disaster*, 161-162.

⁸⁷ Translated from Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1957), 66-69.

⁸⁸ Lowenthal, “The Place of the Past in the American Landscape,” 110.

local personae, including artist William Keith, photographers Anne Brigman and Laura Adams Armer, lecturer George Wharton James, or naturalist John Muir. These intersecting interests merged in the Hillside Club, of which Keeler became the president in 1904. The organization notably promoted an artistic sensibility toward the local environment and its protection. Keeler's home became the meeting place for the Club, and perfectly reflected its aesthetic ideals, as it was constructed by local architect Bernard Maybeck who had already designed the California Building for the Chicago Fair of 1893, and was director of architecture at the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art. In their turn toward the environment and artisanal production, members of the Hillside Club celebrated a Greek revival in Berkeley and considered the campus' intellectual community as the "New Athens."⁸⁹

The perfect publishing platform for Keeler was found in Paul Elder & Company, the thriving San Franciscan publisher of the 1900s. Advertised as "an Arts and Crafts book shop," the store expanded to Santa Barbara and New York in the period. Its local headquarters regularly showed photographs by Dasonville and Brigman, and advertised special prints of the Yosemite. After the earthquake, the shop would be redesigned by Maybeck.⁹⁰ A guestbook from the period 1909-1917 demonstrates the remarkable parade of the local bohème regularly stopping by Elder's store, including Brigman, Genthe, and Maurer, poet Will Irwin, and UCB regent Phoebe Hearst.⁹¹ The ideals shared by these artists, writers, and local investors were reflected in Elder's publications, which included coffee table books like Stellmann's by the 1910s. Around the turn of the century, Elder had started the *Impressions Quarterly*, a journal which mixed literary writings and reviews, with photographs, and advertisement.⁹² Keeler contributed in November 1900 with an article entitled "The Impression of Nature on Art in California," mirroring the claims to uniqueness of the local artistic community at the time. Celebrating the "intimate and habitual relationship" of Californians with their landscape, he made a case for the "promise" of the state and its cultural production. The same issue included an advertisement photographer Laura Adams Armer for her "artistic portraits," as well as ads by the Southern Pacific.⁹³ This mixture of artistic recognition and local boosting perfectly reflected the tenor of *Camera Craft*'s first issue, published a few months earlier. As Christian Peterson has remarked, the ideals of object-making as embraced by the Arts & Crafts movement corresponded

⁸⁹ Dimitri Shipounoff, introduction to *The Simple Home by Charles Keeler* (Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1979), vii-xxxvi; Hery et al., *Berkeley Bohemia*, 33-49; Trapp, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in California*, 281.

⁹⁰ Trapp, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in California*, 272, 281; Palmquist "William E. Dasonville: An Appreciation," 14.

⁹¹ See David Paul Elder Papers (BANC MSS 71/120 c, Vol. 1), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

⁹² Between 1898 and 1917, Elder would edit 375 publications, see David Mostardi, *A Checklist of the Publications of Paul Elder* (Olalla, Washington: The Arts & Crafts Press, 2001).

⁹³ Charles Keeler, "The Impression of Nature on Art in California," *Impressions Quarterly* 1, no. 9 (1900): 171-172.

to the forms of photographic practice advocated by Pictorialists. Accordingly, Elder's catalogs provided the ideal platforms to appreciate such productions.⁹⁴

However, inasmuch as the craft-making ideal was appealing, it was the shared rhetoric on legitimizing Californian culture which united photographers with writers and promoters at the time. The "promise" of the local culture, as advertised by Lange in the UCB project or by Maurer in *Sunset*, was to be renewed in the wake of the catastrophe. From this earlier-established network, the photographers and writers drew inspiration to reinvigorate the desires they had projected together. Furthermore, Elder's edition of Keeler's account was not the first of the poet's books to rely on illustrations by local photographers. In 1902, the California Promotion Committee (an organization subject to discussion in the next section) had already commissioned Keeler to write the booklet *San Francisco and Thereabout*, illustrated with photographs by Taber, and more notably, Lange and Tibbitts. The preface designated the work as an important contribution to the "real need at the present day of a book on San Francisco [...] giving a brief history of the city's romantic past and a just description of its present life, with the picturesque setting of bay and hills."⁹⁵ Keeler likewise wrote commissioned works on Southern California for the Passenger Department of the Santa Fe railway, illustrated with photographs by his wife.⁹⁶ The poet's numerous contributions to the "characteristic" work on the American West was appreciated by the Club, which invited him in early 1905 to a series of lectures on Pueblo Indians and their production of "arts and crafts."⁹⁷ Via their shared interests in California history, art, and promotion, the membership of the Hillside Club and the CCC engaged in close exchanges. Maurer, whose wife was among the founding members of the former club, also cultivated a friendship with Keeler (fig. 7.28). After moving to Berkeley in 1905, the photographer became more actively involved in the East Bay artistic community – a relationship which was underlined by the architecture of his new studio, designed by Maybeck in 1907.⁹⁸ Given these intersecting interests of authors, artists, and photographers, the illustrated earthquake narrative can be seen as a careful balancing of Keeler's aesthetic interests as a writer with the promotional principles of potential commissioners to whom his work continued to appeal.

San Francisco Through Earthquake and Fire appeared in August 1906 to a cultural marketplace, which was still struggling to regain its earlier dynamics. Institutions like the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art had burned down entirely, leading to the disappearing of valuable collections of California art. Elder, whose shop had undergone the same fate, brought out a new catalogue in

⁹⁴ Peterson, "The Photograph Beautiful, 1895-1915," 198-210, 216-218.

⁹⁵ Charles Keeler, *San Francisco and Thereabout* (San Francisco: California Promotion Committee, 1902), n.p.

⁹⁶ Charles Keeler, *Southern California. Illustrated with Drawings from Nature and from Photographs by Louise M. Keeler* (Los Angeles: Passenger Dept., Santa Fe, 1899). To my knowledge, Louise Keeler was not a member of the California Camera Club.

⁹⁷ "Club Notes," *Camera Craft* 10, no. 4 (1905): 244.

⁹⁸ Hery et al., *Berkeley Bohemia*, 77; see also Daniella Thompson, "Oscar Maurer Studio," Berkeley Landmarks, accessed October 15, 2016, http://berkeleyheritage.com/berkeley_landmarks/maurer_studio.html.

December of that year. It opened with the following extract from the summer's *San Francisco Chronicle*:

San Franciscans are not losing sight of the fact that mere bricks and mortar, steel frames and corrugated iron alone cannot restore the city of our memory, and that now, even more than formerly, art in construction is a desideration.⁹⁹

Accordingly, the catalog addressed itself to “Art Lovers and Home Builders,” that is, those “seeking to rebuild the lost library and to restore the memories of a vanished home with its various book and art interests.” Elder hence embraced “the task of renewing the art interests of our stricken city,” by selling pottery, leather works, pastels, and prints. In the latter section were to be found “California views, among them being a set illustrative of San Francisco since the earthquake, Size 6 ½ x 4 ½ inches, Price 30 cents.”¹⁰⁰ As no photographer is listed in the catalog, it is not known whose views of the city were for sale at Elder’s. Furthermore, the absence of correspondence between Elder and local photographers does not allow us to speculate on the prints to be purchased at his shop. However, from looking at Keeler’s account and Elder’s *mise-en-scène* of Club photographers’ works, we can analyze which images were considered useful for the desired community portrayal. Judging from the price at which the pictures were sold at the bookshop (equaling some \$8 in today’s money), as well as the price of the book (\$0.75, approximately corresponding to \$20 today), it can be deduced that the investment in an “art in construction” ranked among the priorities of the wealthier classes. This hypothesis is further backed by the fact that upper class neighborhoods recovered from the catastrophe more rapidly and efficiently than the poor and minority populations, whose neighborhoods would remain under construction for years. This imbalanced rebuilding process facilitated the establishment of pre-disaster conditions of economic and racial injustice.¹⁰¹

The narrative published through Elder – sold at a sophisticated venue for wealthy citizens – indirectly sustained these conditions. The reestablishment worked not only through words, but especially through the reliance on widely held beliefs about photography’s authenticity. On publication in July 1906, the book was accordingly praised for its truth value. The *San Francisco Call* titled “[r]ealistic, sane and comprehensive account of the San Francisco disaster, illustrated.”¹⁰² Its authenticity was backed by the author’s direct engagement in relief work, “hurrying about the city in an automobile,” providing him with “exceptional opportunities to observe the wholeness of the picture both as a thing spectacular and as a thing pathetic.” Keeler’s “sensibly restrained eloquence” enriched the publication, which “San Franciscans and their Eastern friends and sympathizers will be

⁹⁹ Cited from *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 9, 1906, in Paul Elder, *An Arts and Crafts Book Shop in Greater San Francisco* (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1906), n.p.

¹⁰⁰ Elder, *An Arts and Crafts Book Shop*, 1, 5, 10.

¹⁰¹ Fradkin, *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906*, 226.

¹⁰² “Charles Keeler’s,” *San Francisco Call*, July 23, 1906, 5.

pleased to read again.” Describing “the story” as “a little bit belated,” the editors made an attempt to situate the four-month-old catastrophe in the remote past. Adding to the credibility of the account were the “well chosen” photographs, among which Hooper’s frontispiece ranked as “the most impressive of the many representations of that awe-inspiring spectacle.”¹⁰³ Numerous studies have mentioned the “campaign of cultural disinformation” after the disaster, which was carried out by pro-business newspapers like the *Call* or the *Chronicle* to advertise rapid rebuilding. The visual output to sustain these notions was tremendous in its extent and served to dictate a public interpretation.¹⁰⁴ Accounts by well-known local figures visiting the scenery, like Charles Keeler, were meant to add another layer of credibility to the desired portrayal. It is through this “verbal smokescreen,” in the words of Philip Fradkin,¹⁰⁵ that we need to understand the photographs used in *San Francisco Through Earthquake and Fire*.

What local critics appreciated most in Keeler’s story was the tribute paid to “the spirit of the people,” to which he dedicated the closing chapter. So as to fully achieve this homage, the San Franciscan experience was portrayed in a total of five chapters – four on the fire and one treating the refugees. Interestingly, the account opened with a six-page chapter on the earthquake, which other such stories tended to omit. Yet again, the information provided in this introductory chapter needs to be read through the lens of the communal spirit which Keeler sought to celebrate. In this context, the degree of severity – combining both earthquake and fire – appeared most powerful so as to portray a resilient community. Therefore, the photographs used in the chapter to illustrate damage from the earthquake were not analyzed scientifically.

Oscar Maurer’s *The Earthquake – Break on Filled Land Across Van Ness Avenue* (**fig. 7.29**) could have been part of a scientific report, as the massive gaps in the pavement strikingly revealed the problem of “made ground.” This strategy of San Franciscan construction, filling the ground with debris to artificially lay out new districts, had caused the greatest damage, since the fragile soil liquefied in the fire. At the time of the disaster, about one-sixth of the urban population of 410,000 was housed on this unstable ground.¹⁰⁶ Its risks were well known, as the phenomenon of “drunken rows” of houses, which literally sank into the earth, had occurred before – and would reoccur even as late as 1989. It concerned working class and immigrant neighborhoods, but also the commercial districts.¹⁰⁷ Despite these obvious shortcomings, reconstruction was advertised rapidly. Just as rapidly, it was agreed upon by city officials and business men to attribute 95% of the entire damage

¹⁰³ “Gossip of Writers,” *San Francisco Call*, August 19, 1906, 27.

¹⁰⁴ Fradkin, *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906*, 263-268; Steinberg, *Acts of God*, 30-33; Davies, *Saving San Francisco*, 4-5; Leikam, *Framing Spaces in Motion*, 243-248.

¹⁰⁵ Fradkin, *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906*, 231.

¹⁰⁶ Hansen and Condon, *Denial of Disaster*, 8, 11; Fradkin, *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906*, 72-73.

¹⁰⁷ Dyl, *Seismic City*, 72-75.

to the fire. Stated as such before Congress in August of 1906, the role of the earthquake damage was significantly downplayed, which eventually led to the obfuscation of the actual causes.¹⁰⁸

Keeler added to this framing in the very brief chapter consecrated to the earthquake by stating that “the most exaggerated reports of the death rate were spread.”¹⁰⁹ From this perspective then, Maurer’s *Break on Filled Land* cannot be taken as an evaluation, and even less so as a criticism, of contemporary construction practices. It rather needs to be seen as part of the series of earthquake damage which Keeler sought to portray as somewhat purifying. Following a short description of the general confusion reigning among San Franciscans after the one minute of tremor in the early morning hours, the author immediately turned toward the most emblematic site of the event: “The great City Hall [...] – a building upon which seven million dollars had been wasted in notorious graft – was unmasked of its vainglorious show.” The description of its destruction in mythological terms “as if smitten by the mailed fist of an avenging Nemesis” underlined the idea that the corrupt local administration had received its necessary punishment. Its destruction, however, was not complete since, as mentioned ever so often, the figure of Liberty persisted and demonstrated that the rest of the nation and its ideals were still intact.¹¹⁰ As manifested in the solidity of the Corinthian pillars, the classic elements resisted the shock, while the porous material of the rest of the building disclosed the administration’s overall instability.

From this framework of earthquake destruction as necessary and yet cathartic, the author sought to reshape the experience of a completely annihilated city space by the fire. Maurer’s *The Ruins – Total Devastation about St. Francis Church* crudely exposed the former urban grid (**fig. 7.30**). Like a chessboard, devoid of its players, the city lay uninhabited. A few structures up the hill in the distance suggest some form of survival, and yet the foreground is cluttered with piles of debris. In line with the above-mentioned argument by Inkersley of noble structures persisting to both earthquake and fire, St. Francis church was depicted as resilient. The roof was gone, yet the foundational walls and dome were still standing, making the church part of the buildings which Keeler labeled “fire-proof-cased Leviathans.”¹¹¹ In its silent persistence, the church communicated to San Franciscans the history of their city, starting with its name patron, Saint Francis of Assisi, after whom was named the

¹⁰⁸ Birken, “Die Kalifornische Institution,” 23-29. The report of the California State Earthquake Commission, consisting of 750 images, counters the fire hypothesis. Including large bodies of rural and architectural imagery, the Commission’s output differed from popular illustrations. None of the survey photographers could be identified as CCC members. The collection is available in digital format, see “Finding Aid to the California State Earthquake Investigation Commission Photographs from the Andrew C. Lawson Collection, 1900-1910, bulk 1906,” Online Archive of California, accessed February 2, 2018, <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/hb1290075d/>. For further information on geologist Lawson’s report of 1908 and the photographs, see Fradkin, *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906*, 254-262, 286-287. For further reading on earthquake surveys and their diverging scientific and ideological uses in the 1880s, see Kelsey on the U.S.G.S. photographs of the Charleston earthquake in 1886, in *Archive Style*, 143-189.

¹⁰⁹ Keeler, *San Francisco Through Earthquake and Fire*, 5.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

settlement of Spanish colonists near the Bay in 1776. Established in 1849, before official statehood, the parish was the oldest of the city and would later be referred to as the “national shrine of Saint Francis of Assisi.”¹¹² Through the visual contemplation of the old brick walls, amid an otherwise desolate or somewhat hostile environment, Maurer’s photograph allowed readers to reimagine the beginnings of the city 130 years earlier. Its slightly elevated viewpoint connoted a mastery of space, since the empty grid demanded to be filled with material and meaning. Taking St. Francis Church as a point of departure gave readers a sense of orientation and, perhaps, even the prospect of a rebuilding, despite the alleged “total devastation.” In the pages preceding Maurer’s picture, Keeler provided sufficient metaphorical input to prepare the audience for the scene. Exclaiming “[w]hat a scene of desolation, where late had stood the proudest city of the Pacific,” he nonetheless did not immerse in desperation. Instead, he referenced Pompeii, Nineveh and Babylon which “would not have seemed more ancient” facing the “ruin of a thousand years,” embodied by San Francisco.¹¹³

The series of disaster photographs made by Maurer in April and May 1906 were included in the aforementioned 1965 Oakland retrospective, which will be treated in greater detail in the epilogue to this thesis. Notably, the collection of earthquake photographs preserved at the Oakland Museum discloses Maurer’s preferred subject matter, which must have been appreciated by Keeler. *The Exodus*, for example, mirrors the Biblical connotation the author sought to present in his account (**fig. 7.31**). The figures huddling on carriages, turning their backs on the destroyed scenery, suggest the determinacy of the inhabitants to flee from the city toward an unknown, yet certainly less grim future. Even though it was not included in Keeler’s publication, the photograph communicates the notion of a universal history of humankind, whose patterns repeat, be they in Egypt or in the American West. The idea of flight from the oppressing city perhaps appeared problematic for a national readership, since California and especially its cultural center San Francisco, had been commonly depicted as the Eden of America, that is, the opposite of an imposed exodus.

The notion of a westward-oriented, brighter future was maintained on a subtler note in the book, in one of O.V. Lange’s photographs. His *The Ruins – Old Safes at a Discount, California Street, Looking West* set the stage for Keeler’s allegories on the Golden West (**fig. 7.32**). The photograph showed the destruction from eyelevel perspective with people removing debris on carriages. The material character of the ruins depicted in this image was less relevant, as the text had provided the necessary vocabulary to turn the visible damage into allegorical objects. The hollow façades, which frame the image horizontally, lead the gaze toward the extension of California Street in the West. The empty trunks in the foreground suggest the material losses suffered by the population. In the back,

¹¹² “A Short History of Saint Francis of Assisi Church,” National Shrine of Saint Francis of Assisi, accessed April 18, 2018, <http://www.shrinesf.org/history.html>.

¹¹³ Keeler, *San Francisco Through Earthquake and Fire*, 33.

the horizon is blocked by a number of smoke-covered buildings, which appear intact. The image invites to join the pedestrians moving toward the West, where the fire stopped and the horizon would eventually become visible. Instead of fleeing from the scene, as the citizens in Maurer's "Exodus," these pedestrians had found a way to move purposefully about the city. Concerning the atmosphere after the last day of fire, Keeler wrote a few pages before Lange's photograph:

The ruby sun dipped into its pall of smoke. The Golden Gate, with fleets of anchored ships in the offing, was veritably a sea of molten gold. Never before was the ruin of a city consummated in a scene of such thrilling splendor.¹¹⁴

While none of this golden scenery was visualized in the book, the reader was lured to imagine walking California Street toward the West in search of the gilded ruin.

The representation of human life in the annihilated city space was another means to demonstrate the population's "spirit" of resilience, instead of portraying inhabitants as exiles from an overpowering destruction scene. The flight was depicted as displacement *within* the city, underlining the idea that the population stayed and resisted. Lange's *Relief and Reconstruction – Refugees in Camp* is exemplary in this sense, as it embodies what Weisenfeld has described as the "heroicization" of disaster victims (**fig. 7.33**). Their narrative depiction would provide a form of positive identification at local level, while at the same time drawing on a more universal framework that was intended to "[underscore] the moral and didactic virtues of perseverance in the face of extreme hardship." The desire to essentialize the suffering experienced in the community would then help to overcome individual hardships and focus on a broader community vision instead.¹¹⁵

Lange's picture, which had also been reproduced next to Inkersley's article in the June *Camera Craft*, appeared at a crucial moment in Keeler's narrative. It enriched his description of a visit to a refugee camp in San Francisco on the Sunday after the third day of fire, when rain eventually set in. On his drive to the camp, the generally optimistic atmosphere in the streets struck the author as "unnatural, almost superhuman, this universal good cheer." Upon arrival in the camp, "the many evidences of thoughtfulness for others" appeared the most pleasant sight, emphasized in the publication by Lange's solemn representation of the refugees.¹¹⁶ Since the caption read "relief and reconstruction," the commanding ruins in the background could be regarded as an ephemeral feature of a cityscape which was about to be transformed. The imposing makeshift tents to the left visually supported the idea of a provisional space. Still, their plain appearance conveyed the unusual and demanding circumstances refugees had to undergo while lodging in these barracks. The representation of the four refugees – two women and two men, three of them in profile with slightly bent heads, one seated – created an impression of "noble perseverance." The calm endurance of the

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 32.

¹¹⁵ Weisenfeld, *Imaging Disaster*, 161-162.

¹¹⁶ Keeler, *San Francisco Through Earthquake and Fire*, 42-43.

circumstances by its protagonists referenced again the universality of human suffering. As history was represented as cyclic in the account, visually reinforced by the ruins in the background, the renaissance of a stronger community could be anticipated.¹¹⁷

An intriguing aspect of Lange's refugee camp photograph is the presence of the man seated in mid-ground. Somewhat detached from the group of three in the background, he smokes a cigarette in a contemplative posture. It is unclear whether the light incidence from the left dims the right side of his profile, or whether he is of dark complexion. His headdress – which is not a classic bowler hat as worn by the white man in the background, but rather a cap – as well as the unicolor of his clothing, suggest a working-class background. In the light of both contemporary retouching strategies (which were employed in Keeler's account as we have seen) and the extremely small number of African-Americans living in San Francisco in the 1900s, it is doubtful whether he can be identified as such. Representing a mere 0.1% of the urban population, that is, approximately 1,600 people, African-Americans occupied an even more unstable position in the city during the disaster. As Davies has demonstrated, due to “the low number of black refugees,” segregated camps of whites and blacks were “an unrealistic endeavor for relief officials.” Unlike the Chinese, the city's black population hence could have been lodged in one of the camps.¹¹⁸

If we were to assume his being African-American, Lange's photograph would demonstrate one of the very rare instances of minority representation in the aftermath of the disaster. While postcards with staged scenes from segregated Chinese camps did circulate, a realistic representation of minorities was completely neglected.¹¹⁹ To compensate the lack of visual material, a strong textual representation of racial harmony and equal conditions of access was developed. Keeler contributed to this tale by claiming that “[m]en and women who had lived in wealth and elegance stood in the bread-line with Chinese and negroes, with street-sweepers and paupers.”¹²⁰ Lange's representation of an African-American refugee would be made to support this interpretation. However, the actual breadline image by commercial photographers Shaw and Shaw in Keeler's book could not certify these claims (**fig. 7.34**). Rather, it showed the common tropes of breadline photographs taken in San Francisco's camps, as analyzed by Leikam, that is, “a rather homogeneous crowd of ‘white’ middle-class San Franciscans.” In this regard, she has argued that the dissemination of breadline images signified order and “a democratic treatment in time of hunger and need,” which was to add to the depiction of “ideal social spaces.”¹²¹

¹¹⁷ On the use of “artistic classical templates” in disaster narratives, see Weisenfeld, *Imaging Disaster*, 189-199.

¹¹⁸ Davies, *Saving San Francisco*, 194. For further discussion of African-Americans in San Francisco in this period, see Douglas Henry Daniels, *Pioneer Urbanites: A Social and Cultural History of Black San Francisco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 17-43.

¹¹⁹ See Davies, *Saving San Francisco*, 94, for the discussion of “an unrealistic view of a Chinese relief camp.”

¹²⁰ Keeler, *San Francisco Through Earthquake and Fire*, 38.

¹²¹ Leikam, *Framing Spaces in Motion*, 272-275.

Noteworthy in Keeler's choice of the headline image is the presence of a soldier looking directly toward the camera. With a stick (or rifle) at hand, he embodied "the law of the moment," that was practiced in the San Francisco in the weeks immediately following the disaster. Employing the tactics of the Vigilance Committee of the city's early days, the military patrolled the streets and followed a "shoot-to-kill order" which would be "carried out aggressively when the targets were poor people or ethnic minorities." Even though martial law had never been officially declared, it was factually employed in the city to control the inhabitants and prevent looting – which was close to "nonexistent," as research has proven.¹²² In its photographic treatment, however, the portrayal of soldiers inspecting food distribution could solidify the desired representation of a well-organized post-disaster space. Serena has noted that the traditional association of the military with security and order played an important role in their photographic representation alongside refugee workers, and hence became "symbols of a functioning and hardworking society."¹²³ Keeler drew exactly this connection, on the page following the photograph, by declaring that "less than a month after the devastating fire, San Francisco is the most law-abiding, the most orderly and the most healthful city in the land, and [...] [it] has been all this ever since the end of the disaster."¹²⁴

The connection between social order and hygiene was also made with reference to the twenty-six segregated refugee camps established in the city. As a recent study on the conditions of disaster relief has disclosed, "the camps funneled native-born middle-class and working-class refugees back to private life," while the Chinese residents of the city had to rely on help from their own, dispersed community, or flee to Oakland. Chinese refugees remaining in San Francisco had to be constantly relocated, as local residents of the Presidio (where one of the largest encampments was established) protested against their presence in the neighborhood. False coverage by the press claimed respectable living conditions for the minority population in camps, while in reality, they lacked basic standards of sanitation and accommodation, like medicine or mattresses. These relatively recent findings, carefully laid out in an extensive study by Davies, revise the history of communal relief. The camps for the city's white population were also in a "deplorable state of affairs," yet this community's legitimacy was not questioned. The Chinese, however, had to develop strategies of communal self-reliance so as to survive the aftermath.¹²⁵

The hostile climate in the city, strongly sustained by politicians and businessmen like Phelan, was not only reflected in the lack of documentation, which until the late 1980s, included merely

¹²² Fradkin, *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906*, 64-68.

¹²³ Serena, "Catastrophe and Photography," 146.

¹²⁴ Keeler, *San Francisco Through Earthquake and Fire*, 49.

¹²⁵ Davies, *Saving San Francisco*, 87-96.

twelve officially declared deaths on the part of the Chinese community.¹²⁶ Persistent patterns of discrimination can also be detected in the few reported cases of attacks on people of Asian origin, for example, a Chinatown resident being stoned to death on attempting to return to his former home,¹²⁷ or the Japanese delegation of Professor Omori, inquiring the earthquake, who endured similar, yet non-fatal, attacks.¹²⁸ When frictions in the city intensified, President Roosevelt demanded instruction on the conditions, as it was known that Chinese inhabitants were prevented from receiving due relief. Alleviating the situation were the compassionate words and donations from Chinese Empress Dowager, amounting up to \$50,000, as well as measures to facilitate a return to China. The experience of relocation and discrimination in the wake of the disaster reinforced bonds among the Chinese, whose earlier space of communal safety had been erased. Therefore, the San Franciscan entrepreneurs' and politicians' attempt to remove Chinatown from the city to open the space for real estate investment, eventually failed. Since the neighborhood represented a valuable income force – and the official location of the Chinese consulate – it was decided to keep Chinatown in its original quarter to avoid diplomatic tensions.¹²⁹ Statements published in the local and national press, however, manifest the desire to remove and profoundly transform San Francisco along the lines of a market-oriented imperial city, as this extract from the *New York Times* shows:

The old San Franciscan Chinatown was a much greater blemish and absurdity than that of New York. For it occupied the slope of the hill at the base of which is the chief commercial quarter, and the top of which is the chief residential quarter. No Franciscan of those parts could pass from his business to his home or back again without passing through it. What is more, his womankind could not “go shopping” without traversing it.¹³⁰

From these accounts, it becomes clear that the disaster experience of the city's population largely depended on their origins. During the three days of fire, the long history of discrimination strikingly played out in the behavior of the rescuers, who “were not concerned” with Chinatown, and the Chinese who, in turn, “did not turn to strangers for help.” The rescue efforts – apart from a few exceptional cases of white employers taking in Chinese workers or food stores providing meals on a non-discriminatory basis – generally functioned along segregated lines. With their intimate community and family space destroyed, the Chinese population felt less protected in San Francisco and eventually dispersed into other parts of the Bay Area in the decades following the disaster.¹³¹

¹²⁶ Steinberg, *Acts of God*, 44. The research conducted by Gladys Hansen, librarian and founder of the Museum of the City of San Francisco, has largely revised the commonly assumed death toll. For a detailed discussion, see Hansen and Condon, *Denial of Disaster*.

¹²⁷ Chen, *Chinese San Francisco, 1850-1943*, 164.

¹²⁸ Fradkin, *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906*, 297-298.

¹²⁹ Chen, *Chinese San Francisco, 1850-1943*, 164-166.

¹³⁰ *The New York Times*, August 8, 1906, quoted in *Ibid.*, 3.

¹³¹ Davies, *Saving San Francisco*, 26-30. For a more extensive study of the Chinese disaster experience, see Erica Ying Zi Pan, *The Impact of the 1906 Earthquake on San Francisco's Chinatown* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995).

As these conditions could hardly provide material for Keeler's communal fable, the book included proportionately little references to Chinatown or the Chinese population. The single paragraph treating the destruction of the neighborhood described "the fire sweeping fiercely through the flimsy oriental city, scattering the inhabitants hither and yon in helpless bands. Out of the narrow alleyways and streets they swarmed like processions of black ants."¹³² With the common tropes of exoticism and contempt, emphasized here through the use of sibilant sounds, Chinatown and its residents were accorded their stereotypical portrayal. Leaving aside the fact that the neighborhood did not undergo such tremendous destruction naturally, but was rather annihilated due to misguided use of explosives,¹³³ Keeler neglected the fate of the 25,000 residents and instead epitomized them as fleeing insects abandoning their formicary. Such stereotypical representations persisted after the disaster, when Chinatown reemerged as a valuable tourist destination. Interestingly, when the San Franciscan Chinese quarter was still under construction in 1907, Oakland boasted of a fake Chinatown in order to continue guided tours through opium dens for tourists. Capitalizing on the earlier-established prejudice of unassimilability, a hotly contested business was developed after the disappearance of the San Franciscan quarter.¹³⁴

From a long-term perspective, it can be stated that the vanishing of the conflicted racialized space constituted an ideal screen on which to articulate a history devoid of tension. Starting with Keeler's narrative, the attempt to aestheticize and depoliticize the past would be taken up in other publications by Elder, for example Stellmann's 1910 *Vanished Ruin Era*. As for the CCC, it can be stated that the disappearance of Chinatown somewhat led to the abandonment of the space by members, who discontinued the assemblage of "characteristic" corpora on the neighborhood after its destruction. Accordingly, Arnold Genthe's views, having survived the catastrophe, became the visual authority of a bygone era. His *Old Chinatown: A Book of Pictures*, conceived with poet Will Irwin, would be marketed by New York publishers in three editions between 1908 and 1913.¹³⁵ It was similar to the format of Elder's publications, that is, a series of double-page spreads juxtaposing verse and tipped-in photographs. While the book has been subject to extensive analysis by Anthony Lee,¹³⁶ it can be added at this point that it constitutes an interesting extension of the work Keeler had initiated with Elder and CCC photographers. Since these men were part of the same intellectual circles, their accounts shared a prominent rhetoric, as tangible for example in Irwin's *Requiem of Old San Francisco*, an instant publication of 1906.

¹³² Keeler, *San Francisco Through Earthquake and Fire*, 19.

¹³³ Davies, *Saving San Francisco*, 25.

¹³⁴ Chen, *Chinese San Francisco, 1850-1943*, 184.

¹³⁵ Arnold Genthe and Will Irwin, *Old Chinatown: A Book of Pictures* (New York: Moffat, Yard & Company, 1906). The 1913 editions were published by Mitchell Kennerly and Sidgwick R. Jackson.

¹³⁶ Lee, *Picturing Chinatown*, 152-181.

The post-disaster publication context proved particularly receptive to these depictions and, in line with the notion of creative destruction, represented an opportunity to both reshuffle and reestablish local identities. The rightful belonging to the earlier-destroyed space could be claimed in these narratives. The harmonious vision of the past was created by looking at photographs of now-obliterated spaces and attaching new stories to them.¹³⁷ Furthermore, it has been argued recently that the creation of a communal narrative “consensus” in times of crisis could be bolstered by the collective practice of a photographic society. Through their embeddedness and outreach to local publics, they would easily communicate the notion of a “homogenous public space” and a “shared culture.”¹³⁸ This phenomenon of consensus through collective practice, discourse, production, and outreach manifests itself especially in the CCC’s contributions to instant histories. By their elaboration with and circulation within the city’s privileged society, a consensual narrative was facilitated and materially bolstered – as the case of Chinese post-disaster representation illustrates.

As Liz Wells has suggested, lived and imagined place have a direct impact on the formation of local identities.¹³⁹ Accordingly, it will be of interest here to provide a brief analysis of how the destroyed Chinese quarter became subject to photographic aestheticization and hence provided an imaginative screen for an optimistic urban future. Generally, the materially irretrievable period of urban history could be harmonized by relying on common tropes of Chinese exoticism and inferiority. In this process, the long “history of imaginings”¹⁴⁰ to which the quarter had been subject in photography since the 1880s, could be reactivated. The attempt to capitalize on a mystified place was widely present in the post-disaster period, and once again reveals Genthe’s strategic use of his images in the popular marketplace. Relying on his corpus of pre-earthquake Chinatown images, retouched and original, Genthe was in an advantageous position to other local photographers. Thanks to his friend and co-author Will Irwin, the negatives had survived, since the latter had warned Genthe that “[s]ome day the whole city will burn up. There’ll never be another Chinatown like this one, and you have its only picture record.” He therefore kept them in a vault which, as one of the few comprehensive corpora, survived the catastrophe.¹⁴¹

Due to the lack of material predating 1906 in published histories, Genthe’s photographs came to bear an air of authority. He framed this vision further in the postscript to the 1913 edition, calling Chinatown as “the city we loved so well” – an obvious embellishment of a tense relationship.¹⁴² Lamenting the progressive Americanization of the quarter after the Xinhai Revolution of 1911 which

¹³⁷ Leikam, *Framing Spaces in Motion*, 222-226.

¹³⁸ Translated from Joschke, *Les Yeux de la Nation*, 176.

¹³⁹ Wells, *Land Matters*, 54.

¹⁴⁰ Lee, *Picturing Chinatown*, 7.

¹⁴¹ Will Irwin quoted in Genthe, *As I Remember*, 96-97. Another substantial collection of pre-earthquake Chinatown views by Club member Dietrich H. Wulzen is held at the San Francisco Public Library.

¹⁴² Quoted from the 1913 edition by Mitchell Kennerly, 205.

had ended imperial rule, he felt that the book “[has] done something of value” to preserve the “atmosphere” of a bygone era.¹⁴³ The postscript is preceded by a photograph entitled *After the Fire* which shows a Chinese man wandering about the desolate ruins with façades of the “new” San Francisco rising in the background (**fig. 7.35**). Neglecting any of the aforementioned struggles of the Chinese, the illustrated book perpetuated the notion of a community rooted in the past, without meaningful stakes in the present or future. Their bodies staged amid the ruins, mixed in the preceding pages with photographs of children dated prior to 1906, were to enrich the depoliticized vision of an “old” San Francisco. Much like the fake Chinatown in Oakland, the rebuilt San Franciscan quarter had to be made identical to its earlier location, so as to attract tourists and yet represent a less vice-ridden community. As Lee remarks, with its outlook on both past and future, *Old Chinatown* was “salutary” for tourists seeking to return to the city to experience the long-advertised picturesqueness of the quarter. At the same time, it was “disciplinary” vis-à-vis the Chinese population itself as it confined the community to a segregated space and a limited societal function.¹⁴⁴

The portrayal of the Chinese as passive bystanders to the course of modernity reveals the narrative makers’ assumptions about their role in the history of the city. As was the common fate of the state’s minorities, the visibility of the Chinese depended on their usefulness in the consensual narrative, in other words, they were subject to “disdain” as well as “desire” with the aim “to reject and yet possess.”¹⁴⁵ Accordingly, the representations of the Chinese were governed by the authoritative tools of onlookers and the demand to perform an ascribed role. The visualization of the Chinese community, comparable to the visibility of other minorities, in consequence worked only in the form of “the conspicuousness of a stranger” whose presence could be easily interpreted along the lines of the newly imagined community and its promoted history.¹⁴⁶ The relegation to the past of both this part of society and the event itself were used as strategic devices to shape a bright outlook on the future. This future would be untainted by racial conflict of the past and would yet remain very much in line with its earlier prejudice.

The nostalgic vision of an “old” San Francisco, the harmonious portrayal of a post-disaster community, as well as the optimistic anticipation of the decades to come reveal the narrative power of accounts like Keeler’s, Stellmann’s, and Genthe’s. They support the argument put forward by historians that disasters are “socially constructed” and that their ensuing narratives are used “to gain some degree of control.” However, this control is exerted by specific parts of society and institutions, and in this, may lead to the silencing of other voices. Therefore, it must be emphasized that “[d]isasters disclose in their unfolding the linkages and interpenetrations of natural forces or agents,

¹⁴³ Ibid., 208; Tchen, *Genthe’s Photographs of San Francisco’s Old Chinatown*, 123.

¹⁴⁴ Lee, *Picturing Chinatown*, 180-181.

¹⁴⁵ Kropp, *California Vieja*, 7.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 9.

power structures and social arrangements, and cultural values and belief systems.”¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, in the face of the massive output of photographic material, the events of April 1906 can be considered a moment of historical consciousness. The historical sensibility, expressed through meticulous documentation of sites and stories, becomes tangible in the variety of sources. These different materials are commonly identified as part of the Halbwachsian process of collective memory – “a process,” which according to Alon Confino, implies “invention and appropriation.”¹⁴⁸ From this perspective, the camera’s social and material functions for history-making take on a new meaning. What is considered collective memory actually reveals “the relationships of power within society.” De facto, the sources designated as “collective” memory are selective and mirror the hierarchical structures of local identities. This form of memory becomes expressed in “material objects of everyday life” which are infused with the socially pervading discourse. Furthermore, the “malleable” character of collective memory and its commodification at the turn of the century have made the past a consumable object, which was aestheticized and harmonized.¹⁴⁹ In short, the material output of the catastrophe – notably photographic accounts like Genthe’s – require critical inquiry through the lens of these power relations and promotional values. The creation of collective memory can therefore be described as a “lived experience,” which concerns “individuals [who] provide interpretations for other individuals, and these are dealt with as information to be assimilated, remembered, or archived.”¹⁵⁰

What further helped to solidify the narrative of the San Francisco earthquake and fire, and its *interpretations*, was its framing as a “natural” disaster. This depiction was not necessarily related to scientific evaluation, as Steinberg has argued, but “[r]ather, the concept of “natural” disaster developed when those in power in disaster-stricken cities sought to normalize calamity in their quest to restore order, that is, to restore property values and the economy to their upward trajectory.”¹⁵¹ This quest is reflected in Keeler’s attempt to portray earthquake damage as a deserved punishment and purifying force for society. By the same token, the tabula rasa of the urban space was envisioned as an opportunity to re-inscribe the city in the fabricated vision of a grand Pacific metropolis, for which its promoters had rallied since the 1850s.

With regard to photography’s function as primary source material and historical illustration of the earthquake, Leikam has recently urged viewers “to be highly alert to the pictures’ silences and omissions.” Neither do the people shown in the photographs represent the lived struggle and diversity

¹⁴⁷ Anthony Oliver-Smith, “Theorizing Disasters: Nature, Power, and Culture,” in *Catastrophe and Culture: The Anthropology of Disaster*, eds. Susanna M. Hoffman and Anthony Oliver-Smith (Santa Fe and Oxford: School of American Research Press and James Currey Ltd., 2002), 25-25, 38.

¹⁴⁸ Alon Confino, *The Nation as Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871-1918* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 8.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 8-12.

¹⁵⁰ Susan A. Crane, “Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory,” *American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (1997): 1381, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2171068>.

¹⁵¹ Steinberg, *Acts of God*, xxi-xxii.

of the city's demographic make-up, nor do their makers diverge from the dominant white middle and upper-class spectrum. In addition, the eyewitness accounts and captions chosen for images channel the viewers' gaze toward the desired interpretation. These glaring absences in the visual and textual record demand another history of the disaster which yet remains to be written.¹⁵² What this dominant source material has resulted in is a "master disaster narrative," in the words of Andrea Davies.¹⁵³ This narrative heavily drew on references to the state's entrepreneurial past and the historical elasticity of ruin imagery to allude to resilience and renaissance. These choices eventually "overshadowed the collective and individual stories emerging from the city's diverse families and neighborhoods."¹⁵⁴

Accordingly – and ultimately – the community image that Keeler elaborated in tandem with the Club photographers reflected the idea of disaster as a God-given event, which could reunite the inhabitants of the country. Thanks to what the poet called "the spirit of the people," the city could "grow great through disaster" and envision a new future. From this perspective, reconstruction was considered a welcome challenge. The "natural" cause of the event and its benefits come full circle in Keeler's conclusion which reads: "Let us thank God for such calamities when they bring us such rewards."¹⁵⁵ What plays out in this attempt of unification through words and images is the potential of an imagined community. This fabricated vision of a society was made attractive through its reliance on shared virtues of local pride and resilience. As Anderson has rightfully argued, the emergence of "print-as-commodity" around the turn of the century paved the way for popularizing discourses on the nation. It can be argued that the "languages-of-power," established, disseminated, and sustained through print capitalism, would be supplemented by photographic reproductions and their designation as authentic testimonies.¹⁵⁶ In the case of Keeler's illustrated history, the commodity value was heightened by the legibility of and aesthetic distance to the actual event. Through its references to ancient histories, it created a form of positive identification not only for the inhabitants of the city, but also for readers nationwide who felt affected by it.¹⁵⁷

The perpetuation of these local moments of patriotism worked through both advertisement and archival storage. For instance, *San Francisco Through Earthquake and Fire* was incorporated in the holdings of the New York Public Library as early as 1908.¹⁵⁸ Elder's New York branch of his bookshop promoted the account as a "descriptive narrative, intensely dramatic, yet sane and comprehensive."¹⁵⁹ Such micro-moments of preservation would contribute to the establishment of a

¹⁵² Leikam, *Framing Spaces in Motion*, 305, 311-312.

¹⁵³ Davies, *Saving San Francisco*, 143.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Keeler, *San Francisco Through Earthquake and Fire*, 53-55.

¹⁵⁶ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 37, 45.

¹⁵⁷ See also Serena, "Catastrophe and Photography," 138-140.

¹⁵⁸ The digital copy can be consulted via archive.org.

¹⁵⁹ Paul Elder and Company, "Order List of the Catalogue from a Western Publisher," n.p. (from Paul Elder & Co. Book Sale Catalogs, 1905-1916, New York Public Library).

standard trope, which took more than half a century to be revised.¹⁶⁰ The Club photographers' involvement in this endeavor again proved strategic, as they were both part of the dominant strands of society and, in their work, had internalized the prevalent discourse on the state and the city. Both O.V. Lange's attempts of local history-making since the 1890s and Oscar Maurer's involvement in the *Sunset* vision of the West were expanded through their participation in Keeler's book. Mirroring the two-fold engagement of Club photographers since the 1890s, their work in 1906 appealed both to promoters and to the aesthetic standards of their circles. From a photo-historical perspective, then, the function of Lange's and Maurer's works can be traced in what Hull termed "the culture bank of American images."¹⁶¹ The re-contextualization of their photographs, moving from *Camera Craft* to Elder's nationally circulating book, demonstrates again the adaptability of Club members' work to various formats and publication contexts. As such, their engagements stretched far beyond the artificially reactivated discussion of principles on amateurism versus professionalism. The versatility of the CCC in the post-disaster period to reaffirm its role in the promotion of California will be subject to discussion in the following section, examining the stakes of promotional agents in the Club's publishing organs as well as its connection to reconstruction photographs.

7.4 Upgrading the ruins: the rebuilding of the city and the California Promotion Committee

In its editorial opening of March 1907, *Camera Craft* editors announced a competition "for the best panoramic photograph of San Francisco, to be taken on April 18, 1907, one year after the fire." The jury, consisting among others of Robert H. Fletcher, director of the San Francisco Art Association, as well as George Knight White, president of the California Camera Club, was to decide on the photograph which illustrated best the reconstruction process. The prize winner, compensated with \$50, was to assign copyright to the California Promotion Committee and make his price scale for velox, bromide, and solio reproductions known, in order to ensure an efficient postcard circulation.¹⁶² While the magazine did not cover the outcome of the competition, San Franciscan newspapers announced the winner and the place of exhibition at the California Building in Union Square. Professional photographer R.J. Waters, whose views of Stanford University and the Redwood Forest had featured in the first San Francisco Salon, won the competition with his photograph *San Francisco Rising from the Ruins, April 18, 1907* (**fig. 7.36**).

A list of criteria in the *Call* laid out the process of selection: "The pictures submitted were judged according to the extent of the city shown, the importance and variety of the reconstruction and

¹⁶⁰ See Davies, *Saving San Francisco*, 4: "The fifty-year disaster anniversary prompted a new round of publications that recapitulated the original instant histories." Next to Hansen's work in the late twentieth century, the 2006 centennial generated more critical research on the disaster, as exemplified by Fradkin. Davies also remarks the continued absence of a complete academic history of the event.

¹⁶¹ Hull, "Emplacement, Displacement, and the Fate of Photographs," 187

¹⁶² "A Fifty Dollar Prize," *Camera Craft* 14, no. 3 (1907): 135.

the effective contrast of the devastated area with the buildings completed or in course of construction.”¹⁶³ The elevated viewpoint chosen by Waters directed the gaze of the viewer via the emblematic “portals of the past” toward the horizon, on which girded façades rose toward the sky and cranes stretched to reach new peaks. Instead of showing a destroyed city framed by the portals, as often depicted in the immediate aftermath, the photographer chose to make the marble pillars a compositional element around which reconstruction vistas assembled. The functioning streetcar tracks in the foreground lured viewers to imagine an ascent to Nob Hill to overlook the extent of progress. By depicting “the devastated area” exclusively through the marble portals and perhaps an adjacent piece of arid land, Waters’ photograph effectively contrasted the damage with the “variety” of reconstructed buildings and transportation facilities. The caption further emphasized the flexible nature of San Francisco’s most evocative ruin, which was used to communicate the turn toward a “grander” metropolis – instead of reminding viewers of the losses.

The involvement of local photographers in a self-congratulatory history of the event, highlighted in the previous section, gains a new dimension when we turn toward the institutional structures that sustained these efforts. The exchange network of San Franciscan culture – bringing together art institutions like the SFAA, leisure clubs like the CCC, and diverse investors – was restored after the disaster, as becomes clear in the jury for the prize competition. To trace the reciprocity between these institutions and actors, between their discourses and circulating images, implies a closer look at the California Promotion Committee (CPC), founded in 1902. In its first monthly publication, *For California*, appearing in December 1903, the Committee defined itself as representative of “the commercial organizations of the state.” Its purpose was “to give to the world reliable and unbiased information regarding the resources of and the opportunities in California.”¹⁶⁴ Accordingly, its board consisted of members of the San Francisco chamber of commerce, the merchants’ exchange and the board of trade. Its advisory committee included governor George Pardee, the presidents of the University of California and Stanford University, as well as representatives of the Southern Pacific. Local attorneys, brokers, department stores, warehouses, and printers like Paul Elder and Company or Sunset Press were listed among the associate membership.¹⁶⁵ Contributions in the monthly magazine were made by James Phelan and David Starr Jordan, alongside reprints of Roosevelt’s speeches given in California, or verse by Charles and Louise Keeler. As remarked with regard to the disaster, it was this mixture of intellectuals, artists, journalists, politicians, and business firms which “contributed to the obfuscation of the real San Francisco.”¹⁶⁶ With an interest in rapid reconstruction, the officials of the Southern Pacific, who pursued an agenda of

¹⁶³ “Prize Awarded for Panoramic Picture,” *San Francisco Call*, April 30, 1907, 2.

¹⁶⁴ *For California* 1, no. 1 (1903): n.p.

¹⁶⁵ “The California Promotion Committee,” *For California* 1, no. 1 (1903): 15-16.

¹⁶⁶ Fradkin, *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906*, 33.

cultural activities compatible to the CPC, sought to focus on the future of the region. Instead of pondering on the aesthetic or metaphorical value of ruins, Southern Pacific officials rejected the ruin iconography and replaced it with a Mediterranean vocabulary revolving around the climate and health benefits of the state.¹⁶⁷ The CPC, in its desire to promote settlement and investment, rapidly jumped on the same bandwagon.

Given this intense focus on reconstruction, it is not surprising that Waters's depiction of the Portals of the Past amid a rapidly transforming urban space won the competition. Through the sponsoring of photo competitions and illustrated brochures (mostly with uncredited images), the California Promotion Committee demonstrated a keen awareness of the power of photographic reproductions for imprinting their message of investment and renewal. By August 1906, an Eastern Bureau was established in New York next to Madison Square Garden, with an interior space decorated in typical California Redwood. In its annual report for the year 1906, the CPC outlined the mission of this office: it would be a meeting place for Californians on the East Coast and those desiring to travel to, invest or settle in the West. A daily telegram from San Francisco with business news and the weather forecast was to emphasize both the state's economic prospects and its beneficial climate. Much like the editors of *Sunset*, the officials of the CPC heavily relied on photographs. An alleged number of 14,000 people had visited the New York offices since its opening, many coming to see lantern slide lectures on California, its agriculture and industries. As the PCAPA and the CCC had done in the 1890s, the CPC relied on such festive occasions to advertise the state to larger publics. For the year 1906, the Committee claimed to have published more than 4,000 pamphlets and brochures, "many of them illustrated."¹⁶⁸ It had also reissued a number of its pre-earthquake publications, among which Keeler's "finely illustrated" *San Francisco and Thereabout* of 1902. Interestingly, in order to inscribe its mission into a historical framework, the CPC stated that all issues of *For California* were to be preserved at the Library of Congress.¹⁶⁹

Through the increasingly illustrated nature of its publications as well as the desire to preserve them as historically valuable documents, the CPC's work crossed paths with the California Camera Club and its publishing platform *Camera Craft*. No direct link between lectures of the CPC in New York and the CCC can be drawn, as records of contributors to lantern slide shows do not exist, and the photographic reproductions in *For California* went uncredited for the most part. Yet, through Keeler's involvement in the Committee, Club photographers gained visibility in the promotional network nonetheless. In *San Francisco Through Earthquake and Fire*, for example, the poet praised

¹⁶⁷ Yablon, *Untimely Ruins*, 234-236.

¹⁶⁸ These numbers cannot be verified, yet given the overlap of the CPC with other commercial organizations as well as its efforts to have pamphlets translated, they appear credible. The Bancroft Library, Berkeley, holds a substantial collection of CPC pamphlets and books (several translated) published between 1902 and 1909.

¹⁶⁹ Information derived from *Fifth Annual Statement of the California Promotion Committee, March 31, 1907* (San Francisco: The Committee, 1907), 4, 9, 13-14.

the efforts undertaken by the CPC to materially assist the mayor in organizing relief; similarly, he pointed out the generosity of railroad companies in ensuring relief transportation.¹⁷⁰ Even in unsponsored publications, Keeler hence maintained his ties to the Committee and its board. Similarly, the CCC's work was indirectly called upon by the organization when the New York offices started to sell *Camera Craft*. An announcement in November 1906 assured readers and contributors of the Western photographic magazine to be properly represented on the East Coast.¹⁷¹

Camera Craft's role as promotional organ had been recognized from the onset by contributors like Erwin and Tibbitts, who held important positions in California's businesses. In the immediate aftermath of the disaster, these thinly veiled promotional campaigns were extended by writers like Inkersley who endorsed the Burnham Plan. In a more straightforward manner, representatives of the Southern Pacific also placed their statements in the magazine in the summer of 1906. As an expansion of the photographers' hopes to rebuild a "grander" San Francisco, they strongly endorsed in words what the photographers sought to reconstruct in their portfolios. In an article entitled "Men, Material and Money Here for Greatest City," passenger traffic manager Charles S. Fee drew the readers' attention toward California's identification as "Italy of America." Mentioning neither ruins nor earthquake, Fee deliberately directed the focus on the "vast scenic and climate attractions" which "the burning of even a great and beautiful city like this can in no wise alter." The "three epoch-making April days" were yet again reshaped as an advantage, as the city would "receive a new impetus" and "open the way for such demonstrations of energy, skill and perseverance as the world has never seen." While the commercial motif underlying Fee's article is undeniable, it also turned the reconstruction into a patriotic process to be witnessed by the nation as a whole. Accordingly, his conclusion anticipated that "men will come from afar to learn for themselves what it means to build quickly and well a great city, in every way worthy of the great State which has been called the most lovable in the Union."¹⁷²

From an editorial point of view, Fee's contribution was well framed as it was printed next to the only non-ruin image in June's *Camera Craft*. Lange's heretofore discussed *The fire as seen from Berkeley, ten miles distant* (see **fig. 7.15**) reduced the smoke ascending from across the Bay into abstract shreds of clouds in an otherwise unblemished, radiant setting of the Golden Gate. Without directly referencing Lange's photograph, the simple presence of the picture could assure Fee's "homeseeker" with a pleasant example of settlement in Berkeley, proving that "the geography of the situation remains" and California prevailed as the most attractive venue for settlement.¹⁷³ Given these strategic emplacements in *Camera Craft* as well as the photographers' overall receptivity to

¹⁷⁰ Keeler, *San Francisco Through Earthquake and Fire*, 25, 41.

¹⁷¹ "California Headquarters in New York," *Camera Craft* 13, no. 5 (1906): 456.

¹⁷² Fee, "Men, Material and Money," 215-216.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 215.

promotional prose, the magazine provided a valuable addition to the mission of the CPC's New York offices.

The focus on rapid reconstruction and the thus demonstrated resilience of the local population would become a common motif by the late summer of 1906. A photograph by Maurer in Keeler's account anticipates this development. As the last photographic reproduction in the book, his *Clearing the streets before the bricks are cold* visually undergirded an optimistic conclusion of the event and confident outlook on the future (**fig. 7.37**). Even though the cause of the smoke visible in the picture is questionable – hot ashes or simply fume from construction works – the photograph was meant to communicate the population's capacity of resistance and of speedy decision-making in times of crisis. As in Stellmann's *Vanished Ruin Era*, the ruin photographs in combination with the text, served to relegate the disaster to the past by insisting on its ephemerality. However, through the prism of rapid rebuilding, the ruins lost their metaphorical value and were reshaped as props pointing to a future that was to be created. In the move away from nostalgic pondering toward purposeful action, the ruins in Maurer's photograph were reframed as announcers of a new city. Shifting from contemplation to anticipation, the pioneer rhetoric of the city was just as quickly transformed. In this process, San Francisco's relatively recent appearance on the map was embraced as an advantageous feature, at the expense of earlier-drawn parallels with Rome or Paris.¹⁷⁴ Ex-mayor Phelan, who had been the most fervent advocate of the Burnham Plan, accordingly reoriented his ambitions during the reconstruction period. As he put it:

San Francisco was no ancient city. It was the recent creation of the Pioneers and possessed the accumulated stores of only a couple of generations. Its temples, monuments and public buildings were not of conspicuous merit or of great value. There was, in fine, nothing destroyed that cannot be speedily rebuilt.¹⁷⁵

In order to “speedily rebuild,” the reference to pioneer experience and enterprise – dating back a mere five decades – was mobilized once again. Turning the catastrophe into an opportunity for entrepreneurs and workers, the city officials in cooperation with the CPC and the Southern Pacific sought to create a market of reconstruction jobs. This fragile and short-lived endeavor did attract some 40,000 workers who were portrayed as dignified contributors to the construction a new metropolis.¹⁷⁶ To efficiently circulate this narrative, the California Promotion Committee came to work with the photographic firm of Turrill & Miller to produce reconstruction photographs, sold as mounted prints or postcards.¹⁷⁷ The firms' images showcased exactly the desired narrative of the

¹⁷⁴ Yablon, *Untimely Ruins*, 236.

¹⁷⁵ James D. Phelan, quoted in Birt, *History's Anteroom*, 72.

¹⁷⁶ Dyl, *Seismic City*, 180-183.

¹⁷⁷ Even though the Turrill Collection at the Society of California Pioneers does not hold any reconstruction postcards, it is very likely that the Turrill & Miller photographs reproduced here were later marketed as postcards by the California Promotion Committee, and joined the vast number of reconstruction images to be disseminated nationwide. Information

rebuilt city from the CPC's entrepreneurial perspective. Furnished with date and location, they traced the removal of ruins by urban workers through relentless "blasting [of] the walls" (**fig. 7.38**). The series included views of picturesque houses standing in an "unburned section" (**fig. 7.39**), followed by panoramas locating the damage in a far distance in both space and time (**fig. 7.40**). In its display of urban dynamics, Maurer's photograph is reminiscent of some of the photographs in the series. A closer connection to the CCC can be drawn, in this regard, as the views were produced by the San Francisco photographic firm of Charles B. Turrill with his partner Charles O. Miller, operating between 1902 and 1920. Known for his awareness of the medium's role in preserving history, Turrill found in the disaster an ideal opportunity to undertake the work he would later describe in *Camera Craft* as "get[ting] in on "the ground floor" in our historical picture-making."¹⁷⁸ The firm made a specialized business in historical views and industrial photography. Its commissioned works included postcards and brochures of viticulture businesses in Napa, a fifteen-year survey of Santa Clara University, as well as official views to be featured in exposition displays and advertisement of the state's mining, oil, and engineering firms.¹⁷⁹

Turrill's interest in historical documentation through photography overlapped with the reestablishment of the California Promotion Committee's library in San Francisco. Its rehabilitation was mentioned in the annual report, with reference to an inventory counting some 4,000 volumes and "thousands of photographs showing picturesque and industrial California."¹⁸⁰ It is very likely that Turrill & Miller's views of progress figured among this inventory. Furthermore, the firm produced mounted views of the Phelan Building in reconstruction (**fig. 7.41**). Like R.J. Waters, who was commissioned to document its stages of rebuilding between 1907 and 1908, Turrill & Miller's production underlines "Burnham's imprint" on Phelan's office building which reflected the steel frame and Baroque patterns of the Flatiron in New York.¹⁸¹ Turrill & Miller's smooth black mount with an elegant seal in the lower left corner added an aura of refinedness to the representation of entrepreneurial progress. Depicting the Phelan Building from an elevated position, its reconstructed upper floors contrastingly exposed, allowed viewers to locate it within the larger setup of the rebuilt city, whose infrastructures below worked smoothly.

confirmed by Patricia Keats (director of the library and archives of the Society of California Pioneers), e-mail message to author, February 1, 2018.

¹⁷⁸ Turrill, "Historical Photography," 531.

¹⁷⁹ Turrill's correspondence of the early twentieth century discloses these diverse engagement (see Charles B. Turrill Correspondence (MS3172), California Historical Society); see also Fels, *Documenting Eden: The Wine Country Photographs of Turrill & Miller*. The survey of the campus is available in digital format via "Turrill-Miller Photograph Collection," Santa Clara University, University Library Digital Collections, accessed January 20, 2018, <http://content.scu.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/turrill>.

¹⁸⁰ *Fifth Annual Statement*, 18.

¹⁸¹ See Birt, *History's Anteroom*, 25-26, 140-146, for a discussion of Waters's views.

To such views can be added the Turrill & Miller series marketed by the CPC which visually incorporated Phelan's pioneer rhetoric. A photograph entitled *Removing Debris by Car, June 7, 1906* prominently displayed a car of the Southern Pacific filled with debris by workers standing on top (**fig. 7.42**). The already less imposing destruction scenes in the background are counterbalanced by the freight train which crosses the frame diagonally. In the foreground is then disclosed the progress made in debris removal, with only a few bricks left to transport. The dynamic atmosphere conveyed by the photograph, mixed with a display of the state's most powerful enterprise, could easily evoke the reliance on pioneer virtues. Once again transforming the seemingly untamable ruin scene, the people in the photograph embodied a regained control of infrastructure combined with mastery of technology. The additional fact that the Southern Pacific tracks along Mission Creek in the city had withstood earthquake and fire was taken as further testimony to the company's expertise and its "exceptionally strong foundation," as one report put it.¹⁸²

The CPC, in the reestablishment of its library and its informational network, systematically relied on such series of images. In order to "correct false stories," it announced the mobilization of "a staff of photographers and writers at work preparing illustrations and articles regarding conditions in San Francisco and vicinity." These were particularly destined to "eastern publishers" and would be made freely available to "reliable newspapers and magazines throughout the country."¹⁸³ The circulation of photographs as authentic documentary material constituted a key element in the solidification of a positive outlook on the event and its aftermath.

In the attempt to downplay the impact of the catastrophe and to depoliticize its consequences, there was "no organization [...] more dedicated" than the Southern Pacific. As rapid rebuilding and positive coverage on the city and state were essential to the railroad endeavor, their efforts were largely backed by local newspapers.¹⁸⁴ From this position, the company had neither interest in displaying the ruins in an aesthetic framing, nor to draw parallels to ancient civilizations. Instead, as Yablon has demonstrated, entrepreneurs insisted on "the 'cow boy' spirit of present day San Franciscans" to mobilize a new workforce for debris removal and rebuilding.¹⁸⁵ The company's publishing organ incorporated this deliberately positive stance in two "emergency editions" of *Sunset* in the summer of 1906. Their main goal was to disqualify the less positive information on the disaster as a misrepresentation. To modify the impression of a chaotic ruined city space in a state of martial law, the magazine was illustrated with breadline and construction worker photographs as well as drawings of the newly envisioned skyscrapers for downtown San Francisco. In the constant demand for "validation" from the East, *Sunset* was the most efficient platform as it was widely disseminated

¹⁸² Dyl, *Seismic City*, 79.

¹⁸³ "Will Correct False Stories," *Los Angeles Herald*, May 12, 1906, 2.

¹⁸⁴ Steinberg, *Acts of God*, 30-33.

¹⁸⁵ Yablon, *Untimely Ruins*, 234-236.

throughout the country.¹⁸⁶ Its editor, Charles Aiken, was keenly aware of the magazine's impact and encouraged the 400,000 readers "in all parts of the world" to imagine "the City-That-is-to-Be" – rebuilt thanks to "[t]he spirit of men that was alive in California's early days."¹⁸⁷ Due to *Sunset's* improved advertisement strategies under Aiken's editorship, the magazine's circulation would reach a peak of 100,000 by the end of the decade.¹⁸⁸ On the occasion of the second anniversary of the event in 1908, the magazine continued the campaign of rebuilding and sought to further appeal to its international readership through the inclusion of large panoramic views of the reconstructed metropolis, realized by official photographer and Club member Howard C. Tibbitts.¹⁸⁹ Thanks to the far-reaching impact of the railroad network, in which local boosters and photographers like Turrill and Tibbitts had been involved from the late nineteenth century, the announcement of reconstruction could be spread in unison by the various organizations.

If the post-disaster *Sunset* issues were to announce swift recovery, the focus on amusement in the out-of-doors had to be renewed. A proper appreciation of California's scenery was therefore also proposed in the emergency issues. The articles anticipating San Francisco's "artful" architecture about to be constructed were supplemented by a feature on the state's Spanish mission history – a particular hobbyhorse of Aiken's as confirmed in the previous chapter. The issue furthermore included an illustrated article of a Sierra Club outing which praised the midsummer atmosphere of the Sierra Mountain Lake. The photographic representation of an enjoyable landscape, detached from the city, proved an important aspect to relaunch incoming tourism from other parts of the country. On a local level, the return to well-known sites of the state proved just as important – not only to revive leisure in the adjacent regions, but also to nourish a corpus of cherished places which had been lost in the disaster. It is from this perspective that the activities of the California Camera Club, near the close of the relief period, between 1907 and 1908, need to be examined. Striving both to reestablish their exploration of local surroundings and to reassemble a corpus of locally meaningful images, the Club went on excursions and set up new headquarters on Market Street by 1908 so as to ensure its presence at the heart of San Franciscan culture. When examining these activities in the last section of this chapter, the social ramifications of an "art in construction," as promoted by Elder, constitute a critical element. In other words, the conception of newly equipped offices and the organization of a two-week round-trip to the Yosemite – a mere twelve months after the catastrophe – further discloses the Club members' privileged position within the city.

¹⁸⁶ Fradkin, *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906*, 272-276.

¹⁸⁷ Charles S. Aiken, "Greeting from the Publishers," *Sunset* 17 (1906): xiv-xv.

¹⁸⁸ Orsi, *Sunset Limited*, 159.

¹⁸⁹ See *Sunset* 20, no. 6 (1908).

7.5 *The return to Market Street and the Yosemite: the Club reassembles its corpus*

By late 1908, when the CCC came to occupy its new headquarters on the top floor of the Commercial Building at 833 Market Street, the editors of *Camera Craft* seized the occasion to declare the recovery period officially ended. Eastern investors “making their first visit since the fire” had commented on “the favorable conditions” in the city, given the large quantity of studio space already rented by photographers. The Club’s move to more refined quarters from the residential to the business district was to underline this general upturn.¹⁹⁰ Before occupying the new space at the emplacement of the former Academy of Science, members had considered several other options, a possibility being the ostentatiously advertised Phelan Building, whose completion marked the return to business and prosperity.¹⁹¹ Eventually, when the Commercial Building at Market Street was conceived by architect Lionel Deane – one of the main actors in the rebuilding of San Francisco – it was announced that the Club had negotiated the construction of a “penthouse on [the] roof” for \$1,350.¹⁹² Once the space of 2,500 square ft. (equaling some 232 m²) on the upper floor was occupied, the roof structure was planned to host a studio with daylight and printing rooms, “all connected by direct stairway with the main club rooms below.” In line with the declared goal of making the Club “the best equipped camera club in the world,” it was expected to spend \$3,000 in furniture and equipment.¹⁹³

From these large sums involved in the reconstruction of headquarters, financed by membership fees, pay shows, and the members themselves, the elite position held by the Club is exemplified. In this vein, the improvement of the CCC’s working conditions would embody the city’s general prosperity. The choice of the Commercial Building pointed to this advantageous position, as it was located “in the immediate center of the retail shopping district,” on the street that was labeled “the Broadway of San Francisco.”¹⁹⁴ In the midst of the economic crisis of the years 1907-1908, caused also by the long-term effects of the catastrophe on the financial market, the Club set out to celebrate its practice through significant investment. While large parts of the local society were exposed to a general recession and scarcity of jobs once the publicity of rebuilding had receded, the Club was able to reassert its privileged position.¹⁹⁵

The material recovery was also announced in the national photographic magazines, in order to demonstrate the improvements made thanks to other societies’ donations in the immediate aftermath. Highlighting the advantages of the new quarters, the CCC news underlined likewise the benefits of active membership (\$10 annually), notably the cooperation with the American Lantern

¹⁹⁰ “Business in this Territory,” *Camera Craft* 15, no. 11 (1908): 433.

¹⁹¹ “Seeking New Quarters,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 26, 1908, 24.

¹⁹² “Real Estate Transactions,” *San Francisco Call*, February 12, 1909, 13.

¹⁹³ “The California Camera Club,” *Camera Craft* 16, no. 1 (1909): 28.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ Dyl, *Seismic City*, 192-195.

Slide Interchange and the organization of monthly lectures at the Commercial Building. In order to convey the impression of a fully rehabilitated Club, the focus was set on its modernized, extravagant facilities. The only direct reference to eventual material losses was made with respect to the library whose “large collection of books lost in the great fire” was to be quickly replaced.¹⁹⁶

The process of material compensation was strongly backed by the celebration of new quarters, serving as an operational basis from which the practice could be reconceived. Before occupying the new location, members sought to revive their out-of-doors agenda by shifting their camera from the city to the surrounding countryside. Soon after the ruins were removed, urban scenes fell out of interest with contributors to *Camera Craft*. Instead, a return to the photographic possibilities of the Bay was encouraged. As one amateur put it in September 1906:

After the terrible scenes of which our cameras have been [...] such faithfully recording eye-witnesses, it is with a sense of unalloyed relief that one turns to the soothing sunsets and cheery shipping views that have been taken [...] while crossing that reservoir of health to weary brains and eyes, the beautiful Bay of San Francisco.¹⁹⁷

Illustrated with morning views, sunsets, and cloud studies, the article defined the local scenery through its rather abstract features by the sea. These motifs provided a remedy, as they implied the restoration of earlier-set parameters for photographic practice in the region. Through the absence of disaster scenes from national photographic literature, it seems that Californian practitioners were not keen on distributing imagery reminiscent of the event on shared platforms with other societies. The return to pre-disaster subject matter is likewise tangible in the Pacific Coast contributions to the American Salon – the series of Pictorialist salons with large numbers of participants that toured the country from 1904. In its third edition, in late 1906, Maurer and Clute served on the jury and the salon committee, and at least three Club members were featured. Alongside photographers from Seattle and Portland, their submissions included portraits and genre scenes, as well as landscape studies of the Bay Area.¹⁹⁸

The ultimate remedy for material losses was found in the return to both pre-disaster subject matter *and* practice. With this ambition, the Club organized its first large-scale outing for June 1907 that led the practitioners back to the Yosemite. Local newspapers announced the importance of the excursion for members who were to “leave on a special train,” and “take more photographic apparatus into the valley than ever before.” Organized by W.J. Street and including members like Charles Weidner and Edgar A. Cohen, the excursion brought together photographers who had previously pointed their apparatus on the destroyed urban space.¹⁹⁹ As the first systematic attempt to reconstruct

¹⁹⁶ “The California Camera Club,” *The Photographic Times* 41 (1909): 187-188.

¹⁹⁷ W. Rob. Whyte, “Photography on the Bay,” *Camera Craft* 13, no. 3 (1906): 339.

¹⁹⁸ “Our Pacific Coast Workers in the Third American Salon,” *Camera Craft* 13, no. 5 (1906): 445. For a complete list of participants, see Greenhill, “The Outsiders: The Salon Club of America,” 189-192.

¹⁹⁹ “Camera Club to Take Pictures in Yosemite,” *San Francisco Call*, June 1, 1907, 4.

a Club corpus and assemble a lecture, president Albert J. LeBreton wrote the report on the two-week excursion in the July 1907 *Camera Craft*. Attended by eighty members, “one-fifth of the entire membership,” the outing was considered a major success. As LeBreton explained:

This large attendance can, no doubt, be attributed to the fact that this was the first extended outing of the Club since the great unscheduled outing of April 18, 1906. [...] The Yosemite [outing] at least gave us our money’s worth, for everyone returned well pleased. We had a few days of stormy weather, it is true, giving us unexpected and highly appreciated opportunities for snow scenes, but then photographers are used to exposures; and, by the way, speaking of the latter, we obtained something like fifteen hundred negatives to replace those lost in the great fire.²⁰⁰

As the first collectively conceived event since the disaster, the outing and its venue of choice were essential to the reinvigoration of a local practice. To underline the united efforts, the article was richly illustrated by five members, including LeBreton himself. The combination of group portraits and the well-known Yosemite iconography created a connection to past excursions, which had been among the most appreciated activities of the CCC (**fig. 7.43**, **fig. 7.44**).

Cohen’s photographs of Merced River next to El Portal station and a passenger train traversing an otherwise untouched mountain scenery were reminiscent of earlier excursion reports. Both the seemingly untamed environment and its re-appropriation through photographic and infrastructural technology were celebrated. California, labeled by LeBreton as “wonderland of creation,” was hence depicted as an inspiring territory for collective picture production.²⁰¹ Apart from the illustrations, the rest of the article did not include any photography-related discussion, but was rather conceived like a guide to the most pleasant vistas. This coverage of the photographers’ excursion reflects again the attempt to advertise an accessible landscape and practice. Much like Tibbitts’s Yosemite reports and his Kodak advertisements, the report underlined the proximity of the park as a pleasant jaunt to be undertaken by locals. Here, Club members again became strategic advertisers of an improved tourist infrastructure. As LeBreton stated with reference to the group portraits: “The California Camera Club was the first large party by way of the near Yosemite Valley Railroad recently completed from Merced to El Portal, which now lands tourists at the gateway of the valley.” The scenery to be witnessed on the sixty-mile train ride was described as “an ever-varying panorama of frowning crags, imposing mountains, in connection with the swiftly flowing waters of the beautiful Merced River.”²⁰² With regard to tourist infrastructure in the Valley, the extension to El Portal station completed in 1907 indeed represented a useful addition to the Southern Pacific lines operating toward the park. However,

²⁰⁰ Albert J. LeBreton, “The Camera Club’s Yosemite Outing,” *Camera Craft* 14, no. 7 (1907): 301.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 306.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 302-303.

as will be demonstrated in the last part of this thesis, the popularity of this line was short-lived since automobile tourism rapidly swept the Valley by the 1910s.²⁰³

The Club's communication with local publics through the advertisement of outdoor tourism and the celebration of the local scenery was reinforced in a lantern slide lecture on the summer outing. Held in October 1907, the entertainment drew 1,200 local visitors immersing in Yosemite views and accompanying music.²⁰⁴ Two slides in the California Camera Club lantern slide collection at the Los Angeles Public Library may be taken from this lecture. A Club banner attached to a Yosemite Valley Railroad car was to announce the members' arrival in a specially designated vehicle (**fig. 7.45**). The group portrait with the same banner taken outside El Portal station shows some eighty well-dressed men and women awaiting transportation to the Valley (**fig. 7.46**). The staging of collective exploration via the "club yell" on train cars and stations served to manifest the photographers' return to their earlier-defined mission. As a unifying event for large parts of the local membership, it was designed to fill the material gap of the catastrophe and assert the practitioners' continued presence on the local cultural scene. The return to the Californian landscape also provided a turn away from ruin imagery toward the well-established tropes of an American Mediterranean which was best enjoyed in company and with camera at hand. This first outing hence reflects the impetus of local infrastructure and tourism for the rehabilitation of a Californian territorial practice.

*

From this examination of the activities undertaken by Club members in the months following the event, we come to understand how the rapid reestablishment of an on-site practice constituted the ideal means to cope with the experience of catastrophe. Numerous strategies were employed to do so, ranging from the publication of illustrated testimonies in *Camera Craft*, the photographic contribution to popular books, the crossing of paths with business-sponsored organs like the California Promotion Committee, and eventually, the return to a locally rooted excursion agenda. Through these diverse activities and engagements, the Club did not so much redefine its practice, but rather reasserted its sociocultural and economic position within the city by relying on the well-established characteristics of local practice. Through a reactivation of their elaborate network in the city and the state, Club photographers gained visibility as foremost agents in the visual and metaphorical reconstruction of San Francisco – a development which once again came at the expense of their representation within the national photographic scene. Opting for the photographic reconstruction of a "grander" city through practice, production, and publication, the Club remained very much within its hitherto established radius of impact.

²⁰³ Anne F. Hyde, "From Stagecoach to Packard Twin Six: Yosemite and the Changing Face of Tourism, 1880-1930," in *Yosemite and Sequoia: A Century of California National Parks*, 74.

²⁰⁴ "Camera Club Benefit," *San Francisco Call*, October 23, 1907, 4.

Be it through aesthetic embrace or visual reshaping, the sight of ruins was strategically modeled to fit each publication context. The historical weight communicated by the ruins, as aesthetic props or as testimony to rebuilding, became a useful tool for the Club to enrich its own practice. Furthermore, the portrayal of citizens as descendants of a generation of pioneers provided a valuable addition to a practice which had often been defined in these terms. Like Isaiah W. Taber who had witnessed the fires of the 1850s, or Carleton Watkins who had mastered the extreme conditions of photography in the Yosemite, references to communal belonging and audacious practice were used to stimulate the notion of an outdoor practice in challenging conditions. From this perspective, the return to Yosemite Valley meant coming full circle on the idea of a uniquely Californian practice of photography. As a place of artistic “renaissance,” the age-old scenery of the park implied the return to a familiar environment and the reconciliation with the recent past. It constituted a resourceful place, to render the practice as dynamic as before 1906 and to fill the recently suffered material gap.

With regard to the impact of the catastrophe on the Club’s self-definition and its practices, several questions ensue from this discussion. From a long-term perspective, it needs to be asked whether these promotional, locally anchored activities merely constituted a tool for rapid recovery in the period 1906-1908, or whether the ambition to render the medium and the state meaningful would persist in the decade after the catastrophe. Given the material caesura of April 1906 and the Club’s subsequently adopted strategies of recovery, it appears that the use of celebratory vocabulary and community-imagination provided an important instrument in coping with the situation and in positively shifting traumatic experiences. While the Club was able to gather its material and physical forces in the run-up to its twentieth anniversary, it will be of importance in the fourth and last part of this thesis to comprehend the long-term changes in photographic and Club practices generated by the catastrophe’s aftermath *and* by the approaching decade of the 1910s.

First, however, in the light of disaster photography, it is of interest to consider more extensively the camera uses by non-affiliated citizens so as to understand how the medium served to express the experiences of San Franciscans who were not implicated in the city’s promotional network. The California Camera Club’s collectively felt material rupture was remedied through group practice and the construction of new exchange spaces. Its entanglement in the commercial and cultural endeavors of the post-disaster space demonstrates that photographic practices in the early twentieth century were neither independent aesthetic ventures nor massive undertakings of anonymous “snapshooters,” but rather carefully constructed regional projects playing into the construction of a desired local identity. In order to appreciate the variety of available photographic material, the guiding question in the following chapter will be how the material rupture was coped with by other citizens who chose the camera and its material supports to document their experience. Their uses of the medium will shed a light on the performative dimension of photographic production in the aftermath

of the catastrophe, by walking the streets with hand-held apparatus and by subsequently assembling albums that retrace these paths. Ultimately, as the album is considered a powerful tool in creating a narrative, the discussion will be reconnected to the Club in order to understand how the material culture of photography played into the creation of a “standard history.”

Chapter 8

Album-making in times of catastrophe: a new material culture through photography

In late May 1906, when urban reconstruction was in full swing, a “captive airship” conceived by photographer George R. Lawrence crossed the sky above the Golden Gate (**fig. 8.1**). Resisting the windy conditions 600 meters above the ground, the airship (actually formed of a dozen kites) carried a 20 kg camera which was to produce negatives roughly sized 120 x 50 cm. Lawrence’s firm in Chicago advertised a specialization in “the hitherto impossible in photography” and had created spectacular views of railroads for the Paris Exposition in 1900.¹ At the time, *Camera Craft* reported on his invention, describing it as sensitive to “the vast benefits to be gained from intelligent and judicious advertising.”² Unsurprisingly, when Lawrence brought his aerial apparatus to San Francisco in 1906, he drew immense profit from the resulting panoramic images, selling prints for up to \$125.³ The embrace of technology to gain control of the destroyed city meant “restor[ing] confidence” in the ambivalent relationship to mechanization and its recent failures. The elevated viewpoint of the camera – and its all-seeing and thus somewhat omniscient perspective – was portrayed as a “[triumph] of the mechanical eye over the chaos of nature,” and thus seized by firms like the Southern Pacific for illustrated promotion.⁴ The omniscience conveyed by the apparatus scanning the city from above pointed to an “increasing militarization” of space, exemplified not least in the actual militia patrolling the streets as well as the authoritative accounts of the event spread via diverse media.⁵

At a closer look, Lawrence’s panoramic view does not exactly allow the viewer to measure the extent of damage, especially since the undestroyed waterfront and harbor occupy one-third of the entire image. It is only when directing the gaze to the right and left of the vertical axis of Market Street, situated in the middle of the picture, that we can make out the damage of several districts. Here, the grid lies crudely bare, like a chessboard devoid of its players. Taken during “Sunset over the Golden Gate,” the photograph shows the city in a shimmering light – with glowing tones coming in from the Bay to the West. As the perspective permitted easy navigation on the urban map, viewers were able to locate specific places and could perhaps start to envision reconstruction. Instead of touring the city on the ground amid torn-down houses, the spectacular endeavor of an aerial view granted the viewer a position of mastery. A sense of orientation was transmitted despite the shock and emptiness still tangible. This positive vision of a destroyed space, through abstraction and zooming-out, through an allusion to climatic features and a possible renewal of maritime trade, discloses the desirability of pictures like these to circulate in promotional literature.

¹ Simon Baker, “The Mammoth Camera of George R. Lawrence,” *History of Photography* 15, no. 2 (1991): 133-135.

² “Successful Advertising,” *Camera Craft* 2, no. 3 (1901): 244.

³ Fradkin, *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906*, 287-288.

⁴ Yablon, *Untimely Ruins*, 212.

⁵ Leikam, *Framing Spaces in Motion*, 285-286.

However, when looking at the abstract version of the city from above, it needs to be critically questioned how the damage was concretely experienced and portrayed at street level – by inhabitants returning to the locations of their former homes and seeking to orientate in the estranged space. While strategies of deliberate detachment and musing in the Californian myth have been amply demonstrated in the previous chapter, this chapter proposes first of all a turn away from this distanced stance by embracing intimacy at street-level. Turning from the macroscopic panoramic view of the city's chessboard to the microscopic experience of its numerous players, this chapter attempts to put into perspective the heretofore discussed promotional and collective accounts. Such an analysis is first and foremost rooted in the individual context of local citizenry and therefore sets aside for a moment the collective endeavor of photographic reconstruction by the Club, drenched in promotional rhetoric. The shift from semi-official or institutionalized source material to more personal accounts implies a change in material support, turning from the edited, polished page to a more intimate and secluded perception of the event. It directs the focus away from spectacular technological endeavors pushing the boundaries of the medium, and toward a hands-on practice in the streets carried out by citizens without particular training in photography. It raises the question of how the personal use of the camera could provide the maker of photographs with a new sense of orientation and, perhaps, a regained control of the immediate surroundings.

The attention directed toward the individual constitutes an alternative to the “distinctly ideological process” occurring oftentimes after disasters, when specific agents seek to assume control over “the social production of meaning” in news coverage and on cultural platforms. A focus on individual experience is necessary, as argued by scholars, as “it displaces any systemic account of the disaster and its causes.” Its reliance on “anecdotal, individualistic” memory helps to “decontextualize the larger sociopolitical conditions in which the tragedy occurred.”⁶ Private testimony discloses the anxieties, questions, and material ways of dealing with the experience, which many officially disseminated publications rejected or obfuscated. As scholarship on the San Francisco disaster has demonstrated in its difficulty to unearth alternative accounts, it is extremely challenging to derive any form of representative “public opinion” from the available source material of the time.⁷ While this thesis has strongly focused on the visual and textual strategies of authoritative accounts and their proliferation, it is considered necessary here to shed light on the vast corpora of photographic material assembled by locals.

The methodological focus on one specific material support – the photographic album – is helpful in confronting the large bulk of archival material. In its circumscribed narrative format, the

⁶ Gregory V. Button, “Popular Media Reframing of Man-Made Disasters: A Cautionary Tale,” in *Catastrophe and Culture: The Anthropology of Disaster*, 146-147.

⁷ See especially Fradkin, *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906*, and Leikam, *Framing Spaces in Motion*.

album could transport the fragmented experience of the disaster into a reconstructed, legible, and – most importantly – self-controlled format. What had been captured in photographs and what lingered as memory imprinted on the inner eye would find a material expression on the blank pages of the album. It would give way to extensive assemblages of personal photographs, commercial views, and hand-written notes. As the San Francisco earthquake and fire is often put into direct relation with the mass-marketization of photography and its supplies, the specific expression of this accessibility must be reconstructed in order to understand the camera's uses in private and in public. With Eastman Kodak having sold approximately 1.2 million cameras by 1905, it is estimated that one-third of the U.S. population could have owned hand-held or more sophisticated photographic apparatus in the spring of the following year.⁸ In the light of these numbers, the contemporary impression of destroyed San Francisco as the most photographed site since the invention of the medium, suggested by Cohen in the epigraph to this part, requires further scrutiny. The visual output available in local archives further supports this impression, as do newspaper testimonies of early May 1906. The *Los Angeles Herald* reported from San Francisco:

The streets of the burned districts were thronged today with sightseers. Every train from neighboring towns on the peninsula and every ferryboat from the bay counties was packed with people eager to get their first glimpse of the city's devastation, and almost every third person carried a camera or a [K]odak.⁹

Admittedly, the diversity of material supports on which these “first glimpses” manifested themselves would demand a more extensive analysis concerning their makers, production context, and potential exchanges at both private and public level. Yet, the album, in its complex material format and individualistic assemblage, unifies many of the techniques employed to make sense of the first impressions. In its pages, the narrative potential of the photographic medium can blossom, as its products are put into a sequence, enriched with captions, and exposed in relation to other visual and non-visual materials. Furthermore, the social interactions required to unfold this narrative constitute a vast terrain of analysis. Recent research on photographic albums has emphasized the performative aspect of “showing and telling” as a dimension to remember when approaching the source in an archival setting. The rather clinical setting of institutional preservation runs counter the material expectations viewers have toward an album. In other words, the desire to turn the pages, to touch the surface of images, or to point out specific sites or people, is lost in this context, and thereby somewhat “strip[s] the album of its social function and meaning.” In order to remedy this imposed material detachment, research on the photographic album reconsiders its potential as “an act of communication,” that is, a conversation that awaits a vocal organ. Naturally, this conversation – even

⁸ Yablon, *Untimely Ruins*, 214. Numbers taken from West, *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia*, 41.

⁹ “Dynamite Used to Raze Walls,” *Los Angeles Herald*, May 7, 1906, 1.

in the original context of production – is a composition with many variations, rather than a fixedly orchestrated record. Due to this lack of closure, the album essentially remains a “draft,” which can embody many ideas and visions of its makers, be it “a sage, a chronicle, a life story, an autobiography, a legend, a photo romance.”¹⁰

It is exactly this aspect of self-representation in a malleable, elaborate format which proved appealing in the San Franciscan context. As the local self-image and the fabrication of communal history had been instigated by the first daguerreotype studios springing up in the 1850s,¹¹ the extension of an affordable photographic supply market by the early twentieth century would encourage locals to assemble their own history at a moment of profound rupture. The survival of the catastrophe and the recounting of this experience in a visual narrative hence allowed citizens to “review [their] own existence” and to connect personal testimony with a historical event. Embedded in the context of abrupt destruction and rapid rebuilding, the album could link a deeply felt personal experience with a nationally known situation. This overlap of “personal memories and national histories” – of self-representation and self-situating with larger contexts – makes it a valuable object of study. Despite its commodified, mass-produced aspect, the album provided a flexible projection screen which could gain a highly personalized character. It is due to this enveloping nature – representing individuals who are at the same time “members of a collective and community,” that is, the family, the city, or the nation – that the albums produced in the post-disaster period represent a particular interest for this study.¹²

Even though the connection of personal and national histories would diminish with the rise of the family and personal snapshot album in the early twentieth century, it can be argued the disaster of 1906 represents an imbrication of both a personal, informal *and* a historically situated, communal representation. In providing a legible shape to “an increasingly complex experience of modernity in turn-of-the-century America,” the albums assembled in 1906 can be seen as part of this process of grasping and materializing a moment of rupture, complexified by urban modernity and its technologies.¹³ In the individual framework, the creation of a photographic album thus allowed to reorient oneself in the recently destroyed city and to create an intelligible, explainable account.

In the public realm, exactly this aspect of legibility and materialized understanding was appealing to urban planners and promoters. It will be therefore useful to extend the analysis, in a second step, to commissioned photographic albums displaying the reconstruction of the city. The demand for photographic albums with official character had been strong among San Franciscan

¹⁰ Martha Langford, *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001), 5, 19-20.

¹¹ See chapters 1 and 4; see also Johnson and Eyman, *Silver and Gold: Cased Images of the California Gold Rush*.

¹² Elizabeth Siegel, *Galleries of Friendship and Fame: A History of Nineteenth-century American Photograph Albums* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 10-13.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 162-167.

businesses and politicians. Be it Fardon's *San Francisco Album* of the 1850s or Dassonville's mission views of the 1900s, lavishly illustrated albums were particularly appealing for politicians seeking legitimacy in times of crisis or railroad officials attempting to extend historical tourism. As historical objects, they mirror the desire since the mid nineteenth century to bend images of Western landscapes to narratives of national expansion in a coherent format. Even if the scenery itself did not provide the sought-after aesthetic appeal, the material support allowed to frame the photographs in an attractive manner. Here, the album's "blank slate" became an imagined space, which was made real through the materiality of the format. Through circulation, such albums were turned into "instruments of communication and persuasion."¹⁴ In the case of San Franciscan officials, the appeal of the photographic book format stemmed from its connection to authentic documentation and validation, conveyed when circulating among politicians and investors. Its sociopolitical role was backed by its makers, who were members of the California Camera Club and committed to the agenda of regional promotion. In this process, the flexible dimension to be found in personal albums was modified and infused with an ideology. Yet, at the same time, what unites the individual and the commissioned album is the attempt to create coherence and understanding, to picture a desire or to fabricate a tale.

In order to shed new light on individual and commissioned albums, this chapter proposes a look at both private and public sources. Such an extended analysis of one and the same material support, utilized by various actors, will reveal the numerous attempts to grasp the disaster in retrospect through photographs. While the individual album may diverge from the standard narrative and represent a fracture in the polished façade of the "grand" San Francisco, the commissioned album incorporated exactly this glorified vision and used the heavy format to solidify its visual message. Motivated by Langford's call to reactive the "suspended conversations" of photographic albums, the following analysis seeks to re-contextualize five San Franciscan albums, their diverse contents, and, whenever possible, their makers, in the reconstruction period. To fully appreciate the material riches of these sources and their role in the articulation of a social history of photography, the chapter will start with a conceptual, historiographical discussion before embarking on the analysis of primary sources. Pointing out the diverse uses of the album in the contemporary setting *and* in historical research allows us to fully comprehend its function in the history of the medium. By conceiving it as a photographic object with a marked social function and an itinerary, the album and its contents take on new, ambivalent meanings and enrich our understanding of the disaster's aftermath. Furthermore, by situating some of its makers in a clearly demarcated sociocultural setting, notions of snapshot contingency and trivial playfulness can be revised. With this historiographical discussion and conceptual framework at hand, we can embark on an informed exploration of individually and

¹⁴ Sandweiss, "Dry Light: Photographic Books and the Arid West," 21-24, 29.

officially compiled albums. The aim will be not only to re-appreciate oft-forgotten sources of the archive in their complexity and historical riches, but also to contribute to a history of disaster photography which takes into account the specific parameters of photographic production and reception in San Francisco.

8.1 *The photograph album: from therapeutic tool to archival source*

At the turn of the twentieth to the twenty-first century, when scholars started to argue in favor “a more socially aware history of photography,” the photograph album and its distinct material dimension was singled out as a source deserving preservation and historical analysis in its most complete form. Glenn Willumson, having stressed the importance of overcoming a Newhallian formalist-aesthetic history and instead opting for “the historical moment of the photo-object’s creation,” chose the album as a prime example to emphasize his point.¹⁵ From its format, content, production and circulation, a two-fold analysis could be derived – amplifying both our understanding of the medium itself and its role within sociocultural, economic processes of the period. Occupying “an unstable place” in academic and curatorial histories of photography, the album was too often made subject to its “museum value,” and underwent transformation or dismembering. The apex was reached by the early 1980s, when an album of Watkins’s mammoth prints – a former “library’s artifact” – was taken apart into individual pieces – “a commodity.” This process, enhanced by the coalition of the art market with the aesthetic standard set by the fine-art museum, was to champion “the uniqueness of the image,” at the expense of its historical purpose. Relying on Elizabeth Edwards’ emerging material studies of the medium, Willumson sought to ascribe the album a biographical dimension which would take into account its initial functions, its changing receptions over time, and its trajectories from private realm to public archive.¹⁶ Coalescing with other critical material histories at the time, these historians sought to work against “the art museum’s colonization of the historic photograph” by focusing on the medium’s integration in specific book formats.¹⁷ Certainly, in its material form, the album represents challenges not only to researchers who have to engage with its complex interplay of photographs, commercial prints, hand-written captions, and myriad other additions, but also to curators who have to decide on the proper conservation of such fragile sources.¹⁸

¹⁵ Willumson, “The Getty Research Institute: Materials for a New Photo-history,” 31-39.

¹⁶ Glenn Willumson, “The Photo-album as Cultural Artifact,” in *L’Album Photographique : Histoire et Conservation d’un Objet*, ed. Groupe Photographie de la Section française de l’Institut International de Conservation (Champs sur Marne: Section française de l’Institut International de Conservation, 2000), 39, 41-44; see also Willumson, “Making Meaning: Displaced Materiality in the Library and Art Museum,” 62-78.

¹⁷ See Carol Armstrong, *Scenes in a Library: Reading the Photograph in the Book, 1843-1875* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998), 2.

¹⁸ For further discussion, see Gustavo Lozano, “History and Conservation of Albums and Photographically Illustrated Books,” Advanced Residency Program in Photograph Conservation (2007), accessed March 30, 2016, http://www.academia.edu/17368690/History_and_Conservation_of_Albums_and_Photo-graphically_Illustrated_Books.

The processes of museification of albums – implying at times their disjointment – can be related to their content. As part of the mass-produced items of a thriving photographic supply industry, the album represents a “slippage [...] between commodity and high culture artifact.”¹⁹ More importantly, its photographic contents – be they mammoth plates by Watkins or snapshots by unidentified persons – have undergone a similar process of museal re-appreciation. As products of a thriving photography market in the early twentieth century, both albums and their intimate depictions of family life have been re-appreciated recently by fine-art institutions in the light of a history of photography championing aesthetic values. Accordingly, over the past twenty years, the material hybridity of the album and its vernacular spontaneity were taken as characteristics of “a new genus of American folk artist[s],”²⁰ – a term derived from the 1944 MoMA exhibition “The American Snapshot: An Exhibition of the Folk Art of the Camera,” upon which would be modeled snapshot exhibitions in the late 1980s and 1990s.²¹ In its techniques of assemblage and coincidence, the snapshot family album came to be considered a precursor to avant-garde collage aesthetics. Seemingly awaiting the discovery of its “genius,” photograph albums were subsequently situated in a tradition of modern art “as objects of significant artistic merit.” While such framings recognized the materiality of the album in its entirety, the source’s historical depth and anchorage in a specific sociocultural context were oftentimes discarded so as to single out instances of artistic ingenuity or experimentation.²²

A fairly recent exhibition on “the art of the American snapshot” has noted this inflation of the Kodak capture as part and parcel of twentieth-century modern art, be it Dadaism, conceptual and Pop Art, or fine-art photography. In addition, the deliberate removal of the personal photograph from its original context facilitated its use as an individual specimen embodying a snapshot aesthetic. Denominated as “immensely satisfying visual objects, worthy of careful scrutiny,” family photographs and their “accidental quality” became depersonalized items serving to sustain a fine-art perception of the medium. In this process, the detachment from photography’s commercial aspect was underlined by a heightened focus on its employment as a spontaneous, experimental tool. The exhibition itself did consider the photographs in their socioeconomic context, examining the shifts in private camera uses and desired portrayals over time. Yet, its staging in the National Gallery of Art naturally elevated the trivial family snapshot to an aesthetic object serving to strengthen the

¹⁹ Willumson, “The Photo-album as Cultural Artifact,” 43.

²⁰ Stephanie Snyder, “The Vernacular Photo Album: Its Origin and Genius,” in *Snapshot Chronicles: Inventing the American Photo Album*, 25.

²¹ Lynn Berger, “The Authentic Amateur and the Democracy of Collecting Photographs,” *Photography & Culture* 2, no. 1 (2009): 38-40, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2752/175145209X419390>.

²² See Stephanie Snyder, preface, 11-13 and “The Vernacular Photo Album: Its Origin and Genius,” in *Snapshot Chronicles: Inventing the American Photo Album*, 25-27.

advocated, inherently artistic dimension of photography.²³ The snapshot's former rejection as banal object of commodified culture was purposefully reshaped so as to fit this vein of photographic history.²⁴

Admittedly, despite the questionable aesthetic reshaping of the snapshot or the album as pristine items to be inserted in histories of art, their institutional re-appreciation has led to increasing sensibility in matters of conservation. This is a favorable development, as it encourages curatorial and historical interest in the source itself. In spite of the rather reductive representation in the above-mentioned exhibitions of the 2000s, the presence and preservation of everyday photographic objects in archives and museums may spark new research on the objects themselves, from which other, less art-historically focused histories may ensue. It is exactly on this more recently emerging research defining the album as photo-historical, sociocultural object that the analysis in this chapter seeks to rely. In opting for a deliberate embrace of the album's complexity, its status as hybrid object, in the archive and in photographic history, is positively emphasized. Objects of photographic memory, mingling image, text, and other materials, are necessarily hybrid and therefore hardly fit into a generalized archival classification system.²⁵ A more intense focus on the interplay of these diverse materials and uses, as recently demonstrated by Elizabeth Siegel and Verna Curtis, points not only to the strong presence of albums in the shaping of a collective imagination, but also reveals "the appeal, versatility, and historical significance of album-making."²⁶

In adopting a shift from formalism to functionality, the album's role within a specific historical setting is brought to the fore. The interplay of commercially produced views and private photographs within a broader narrative sequence is a particularly interesting aspect to bear in mind when approaching the personal albums made in the post-disaster period. In this combination lies a mixture of imagined and actual representation, which takes into account both the publicly circulating imagery of the city and one's personal situating within it. In addition, the process of album-making, which grants the compiler a great number of liberties, leads to a reversal of the standardized commodity into an individualized resource, for personal or public use. The intersection of a thriving consumer-market, facilitated and affordable photographic techniques, and expanding viewing practices hence unfolds in its pages. From a sociopolitical and cultural-historical perspective, these notions of self-representation need further scrutiny with regard to their uses.

²³ See Greenough, introduction to *The Art of the American Snapshot, 1888-1978*, 2-5.

²⁴ For an extensive discussion of the process of art-historical canonization of snapshot photographs and their inclusion in the art market, see Berger, "The Authentic Amateur and the Democracy of Collecting Photographs," 33-40.

²⁵ Geoffrey Batchen, *Forget Me Not: Photography and Remembrance* (New York and Amsterdam: Princeton Architectural Press and Van Gogh Museum, 2004), 81.

²⁶ Verna Posever Curtis, *Photographic Memory: The Album in the Age of Photography* (New York and Washington: Aperture Foundation and Library of Congress, 2011), 13; Siegel, *Galleries of Friendship and Fame*, 1-7. See also Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 20.

The act of assembling of such hybrid objects can be termed “album rituals,” that is, album-compilation implied a collective, ceremonial dimension which would give way to meaningful portrayals. Through these practices of memory-making, the micro experience of locals expressed in “the most personal pictures” would create “a link to a larger community.”²⁷ More often than not, the ensuing representations served to materially perpetuate the position of a middle-class citizenry. As Langford has contended with reference to Bourdieu’s seminal writings, the increasing affordability of photographic practice and the sources created by it “had not revolutionized society, but actually served to reinforce social stratification by confirming the middle class in its traditional values.” These modes of “ritualistic self-presentation” remained within a closed exchange circle of shared values, thus perpetuating a bourgeois existence.²⁸ Due to this self-serving dimension, the personal albums treating the San Francisco earthquake and fire – which may generally disclose a more critical view of the event – cannot completely reverse the disaster narrative, as they were made within a specific middle-class context with access to commodities. Whether applied to individual members of society or affiliates of camera clubs, the notion of a self-sustaining portrayal was very much present in both groups. Due to its reassuring material character, the album compiled for official purposes showed a similar self-perpetuating and congratulating dimension. Opting for legibility and traceability, its circulation within official circles was appreciated for its standardized and yet personalized format, and the pre-channeled interpretation of the narrative it depicted.

Eventually, be it “a souvenir” or “an instrument to inform or influence,” what made the album attractive and useful in the context of 1906 was its format’s purity and originality. As Curtis writes, “[t]he tabula rasa of the physical album format offers myriad possibilities for the photographer or compiler to select the structure, design the cover, and organize the photographs.”²⁹ Its etymological meaning confirms the creational dimension of the album, “inspired by the whiteness of the sheet.”³⁰ Its blank state invited the construction of narratives so as to fill the void of the pages. This aspect is even more tangible when applied to the destroyed city space, whose emptiness demanded to be filled. In the disaster context, thus, the album’s blank spaces would be linked to the city’s devastated areas. The album fulfilled the double-function of photographically reconstructing the experience of the event and representing a new material possession of one’s own.

Through its photographic narrative, meaning was expressed coherently and materially. It is this specific dimension of the album – shaping meaning through materialization – which is the foremost aspect to be kept in mind when confronting *both* the private and the public expressions of album-making in the months and years after April 1906. At a moment when the rupture of urban life

²⁷ Siegel, *Galleries of Friendship and Fame*, 4-6, 153.

²⁸ Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 25-27; see also Bourdieu, *Photography: A Middle-brow Art*.

²⁹ Curtis, *Photographic Memory*, 7.

³⁰ Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 23.

coalesced with the conscious seizing of the photographic apparatus' potential, the album came to express not only the desires attached to reconstructing a bygone past and envisioning a possible future of the community. In its pages were also expressed the understandings, convictions, and expectations of photographic representation and photographic materialization in the face of immense losses.

8.2 “*Many times have we trodden this street*”: the album as materialized memory of individual citizens

If the decade of the 1900s constituted a crucial moment in which “time-related metaphor” entered Kodak advertisement – moving from the appraisal of instantaneity as technological accomplishment to an appreciation of the apparatus as story teller – the photographs to be found in albums of this period can be partly approached as a response to this encouragement of “recording” and narrating.³¹ The commodification of memory represented a key strategy in the company’s targeting of the mass-market, as the use of a camera was integrated into everyday life as “an obligatory act of preserving memories as defense against the future and as assurance of the past.”³² The aforementioned estimation of photographic apparatus owned by Americans in the mid 1900s suggests a rise in such memorizing activities, bolstered by the sheer mass of photographs stored in collecting institutions for this period. While the following study does not seek to unite the entirety of available primary source material under this banner, it does take the notion of a facilitated and widely advertised story-telling through photography as a major analytical tool. This choice is motivated by the specific nature of the catastrophe, which – by its infliction of losses – initiated a more vigorous process of memory-making and material recuperation.

In line with the notion of creative destruction, the act of photographing and the subsequent creation of a visual narrative in condensed format allowed compilers to purposefully reshape the damage. In this framework, as evoked in Lucy Lippard’s lines used in the epigraph, photographs could serve to “fill the voids of memory [...], to preserve the remnants of a world that has disappeared.” As an extension of this compensating capacity, the snapshot performed a special role, as it embodied a personalized expression of memory to be revisited and retold. It occupied a strong focus within “the local narrative” by designating specific sites of the community as points of departure for intimate processes of remembering. Even though the transmission of this memory is necessarily fragmented and at times unsatisfactory, it has a non-negligible therapeutic connotation, as it encourages personal narration.³³ By establishing a direct link with the past through an imprint captured on photographic film, the photograph of a past event constituted a tangible connection. For purposes of memorialization, the photograph’s content would be enriched with all kinds of details so

³¹ James E. Paster, “Advertising Immortality by Kodak,” *History of Photography* 16, no. 2 (1992): 135, 138.

³² West, *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia*, 9-13.

³³ Lippard, *The Lure of the Local*, 55-56.

as to “[give] reality to the mourned.” From this perspective, the creation of a narrative based on the debris of the city constitutes no less than an “act of therapy,” as it helped rehabilitate one’s position within the local setting and actively produced material remedial.³⁴

It is from this perspective of orientation through material recreation that we can approach the first two examples of personal albums compiled in the wake of the disaster. Digitized for the centennial project in 2006, they belong to a larger collection of photograph albums held by the California Historical Society (CHS).³⁵ Unfortunately, through digitization, the albums have lost their comprehensive material character. This deficiency is reinforced by the individual rather than sequential reproduction of the images, as well as the incomplete digitization of their captions. In order to overcome some of these shortcomings, the following analysis seeks to bring to the fore the albums’ material dimension, notably its narrative character. One remarkable document in the CHS collection (entitled Photograph Album no. 11), donated in 1906, was assembled by an unknown individual from San Francisco, one month after the disaster. It featured twenty-five recto-verso pages with some fifty photographs, the large majority of which are personal prints, completed with several clippings from newspapers at the end of the album. Starting with a short documentation of life in refugee camps, it mainly consisted of a walking tour through burned districts, documenting the damage of specific sites, including former locations related to the maker as well as public venues. The captions, short but effective, enriched the narrative sequence with nostalgic, at times political, but also outright sarcastic commentary.

The third photograph in the album is the first to depict people (**fig. 8.2**). A family – father, mother, and daughter, alongside two women and a dog – are posing in front of a wooden shelter. While the family are seated for the photograph, the two women are standing at the entrance of the makeshift home, and seem engaged in some activity which they briefly interrupt for the time of the exposure. The family are rather well dressed: the father wears a bowler hat, waistcoat, and tie, the mother and daughter are dressed in white cloth – a striking contrast to the working attire of the two remaining women. While the scene does not explicitly depict misery, it does suggest the hardships of daily life through the rather messy exterior and the erring dog whose gaze is turned away from the camera toward the rest of the camp to the far right. The division in two panels is vertically underlined by the American flag, waving in the air behind the shelter. The experience of the portrayed people is connected to this national symbol in the caption, reading “The spirit of patriotism helps them to bear up happily after the great calamity.” Through the wording, the viewer’s gaze is directed toward the flag which stands as a reminder of durability.

³⁴ See Edwards, “Photographs as Objects of Memory,” 232.

³⁵ For a complete list, see “Photo Album Shelf List,” California Historical Society, accessed February 1, 2018, https://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/oldsite/collections/photo_collection/photo_guide/photo_album.html.

The notion of national pride with which the image is instilled through the caption is reminiscent of Keeler's heroic portrayal of camp life, with ordinary people quietly enduring daily hardships. The addition of such captions emphasizes in retrospect the experience of being a refugee. While it can only be speculated to what extent the abstract principle of belief in the nation provided emotional relief, it did appear important for the maker to align the people presented in the album as affiliates to this often-advertised "spirit" of the people and the city, with which national values were closely entwined. It is a form of desired representation of the past as seen from a specific moment in the present – when the maker had found the time to engage materially with the experience by assembling the album. If we were to assume the maker to be the father or mother of the exposed family, the self-ascribed role as local patriots would constitute an important addition to the family narrative of the event. Such retrospective family portrayals in albums contribute to the elaboration of a common – or perhaps communal – past. It allowed album compilers to shape an anticipated interpretation of the image which put its subject in the desired light. As Celia Lury has argued with regard to photographs in family albums:

The photograph's freeze-framing creates a loop in time from which a newly self-possessed individual may emerge. In this loop, the future perfect of the photographic image – this will have been – may be suspended, manipulated and reworked to become a past perfected.³⁶

In this specific case, the polishing of the past by purposefully situating oneself within a well-known event was extended by the positioning of the family photograph in the album. In the sequence, it was preceded by an image of "one of the well regulated streets in camp town," showing an orderly arrangement of white tents on an expansive field (**fig. 8.3**). Even though, visibly, the family's shelter was not located on this street, no comment was made to upon their own living conditions apart from patriotic references. The family portrait was followed by "some of the scenes of refugee life," depicting several men and a girl in a white dress (perhaps the daughter) vividly engaged in discharging building material from a trailer (**fig. 8.4**). Through this sequential depiction, the family's activities during the relief period were presented as meaningful contributions to reconstruction – by actively engaging in the daily work of the camp and keeping up the "spirit." In this context, the microscopic experience of one family, as traumatic as it may have been, was adapted to a more broadly promoted, national optimism. As the opening images of the album, they seem to set the tone for its historical interpretation.

Yet, when leafing halfway through the pages, amid the walking tour of the urban ruins, the viewer is confronted with a more personalized expression of the disaster experience. The return to once-familiar sites was an important, yet painful endeavor, which carefully unfolds in this part of the album. A photograph captioned "Many times have we trodden this street" shows a cable car track

³⁶ Celia Lury, *Prosthetic Culture: Photography, Memory, and Identity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 85.

leading up a hill, with bricks to one side and desolate façades to the other (**fig. 8.5**). The only continuity that can be established with the past lies in the maker who, once again, treads the street – or what remains of it. The photographic tour continues in the same district, from a more distanced perspective, so as to show the expanse of damage (**fig. 8.6**). The earthquake and fire having razed to the ground practically all buildings, the map of the city lay bare and brought unexpected vistas to the fore, as confirmed by the caption: “It was very startling to see Russian Hill from Powell and Washington.” In this confusing setup of a once well-known location, the photographer tries to make out specific points of reference like street names, repeated in the captions, in order to relocate himself and the viewer of the album in the city space.

To affirm personal presence and to regain possession of the unfamiliar location, the compiler drew on a common motif of disaster albums, that is, portraits taken amid the rubble. This becomes tangible in a photograph captioned “Dear old 926,” showing a woman standing next to what must be a completely torn down house (**fig. 8.7**). While the debris occupies almost the entire foreground, the woman is depicted in a mourning posture with her head slightly bent and a book in her hand. Reminiscent of a funeral ceremony, the photograph positions her in front of the house as if she was standing in front of a grave, paying her last respects to the dead by reciting from the Bible. The caption, formulated like a personal address to a loved one, reinforces the impression of deep-felt loss. The extent of damage to be lamented becomes even more striking when compared to the structures in the background, of which at least a few outer walls remain and some are upheld by scaffolding.

This kind of explicit representation of grief is a hallmark of the personal album – as opposed to the official publications discussed in the preceding chapter. While some of the latter would allude to losses by showing ruined buildings or even entirely annihilated quarters, they were mostly devoid of people. Otherwise, the specific focus on an individual could be intimately connected with the lost structures. As surviving inhabitants of the erased city space, their presence in photographs like **fig. 8.7** disclosed misery and pain instead of resilience and optimism. However, this expression was accepted within the viewing circle of an album, who considered such personal documentation a necessity. To related viewers, the former No. 926 constituted a reference familiar to the point that it did not require any additional street name. The experienced loss could hence be more easily grasped when shared within this group. Here, the family album provided an intimate and yet elaborate format for expressions of grief to take shape as blunt and explicit exclamations, instead of constant adjustment to the vocabulary of optimistic reconstruction.

Be it former homes or public buildings, the positioning of a person within the unfamiliar space was a powerful tool to re-inscribe one’s presence in the city. The ensuing depictions of such poses are ambiguous in their expression of lament or hope for rebuilding. Either way, they can be understood as photographic ways of dealing with the situation by deliberately situating one’s body *in*

relation to the city. Furthermore, by ascribing specific locations and dates to the scenes, “the continuity of time and place in man-made terms” was upheld, as Leikam has suggested, “despite the traumatic experience and the disruption of familiar structures and processes.” In this context, it was not only the narrative sequence of the album which bolstered the continuity, but also the very format of the photographs which circulated from one hand to the next. Through this photographic condensation of the monumental damage, the destroyed scenery was “convert[ed] [...] into small, portable inanimate objects [through which] the sense of having control over the events [was] procured.”³⁷ More generally, when using photographs as “souvenirs” of specific events, “the public, the monumental, and the three-dimensional” is turned into “the miniature,” and as such can take on new meanings “within the privatized view of the individual subject.”³⁸

The photographic re-appropriation of the city worked through a re-familiarization of space by identifying well-known sites or showing recognizable persons in the scene. This kind of familiar representation, which becomes tangible in the photograph of “Dear old 926,” would be extended in the widely circulating postcards which people sent to loved ones all over the country. By indicating the precise location and by identifying people, the difficult circumstances of the event were infused with personal meaning and reduced to a microscopic expression. A postcard entitled “Cooking in street, S.F. Cal. [...] in front of 2409 Washington St.” exemplifies this idea of attaching a legible and personally accessible dimension to the difficult circumstances (**fig. 8.8**). A handwritten mark on the postcard – which at the time did not provide much space for writing – identified “grandpa,” next to “Herbie,” “Louis,” and “Gene.” The grandfather, hammer in hand, appeared prepared to operate with his grandsons this extremely well-equipped version of a street kitchen. As Bogdan and Weseloh have demonstrated, the history of “real photo postcards” like **fig. 8.8** set off in 1899 with the introduction of Velox paper, on which amateur photographers could print their own images and send them through the mail. A first climax was reached by 1907, coinciding with the aftermath of the San Francisco earthquake and fire. Among the most desired postcards were scenes which “capture[d] aspects of life that have drastically changed or were in transition during the time.” The historical relevance of such commercially produced and personally printed views is expressed exactly in this thirst for images depicting profound transformation.³⁹ Their annotation with personal comment and circulation through the mail to reach loved ones added a human scale to an otherwise monumental event.

It is worthwhile mentioning this circulation dimension of personal photo postcards, as it ties in with the album’s attempt to re-infuse the destroyed city space with familiar sites, people and

³⁷ Susanne Leikam, “Depicting ‘Natural’ Disasters in U.S.-American History and Culture: San Francisco’s City Hall as an Icon of the 1906 Earthquake and Fire,” *Copas* 10 (2009), <http://dx.doi.org/10.5283/copas.109>.

³⁸ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 137-138.

³⁹ Robert Bogdan and Todd Weseloh, *Real Photo Postcard Guide: The People’s Photography* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 14-20, 105, 109.

activities. Another way of reaffirming a personal connection with the specific setting was the use of political commentary in captions. As San Francisco was well-known for its corrupt administration, the politicization of disaster imagery was not uncommon, as demonstrated in the preceding chapter. Photographs of City Hall embedded in magazines or newspapers oftentimes alluded to the corrupt administration when discussing the damage, considering it a rightful punishment. The maker of album no. 11 integrated this vision in a view of City Hall taken from Market Street, captioned “A great example of corrupt ways” (**fig. 8.9**). The photograph is not particularly well composed with its slightly slanted horizon and a bulky pile of damage in the foreground obstructing a coherent view of the structure. As the only photograph of City Hall in the album, the compiler did not make any attempt to ennoble the building or to develop a fable of patriotism from its remnants, as official publications would do. Instead, through a snapshot from a distance, it was dismissed as an embodiment of fraud deserving rapid eradication.

As the walking tour continued to the wealthy quarters on Nob Hill, more explicit political comment was made. A comprehensive view of Rudolph Spreckels’s villa showed its neo-Gothic outer walls intact, however, its numerous hollow window frames testified to intense burning inside (**fig. 8.10**). As the son of Claus Spreckels and co-owner of his father’s sugar refineries in California and Hawai’i, he had speculated in real estate and belonged, with James D. Phelan, to the city’s richest businessmen. Even though both men would later be part of the committee which sued mayor Eugene Schmitz and his attorney Abraham Ruef for bribery, their reputation as speculators (and investors in the Southern Pacific) did not necessarily gain them a popular position.⁴⁰ Given the political impact of business elites, public aversions had been widespread in the city since the 1870s, and were oftentimes directed toward their homes on Nob Hill. Benefiting from the businessmen’s far-reaching impact, however, official disaster publications tended to reshape the quarter’s ruins as former pioneer homes, for example in the *Portals of the Past*. Situated on the other hand of this representational spectrum, the maker of album no. 11 did not indulge in such transfigurations. Rather, the caption to Spreckels’s home reads like a call for just treatment under disaster law, conveying a sense of satisfaction with regard to the businessman’s losses: “One time when money did not count. The offer of a million dollars by Spreckels to the firemen had no effect to save his mansion.” With rumors of all kinds running high, Spreckels’s apparent search for advantageous treatment to save his burning home provided a welcome anecdote to be added to the photograph.

The mockery of business ventures becomes once again tangible in this sequence of the album covering the area on and around Nob Hill. An image of blatant destruction with two-thirds occupied by debris and garbage, and one-third in the background showing a decrepit structure, was captioned

⁴⁰ See Fradkin, *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906*, 305-338.

“Real estate is booming on Van Ness” (**fig. 8.11**). A signpost lurking amid the rubble visually underlines the caption, suggesting that the destroyed terrain could be easily advertised for sale. The sarcasm of the picture lies in its connection of debris with real estate. It drew attention to the rapid seizure of land for investment through facilitated building permits even though the sites had not been properly cleared and the risks not properly investigated.⁴¹ It could also mirror the attempts of the city’s board of real estate to downplay the earthquake and frame the catastrophe as a fire with minor consequences. This form of political mockery created an emotional detachment from the desolate scene. It was an explicit pointing of fingers to the wrong-doings of an ostentatious urban elite. Through this politicization of space, the experience of destruction was actively rechanneled and gained a new sociopolitical understanding. It likewise permitted to put personal losses into correlation with others.

Ultimately, three strategies can be derived from the visual rearrangement of the city in this personal album. They partly overlap with and in part markedly diverge from the narratives offered in officially published disaster accounts. The coping with the estranged space worked first of all through a deliberate positioning of the individual within the communal experience of disaster, implying endurance and perhaps a sense of regained control. In this, the photographs of camp life correspond to popular depictions of the community seeking to restore order in the broader context of challenging living conditions. The second step – where the album departs from the public tenor – constituted a return to familiar sites. This personal experience of relocating oneself in the city worked through explicit expressions of personal grief. It could be alleviated through political comment which picked out specific sites or actors, perhaps so as to make sense of one’s personal losses. While the public disaster narrative tried to reframe political commentary in the shape of ruin metaphors and a process of public catharsis, personal accounts articulated more pointed accusations. Again, however, in both narratives, the deliberate choice of self-portrayal – individual or on behalf of a community – was bolstered by the image sequence.

An essential endeavor of album-making, especially in the post-disaster context, was then to create “possible pasts” which disclosed the path of an individual seeking to make sense of the city. The assembled photographs offer “an imaginative and ambiguous space which the past inhabits,” as Edwards has suggested. Through the photographic sequence, the annihilated space is partly reconstructed and the individual’s position in it is purposefully “respatialize[d],” so as to maintain his or her belonging.⁴² Grasping the damage’s expanse and regaining orientation were processes which the album facilitated – an aspect that becomes apparent in another item preserved in the collections of the California Historical Society. Photograph album no. 25 offers a very intense expression of a

⁴¹ Davies, *Saving San Francisco*, 117.

⁴² Edwards, “Photographs as Objects of Memory,” 230.

search for reorientation, stretching over fifty recto-verso pages with between one and three prints per page, amounting to a total of 142 photographs. The maker relied massively on commercial images, many of them with sensationalist content, like Hooper's *Burning of San Francisco* used by Keeler. These were mixed with several personal snapshots, which yet fulfilled the same purpose as the commercial prints: Meticulously annotated with a white pen, they constitute traces of sites which were either about to vanish or had already disappeared. Since its provenance and maker are unknown, it could be speculated, that the album was compiled for official uses, for example an insurance company or the City of San Francisco's Department of Public Works. The latter possibility can be dismissed as the Department never used commercial views and conceived their albums in a much less elaborate way.⁴³ Furthermore, the source itself does not bear any trace of official use, as specially compiled albums usually would, indicating at least the name of its maker or the person to whom it was presented.

Disregarding speculations on potential circulation and instrumentalization due to lack of comprehensive information on the source, the following analysis rather seeks to draw attention to the specific treatment of photographs in the album. In its use of urban data and recurrent identification of locations, the album stripped the well-known photographs of burning San Francisco off their pathos. This becomes tangible in a view which resembles Genthe's well-known photograph of Sacramento Street. Taken from a comparable perspective, *Looking down California St. from Powell St.* defines the street car tracks as a vertical axis leading toward the ravaging clouds enveloping the downtown area (**fig. 8.12**). The buildings in this section of California Street are still unharmed and the inhabitants are seen busily roaming about the quarter rather than attending a spectacle of destruction. Without reference to potential feelings or losses, the information in the caption is supplemented by data in the margins of the image. The addition of street, block, and number identified the exact numbers of structures photographically reproduced. In the case of images which showed larger parts of the city, like R.J. Waters's *Fire on Third and Mission*, the inclusion of various structures was strategically used so as to add a maximum of geographic information (**fig. 8.13**). Since the image was taken from an elevated view point, street names were more difficult to identify at first sight. Hence, the arrows precisely pointed to specific buildings so as to mark out their location on the intersecting streets. Next to the numbers, well-known structures, like the Masonic Temple in the lower left corner, were pinpointed. The detail of its torn-open façade captured a specific moment in the destruction process, which otherwise would be represented in emblematic before-after views.

⁴³ An inventory of the 95 official albums can be accessed online, see "San Francisco Department of Public Works Photograph Collection," San Francisco Public Library, accessed February 13, 2018, <https://sfpl.org/?pg=2000084601>. Information confirmed by Christina Moretta (photo curator, San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library), e-mail message to author, February 14, 2018.

The addition of geographic data imposed an imaginative grid on the photograph through which the image's content could be read like a map. In this, the spectacular representation was transformed into legible information, allowing to trace processes of eradication. Highly popular photographs of the burning city, as the ones marketed by Willard E. Worden, almost ironically lost their monumentality (**fig. 8.14**). Two little arrows dashing into the picture frame from the right would direct the viewer's gaze toward "John Brenner and Cordes' Furniture Stores," of which at least one façade showed marks of intense burning. In this process, again, the macro sight of oncoming destruction was rendered intelligible by shifting the attention toward a precise moment and location. Interestingly, the photographer Worden, who had made considerable profit from "the general public's fascination for [...] sensationalist content" also provided his view collection to urban planners and seismologists studying the impact and evaluating potential improvements.⁴⁴ This use of Worden's photograph could perhaps corroborate the idea of an album compiled for official purposes, yet again, the repurposing of blatantly commercial, dramatized views for an official occasion appears unlikely.

What is more important at this point is the notion of countering – or at least factually supplementing – a narrative of monumental destruction by relying on the very photographic sources which embodied this sensationalist vein. A large panoramic photograph of the burning city taken from St. Francis Hotel on April 18, made by the Oakland-based firm Pillsbury Picture, was advertised in *Camera Craft* in July 1906 for the price of \$5 – a gem "particularly interesting to those who failed to witness the conflagration."⁴⁵ Its pocket-format reproduction was used in the album so as to point out a large number of public buildings located along the axis of Market Street (**fig. 8.15**). The Masonic Temple was once again identified, and so was Cordes' Furniture Company, this time visible with much more detail in the foreground. The arrow pointing to the Phelan Building merged with the large cloud of smoke which enveloped the structure. While perhaps a delight to the spectacle-thirsty collector of the San Franciscan calamity business, the album dryly countered the image's dramatic character through a systematic addition of data. As the same structures would be identified recurrently, each building's itinerary through the chronology of the disaster could be traced – and its history thus visually reconstructed. Interestingly, Club member and *Camera Craft* contributor W.J. Street also figured in the album with his view taken down Market Street in the morning of the first day of fire (**fig. 8.16**, see also **fig. 7.1**). Again, here, the identification of the still intact Flood Building and Emporium Department Store in the foreground would allow a tracing of their gradual destruction

⁴⁴ Worden's career was covered in a recent retrospective in San Francisco. A former soldier in the Spanish-American War, he set up a professional photography business in 1901 and gained popularity through his disaster views and participation in the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in 1915. His works were featured in the aforementioned report of the California State Earthquake Commission. No connection to the Club or to *Camera Craft* could be established. See James A. Ganz, *Portals of the Past: The Photographs of Willard Worden* (San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 2015).

⁴⁵ "A Fine Photograph," *Camera Craft* 13, no. 1 (1906): 270.

in retrospect. The views of Club members – marketed despite aversions of “honorable” amateurs in the magazine – thus found another application in the aftermath through the inclusion in personally conceived accounts.

What is remarkable with regard to album no. 25 is its extensive, and almost exclusive, reliance on commercial views, so as to produce a highly intelligible and somewhat dispassionate representation of the disaster. In this vein, Willumson has argued that the reliance on commercially produced images in photograph albums does not curtail the personal dimension of the source. Instead, by assembling the images in a specific manner and adding details to them, the maker “transform[s] mass-produced photographs into singular expressions.” The coexistence of various photographic prints – commercial or personal – with other materials like maps or clippings, creates an interactive experience which resembles a curation process. Here, the commercial views are “made to function in specific ways.”⁴⁶ In the case of album no. 25, the photographs’ emotionalized content was carefully modified into an assemblage of visualized data used to trace the progressive disappearance of several neighborhoods. If we consider this album as a keenly informed, personal attempt to make sense of the catastrophe in a rational way, the initial publication target of the purchased photographs is reversed. The buyer of these views and maker of the album infused the commercial products with an entirely new meaning by deriving from them a rapidly overlooked, yet highly instructive content. This re-contextualization of disaster images is made possible through the maker’s own material intervention on the image surface and in the margins. As such, the album can be analyzed as a “subversive” source which, through its personalized use of commodified images “demonstrate[s] the cultural power of an individual to transform the medium of photography into a singular cultural expression.”⁴⁷

Lingering in this analytical vein for a moment longer, we can consider the few non-commercial views included in the album as an extension of this personalized expression. Two notable pocket-size photographs are included in the album next to the commercial views (**fig. 8.17**, **fig. 8.18**). Through their format (roughly 9 x 9 cm), their conspicuous inclusion of identifiable individuals, and their deficiency in composition (especially the motion blur in 8.17), these snapshots stand in marked contrast to the commercial views. Whether collected from another source or personally taken, the photographs add the same individual dimension to the disaster space as the ones in the preceding album. They inscribe a human presence into the destroyed environment. The positioning of the bodies right next to debris or specific buildings would allow to retrospectively measure the proportionate size of damage. While commercial views oftentimes concentrated on well-known structures or produced much broader views of streets, these two photographs narrow the frame down to very

⁴⁶ Willumson, “The Photo-album as Cultural Artifact,” 46-47.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

specific sites – “No. 610 Clay Street” and “1200 Block North Side of Market Street.” Data in the margins identified adjacent numbers and familiar sites. These depictions of encounters with other citizens at eye-level could provide a supplement to the broader commercial views by pointing out very specific locations which otherwise would be missing.

From these varied assemblages and modifications of circulating disaster imagery, several potential uses of album no. 25 can be envisioned. From a public perspective, the album could have been useful to the reconstruction process not only through its identification of fragile structures, and the documentation of the several stages and degrees of damage. Exactly for this reason, it could lend itself to the evaluation of losses by insurance companies. At the time, claims for recompense constituted a great difficulty, since the earthquake had been eliminated as a reasonable cause for insurance claims, which were thus evaluated “on the basis of fire damage.”⁴⁸ Even though the album does not disclose information on earthquake damage, it is from its systematic approach to the built environment that potential claims for recompense could have been envisioned. Yet again, the reliance on commercial views to trace evidence appears dubious.

Regardless of these speculations, attention must be drawn to a persisting dimension of the album which is encountered by anyone turning its pages many years later – namely, its intense search for orientation. The extensive, almost obsessive marking of sites also attests to a very individual search for understanding. Without a trace of official commissioning or use, the album needs to be first and foremost considered a personal endeavor. If we were to imagine the meticulous process of its compilation, we come to realize the conflicted relation to photography which the album reflects. Its making implied a profound engagement with exaggerated or obfuscated photographic representation on the one hand, which was then opposed to a set of standardized, yet invisible, geographic data on the other. The dramatized content was removed by adding visualized geographic data on the image surface. In its confrontation of the sensationalist with the rational, the album mirrors two desired forms of representation for which the medium became the declared vehicle in the aftermath of the disaster. Through this combination, the album brings to the fore “the social expectation of photographs,” that is, its indexical function to provide “the visual trace of the appearance of a past moment in its apparent entirety.”⁴⁹ The striving for completeness is heightened by the maker’s personal intervention, notably by adding otherwise invisible information. This addition implies a tactile dimension in which “touch transfigures the indexical into the real for a moment.”⁵⁰ If first the white marker and later the finger, in an explicative gesture, trace the arrow, the scene in the photograph becomes endowed with an imagined order. As Edwards has stated with

⁴⁸ On the challenges of insurance claims, see Fradkin, *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906*, 231-239.

⁴⁹ Elizabeth Edwards, “Photographs and History: Emotion and Materiality,” in *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations*, ed. Sandra H. Dudley (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 24.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

reference to Latour: “the index finger always signals an access to reality [or an imagined reality] even when it targets a mere piece of paper.”⁵¹

From this striving for integral and intelligible representation, the function of the photograph album in the fabrication of a collective memory of the event can be better understood. Through recent digitization, the specific expectations of the album – to provide a trustworthy and somewhat universal representation – have been extended to a numeric format. In its accumulation of sources from various institutions, the digital archive of the earthquake and fire strives just as much for a comprehensive overview. On a general note, it can be assumed that the disruptive character of the disaster spurred a process of history-making at local level. Its far-reaching character was underlined by the circulation of commercial imagery, as well as the increasingly affordable practice of Kodak photography – which was advertised to locals as a memory-aid. The acute awareness of an historical moment and of an irrecoverable material loss would be expressed in the production of photographs that sought to capture this experience. The repercussions of this historical awareness through photographs is still tangible in the long-term aftermath of the catastrophe, notably on the occasion of its anniversary, when the sensationalist photographs and narratives are brought to the fore – solidifying once again the mythologized version of the event.⁵²

With regard to the commemoration of the event in personal albums in a chronology that exceeds the immediate aftermath, a last example of a personal photograph album can be given. Entitled “Reconstruction Period of San Francisco After Great Earthquake and Fire, April 18-19-20, 1906, 5:16 a.m.,” an album of 107 photographs (roughly sized 9 x 12 cm) was donated to the San Francisco Public Library thirty-five years after the catastrophe, in October 1941. The photographs were taken by Crittenden Van Wyck in May 1908, when reconstruction had already substantially advanced. Birt, who was the first historian to include Van Wyck in recent a study on photographic documentation of the disaster, has underlined the amateurish character of the album. Yet, regardless of the image’s obvious technical flaws, the source constitutes an important testimony to the ongoing portrayal of San Francisco as an efficiently reconstructed metropolis. As such, as Birt has suggested, this “modest” photographic narrative “visually echoes the claims of the city’s resurgent state.”⁵³ Due to both its content and its object itinerary – assembled in private first and decades later reconceived for public preservation – the album represents an interesting case study to round off the analysis of personal photo-albums as materialized disaster memory *and* as performance of a local narrative.

The ambition of creating an official and authentically documented history through photographs becomes tangible when leafing through the album. Including his portrait on the first

⁵¹ Bruno Latour, quoted in *Ibid.*

⁵² Davies, *Saving San Francisco*, 4.

⁵³ Birt, *History’s Anteroom*, 26-27.

page, the compiler put to the forth his birth in San Francisco in 1870 as well as his short career in the military between 1917 and 1919. Working as a dentist in San Francisco from 1902 until the U.S. intervention in World War I, Van Wyck had enrolled as an army dentist and owned the grade of Major. The inclusion of his biographical data and professional activity at the beginning serves as a reminder to the viewer of the album in the following pages, as Van Wyck singles out specific locations related to his own life in the community.⁵⁴ The overall conception of the album mirrors this desire for precise inscription into space and time. Instead of relying on dispersed hand-written notes, he adopted a rigorous lay-out with two to four photographs per page, which were carefully annotated with typed captions. These included ample descriptions and information on the exposed subject. Here, emphasis was put on details of construction, for example the various materials or processes of repairing and excavating. While the photographs were taken in 1908, the captions recount a broader historical chronology by referring to the progress made over three decades.

With regard to his choice of subject matter, a special interest in the portrayal of a controllable and well-organized city space can be made out. As Birt has underlined, Van Wyck's focus on the specifics of construction overlaps with many of the commercially produced views of the time, for example R.J. Waters's documentation of the new Phelan Building.⁵⁵ However, the Major's photographic depictions of this and other structures are much more detailed than commercial views, as a page-spread at the beginning of the album shows (**fig. 8.19**). Through a juxtaposition of four photographs taken at street-level and from an elevated position, four different impressions of reconstruction are provided, ranging from the specific utility of tools like cranes to the broader use of vacant lots downtown to be occupied by businesses. The information given for each of these four scenes creates an impression of simultaneity in reconstruction, suggesting a swift operation carried out by workers and architects in tandem. In this thorough documentation of the various stages, the citizens become decision-makers who design well-functioning surroundings.

Via the album, Van Wyck inscribed himself in this new space – not only as photographer, but also as active citizen who would turn the city once again into his home. So as to combine public and private space, page 13 showed the elevation of street car tracks on Market Street next to a photograph of Van Wyck's house on Webster street (marked with his street number), captioned as "Home of Major Crittenden Van Wyck who took all these pictures in 1908 and made up this album in 1941" (**fig. 8.20**). The caption specified that the home was located "six blocks west of fire burned district," and thereby geographically situated his biography in the larger history of destruction. A similar attempt to re-situate himself – this time in the future of the city – was made on the following page.

⁵⁴ Ibid.; biographical information retrieved from "Finding aid of the Crittenden Van Wyck Diary (Vol. 1), C058788," Online Archive of California, accessed February 1, 2018, <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/c82r3ttj/>.

⁵⁵ Birt, *History's Anteroom*, 27.

Here, a photograph of the Schroth Building on Stockton Street, at the time merely a steel scaffolding with a timid range of palm trees planted in front, was supplemented with a pen mark pointing to the second floor (**fig. 8.21**). Its caption read:

Schroth Building, 240 Stockton St. for doctors and dentists only. X marks office of Crittenden Van Wyck, dentist. [...] Palm trees are in the Square – occupies one block. In 1941 a hugh [sic] garage is being built underground. Later all trees will be returned.

Through the extensive written references to past destruction and future reconstruction – none of which were actually visible in the photographs of 1908 – the album attempted to create a much broader history of the city. Its chronology stretching over three decades, the city space that was described in Van Wyck’s album was an imagined product. This imaginary space was made possible through the album format which facilitated a cross-referencing of past events with the present situation and future construction plans. It was a space which combined the personal experience of citizens while showcasing a communal vision of material progress.

The itinerary of Van Wyck’s disaster narrative from the private to the public realm constitutes a shift from a personal remedy to a deliberate shaping of a collectively valuable, photographically authenticated narrative. The initial function of his photographs as personal souvenirs is augmented by the retrospectively added album frame. Through the shift in material support, the photographs’ original use became infused with a public expectation – for instance when consulted as a representative, historical object in the archival context. Birt, in his brief discussion of Van Wyck’s narrative, has proposed that the assemblage of his photographs thirty-five years later must have “provoked the consideration of his own mortality.”⁵⁶ The reflections on past, present and future, which intersect in the album, are certainly an expression of this personal realization. Yet, it may also be suggested that Van Wyck’s donation of his album to the San Francisco Public Library occurred at a decisive moment in his personal life, when he attempted to leave a purposeful imprint on his community’s history – which perhaps would also shed a positive light on him in retrospect. This hypothesis is corroborated by the donation file related to his autobiographical material. A duplicate of the album was given to the Society of California Pioneers the same year, along with two diaries written in 1890. The latter include a brief biographical sketch in which the author traces his career as a dentist in the city and in the military. It finishes with the following information: “Disabled in line of duty at Camp McClellan, Alabama. Permanently injured as it eventually turned out. Married 1921. Divorced 1935 at Reno, Nev. Desertion by wife who picked out a younger man.”⁵⁷ These painful personal details are worth mentioning when considering the context of his album donation in October 1941. Eight months later, in June 1942, Van Wyck killed his ex-wife by burning her home. He

⁵⁶ Ibid., 26.

⁵⁷ Crittenden Van Wyck, quoted in “Finding aid of the Crittenden Van Wyck Diary.”

suffered intense burns during the arson, which led him to commit suicide the same month. As the finding aid from the Society of California Pioneers adds: “He is quoted as saying that he wanted her to ‘suffer as I’ve suffered these many years.’”⁵⁸ In the light of this tragic and profoundly disturbing biography, Van Wyck’s elaborately compiled album and diaries may point to the attempt to bequeath a positive personal narrative of communal life to two of the most important collecting institutions in the city.

On a more general note, if we consider his disaster narrative as a hybrid object with an itinerant history, we come to understand that an album can take on different discursive dimensions over the course of the decades. In the transition from the private to the public realm, the dialectics of individual and communal desire intersect and thus attribute new meanings to the visual content and physical dimension of the album. It requires an informed analysis which respects the physicality of the object in all its forms so as to reconstruct its functions in private and in public. From this analysis, the main strategies of personal album-making can be derived. They integrate a re-appropriation of space that works through the addition of a deeply personal dimension to the representation of the city. Through the specific emplacement of photographs in a sequence, through written commentary, or through direct intervention on the surface of the print, album-makers could figuratively and literally reinscribe themselves in the past event. With the help of a personal assemblage, both a history of the event and a possible interpretation of its aftermath could be envisioned. Certainly, through these different strategies of personal narration with the medium, a much more intimate and perhaps politicized history of the disaster was created. In their material, visual, and historical riches, the multiple layers of the personal album substantially exceed the one-dimensionality of the officially published disaster account.

While the personal album thus offers alternative visions to the linear narrative of progress, it is difficult to pinpoint its exact uses and circulations over time, due to the oftentimes profound lack of information. The albums in the CHS collection provide a fertile terrain for the analysis of photographic practices and reuses of commercially printed material. Yet, since further information on the provenance is difficult to retrieve or simply non-existent, a broader statement on the object’s meaning becomes challenging. The case of Crittenden Van Wyck – a conscious attempt of compiling and donating a meaningful narrative – is easier to contextualize and to comprehend in its shifting functions. Interestingly, as Birt has remarked, the choice of the San Francisco Public Library for his donation can be seen as an extension of Van Wyck’s embrace of a celebratory reconstruction history. As the only element reminiscent of the Burnham Plan to be implemented after the disaster, the Library’s location in the Civic Center reflected Phelan’s idea of embellishing the city with

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Neoclassical government buildings and cultural institutions. When pushed to the utmost, this choice for future historical preservation could be seen as a purposeful alignment with a political agenda.⁵⁹ From this perspective, it will be of interest in the following section to trace the use of the album format for official purposes. To this end, two albums assembled by California Camera Club members, preserved as part of the James D. Phelan Estate, will be examined.

8.3 *Flag-waving, sanitation and rehabilitation: Club members' albums in the James D. Phelan estate*

As the case of Crittenden Van Wyck has demonstrated, the personal experience of disaster could be turned into a publicly meaningful source when reconceived for preservation. In this regard, a remarkable overlap exists between the appropriation of the standardized album format and the reconceptualization of the city space. As the tabula rasa of the modern city served as a projection screen for past and future visions, the blank sheets of the album came to materialize and solidify these scenarios. When turning to professionally assembled sources, the format of the photograph album and its incitement of “authorial ordering” require particular emphasis. It is through the sequential command of images that an album arranges its own forms of memory. The professional photograph album, in its conception and reception, becomes a “material [manifestation] of social desire.”⁶⁰

The following analysis takes this notion of social desire as a point of departure when looking at two albums by California Camera Club members from the James D. Phelan estate at the Bancroft Library. With regard to both their physical format and their itinerary, the albums bolster the idea of a disaster history that was turned into a tale of communal progress through a strategic reliance on photography and its manifold material expressions. Here, the format of the album – much more than the popular disaster account – constitutes a particularly powerful instrument. Its functionality worked on two levels. First, its bulky format literally lent weight to the scenario developed in its pages, while its professionally produced views depicted exactly the desired locations. Second, its preservation by a civic leader and local promoter (and later by one of the state’s foremost collecting institutions) would further validate the tale of resilience and reconstruction. Even though it cannot be stated with certainty whether the albums were deliberately compiled for or commissioned by Phelan, we can presume from their unique object character in the estate that they were conceived and shown around to demonstrate the desired political agenda and investment goals.⁶¹ Having founded the Association for the Improvement and Adornment of San Francisco two years before the disaster, Phelan would

⁵⁹ Birt, *History's Anteroom*, 26.

⁶⁰ Edwards, “Photographs as Objects of Memory,” 231.

⁶¹ Next to portraits and postcards, the photographic material from the James D. Phelan estate preserved at the Bancroft Library includes an album by Charles Weidner, one by Edward N. Sewell (both discussed below), as well as a three-page folder with photographs by R.J. Waters on the reconstruction of the Phelan Building.

regard the destruction of the city as “an invaluable opportunity to build an ideal city and citizen.”⁶² The two albums discussed in the following support and perhaps even embody this ambition, as they show a courageous citizenry efficiently managing relief assistance, and showcase the rebuilt city of 1909 as a monument to endurance and entrepreneurship.

With regard to the Club, this material support of a standard history points again to the members’ sociopolitical involvement. The aesthetic appeal of their photographic objects, used for various purposes throughout the preceding decade, took on yet another political meaning in the aftermath of the disaster. Through the lens of their aesthetic and historical instrumentality, the photograph albums by Charles Weidner and Edward N. Sewell in the Phelan estate are material testimonies to the Club’s ideological and legitimizing uses of photography. Weidner’s longstanding promotional work on the city and state, as well as his participation in the 1907 outing to Yosemite point to the intimate connection between congenial practice and territorial promotion. Sewell, who worked as corresponding secretary at the Club after 1906, had shown his work at the third salon and at the Club rooms with Dasonville in 1904. His photographs were appreciated by Genthe at the time and by editor Paul Elder later on. As products of this local photographic expertise – mixing aesthetics and commercialism – the albums must have appealed to Phelan. Consisting of twenty-five photographs each, Weidner’s 1906 album on relief camps and Sewell’s 1909 album on *The New San Francisco* materially, aesthetically, and historically corresponded to Phelan’s vision of the city as a grand and well-managed metropolis.

By the time that Charles Weidner set out to take photographs for the album *Relief Camps for Refugees from the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire in the summer of 1906*, he could easily be listed among the city’s foremost promotional photographers. Coming to California as a fourteen-year-old with his German family in 1880, Weidner’s studio first appeared in the directory in 1898 and would remain on Market Street at least until 1916.⁶³ As contributor to *Camera Craft*, he gained fame through the portrait of a Chinese cobbler, reproduced in the inaugural issue of the magazine (see **fig. 6.18**). Over the course of the early decades of the twentieth century, he produced numerous series of colored postcards on San Francisco, the disaster, Chinatown, the Yosemite, and Native Americans, alongside stereo views of railroad tracks in the Western United States and in Germany.⁶⁴ His commercial work fit well in the overtly patriotic atmosphere reigning the city at the time of the Spanish-American War. Alongside R.J. Waters and Fayette Clute, Weidner contributed to a souvenir booklet entitled *Our Boys in Blue* by the Pacific Illustrating Bureau, which also distributed panoramic

⁶² Davies, *Saving San Francisco*, 113.

⁶³ Mautz, *Biographies of Western Photographers*, 153.

⁶⁴ See directory of photographers in bibliography for a complete list of institutions with holdings by Charles Weidner. See also “Through the Lens of Charles Weidner: A San Francisco Retrospective,” WeidnerCA, accessed February 16, 2018, <http://weidnerca.com/blog/charles-weidner/>.

views of military camps in the Bay Area. The illustrated souvenir documented the encampment, training, and departure of the regiments of California volunteers from the Presidio “on their way to the front.” It showcased a cheerful atmosphere of departure with street parades and a grand “au revoir” to the battleships at San Francisco’s water front.⁶⁵

As noted earlier, Phelan was mayor during this period and was attracted by the staging of such patriotic events so as to rally support for a war with much economic potential for the local industry. His ambition to establish new monuments in the city, realized with sculptor Douglas Tilden, points to the heightened emphasis on commemoration. After the disaster, Phelan worked with Tilden and the Native Sons of the Golden West on the conception of a monument for Father Junípero Serra in Golden Gate Park. The Sons had been eager to commemorate the heritage of the Gold Rush by admitting only Native-born Californians to their ranks, which means that theirs constituted an exclusively white male endeavor.⁶⁶ Phelan supported their agenda, especially after the disaster, when he deemed it necessary to celebrate the resistance of Mission Dolores to the destruction. In this context, the ex-mayor designated Serra’s “life work” as “the beginning of civilization in California,” and as such, a monument would serve to “unite” “all Californians [...] in doing him honor.”⁶⁷ After the statue was inaugurated in November 1907, Phelan corresponded with local publishers to provide information on the ceremony. With regard to pictorial material, he recommended to contact “Weidner, the photographer,” who had been present at the inauguration, and “could undoubtedly furnish you with a photograph.”⁶⁸

As the photographer of a patriotic, cheerful San Francisco appealing to tourists, investors, and politicians alike, Weidner constituted an excellent choice for the documentation of the city’s numerous relief camps in the summer of 1906. Since refugees in particularly difficult situations addressed their specific demands directly to city officials like Phelan,⁶⁹ the ex-mayor perhaps felt compelled to possess an illustrated report on the reconstruction effort. An album attesting to the efficiency of relief measures would prove most beneficial. The hypothesis of a probable cooperation between Weidner and Phelan is further supported by duplicates of the album’s photographs preserved at the Society of California Pioneers. They bear a stamp of the Board of Trustees of Relief and Red Cross Funds on the back – an organization of which Phelan was the President at the time. When communicating with other officials like Rudolph Spreckels and Michael de Young on the efficiency

⁶⁵ See *Our Boys in Blue: A Souvenir* (San Francisco: The Pacific Illustrating Bureau, 1898).

⁶⁶ For further information on the Native Sons of the Golden West, see Glassberg, *Sense of History*, 175-199.

⁶⁷ James D. Phelan to Hon. Edward R. Taylor, November 9, 1907 (James D. Phelan Papers (BANC MSS C-B 800, Box 92:07), the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley).

⁶⁸ James D. Phelan to Monitor Publishing Company, November 18, 1907 (James D. Phelan Papers (Box 92:07)). Three photographs by Weidner of the inaugural ceremony in Golden Gate Park are stored at the Society of California Pioneers.

⁶⁹ Davies, *Saving San Francisco*, 98, 106-107.

of measures undertaken, the album could have been a valuable tool of persuasion.⁷⁰ Weidner's grandson has confirmed that while there is no information available on communication between the photographer and the ex-mayor, the generation of Weidner's children cultivated close relationships with the California legislature and real estate businesses. Furthermore, given the photographers' responsiveness to commissioned works, his grandson has deemed it likely that the relief camp album was conceived "as a favor, or on assignment of the mayor [i.e. Phelan]."⁷¹

In the light of the massive demand for appropriate housing, photographic representation would have to be carried out professionally and coherently. The album, which covered 14 of the 26 camps located in the city and on its outskirts, certainly fulfilled this function by underlining efficiency – and obfuscating a range of conflictual, sociopolitical issues. Housing 40% of the 100,000 homeless citizens, the camps integrated longstanding patterns of population development. It was not only through racial but also through social segregation on various levels, that they reinforced a preferential treatment of the city's wealthy population. As Davies has remarked in her study on relief measures, "native-born two-parent families, especially those with property" would receive "additional relief dollars to rebuild their homes and businesses in the city." Accordingly, relief officials produced a replica of pre-disaster living conditions, which – apart from several women for whom relief assistance provided short-lived empowerment and assertion of citizen rights – did not prove beneficial to the hitherto disadvantaged. However, as the first structures to be built in the immediate wake of the disaster, the camps represented the onset of reconstruction. As "the city's new public household," they had to showcase functioning locations with a purposefully employed citizenry.⁷²

If we come to consider the camp space as a home – not only for the inhabitants but also for the city as a macro-structure expected to provide shelter – a unifying and harmonizing portrayal was needed. Inasmuch as a monument to Father Junípero Serra was supposed to display unity and resilience, the refugee camp would epitomize the birth site of a revitalized population. To this end, it had to be represented as a safe, well-equipped space in which inhabitants were assigned useful tasks and led an agreeable life. This desired emphasis becomes tangible in the album's narrative structure. Its image sequence mingles interior and exterior views of with an affirmative human presence that points to the utility of the structure. For this narrative to become credible, the focus on the furnishing of structural relief in the shape of rapidly built facilities was considered most important.

The album sequence attests to the priority of supply management by starting with two photographs of the relief headquarters, set up at Native Sons' Hall, and the Land and Building

⁷⁰ For a list of the officials involved in the Fund, see San Francisco Relief and Red Cross Funds, *Department Reports as submitted to the Board of Directors at the regular monthly meeting, March 19, 1907* (San Francisco: Starkweather, Latham & Emanuel, 1907). No mention is made of Weidner in the report.

⁷¹ Robert Weidner (grandson of Charles Weidner), e-mail message to author, February 21, 2018. I wish to thank Robert Weidner for the expansive insights he granted me to his personal collection and memory of his grandfather.

⁷² Davies, *Saving San Francisco*, 85-87.

Department. Having assured a visual presence of the administrative structures which provide relief, the sequence then turns to the first camp in Golden Gate Park. Seen from an intersection, two rows of wooden cottages – which by the summer of 1906 had replaced all tents⁷³ – dashed toward the horizon (**fig. 8.22**). This view of the Park’s “speedway” is made both dynamic and monumental by the use of the American flag as pivot. Looked at from street level, it waves far above the rooftops and endows the entrance with a stately atmosphere – heightened by the presence of a uniformed man to the right. While the personal album alluded to a “spirit of patriotism” through a family huddling next to a shelter and a dimly visible flag in the background, the official album took the flag as defining element from which the rest could be constructed. Towering above the entire camp structure – like a modest precursor of Dorothea Lange’s prominent photograph of the Japanese internment camp at Manzanar, California – the flag becomes the visual prism through which all surrounding elements are read. Despite the lack of a monumental landscape in the background to undergird a form of visual authority, Weidner’s image suggests command through the presence of uniformed individuals. As in Keeler’s popular history, military or patrolling personnel embodied state authority and efficient management.

This form of what Davies labeled “‘politicized’ domesticity”⁷⁴ was taken further in images from elevated viewpoints. Immediately following the camp in Golden Gate Park, a photograph of cottages in Lobos Square attested to the notion of state control conveyed in the previous image (**fig. 8.23**). Through the first row of houses in the foreground, the viewer gains a detailed impression of the rectangular structures whose curtained windows suggest shelter and comfort. As the eyes move further across the rooftops, the remaining rows of cottages merge into a coherent, symmetric whole. While several destroyed structures are thinly visible on the horizon, the vast portion of the photograph is occupied by this rapidly conceived relief settlement. Its location in the midst of an inhospitable environment again reminds viewers of the initial pioneer settlements at the Bay which would similarly resist hardships. Just as the viewer tries to imagine what the living conditions beneath the rooftops and in the small alleys may look like, he or she is invited to turn the gaze toward the juxtaposing page on which a dozen tanks of sterilized water in Camp Lobos are displayed (**fig. 8.24**). This detailed view constitutes an instructive addition to the preceding panoramic view, as the tanks of sterilized water complement the impression of order and efficiency gained from above. It demonstrates that effective management is continued at street level by providing cleanly facilities.

Through its visual emphasis on regulation and command, Weidner’s relief camp documentation resembles other professionally conceived albums for government officials. As Verna Curtis has argued with regard to an album compiled for the governor general of the Philippines

⁷³ Ibid., 100.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 86.

managing the Bureau of Prisons in the early 1900s, the book format materially underlines institutional power. The systematic conception of the pages, shifting back and forth between small details and broad overviews, allows to shape a “vast and orderly environment with precision and directness.” The specific sequencing of the captioned images brings to the fore the sought-after depiction of effective management, and in this, turns the depicted site into a “model institution.”⁷⁵ As the camps were not supposed to resemble prisons but rather to become the city’s new household, the album carefully infused images of interior and exterior facilities with patriotic messages and a comfortable atmosphere. Through these sequential choices, the vision of uniformity and hygienic standard could support the promoted idea of equal treatment.

Such an assemblage of “didactic photographs,” in the words of Curtis,⁷⁶ was indeed necessary given the actual conditions of camp life. The arbitrary control exerted by camp officials – granting them the right to personally decide who was worthy of “additional aid” and allowing them to “supervis[e] all aspects of daily life” – did resemble a malfunctioning prison system. As sociologists who investigated refugee camps at the time observed, the daily exposure to dust, wind, cold, and insects, coupled with a “loss of privacy,” led to “the total uprooting of all ordinary habits of life.” To these physical and psychological hardships were added the “unappetizing and unsanitary” conditions of the camp facilities, leading to 151 cases of typhoid fever by the early summer.⁷⁷ As if attempting to visually counter this negative evaluation of local investigators, the last third of the album was conceived as an instructive sequence on the Ingleside Model Camp. While Weidner covered a total of 14 camps, this location was treated most extensively in seven interior and exterior views.

Located on the outskirts of the city in former horse stables on a racing track, Ingleside was conceived for the elderly and the invalid. Its “prisonlike atmosphere” was augmented by its location and organization, which attributed circumscribed spaces to inhabitants and controlled their movement about the facilities. The bird’s eye view with which the camp is introduced in the album visually attests to this “regimented” space (**fig. 8.25**).⁷⁸ From an elevated viewpoint, it resembled a military encampment with clearly delineated borders of the race track. By encouraging wage work like farming and sewing, the camp became famous for its “labor program and low cost per inmate,” and as such represented “a model of efficiency” in official reports. While these activities de facto put needy persons in a strong dependency, the camp society was evaluated positively for its efficiency and economic contribution. Within this framework, the camp commander was to oversee the daily activities by providing “good feeling, health, and discipline.”⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Curtis, *Photographic Memory*, 75.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Davies, *Saving San Francisco*, 87-91.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 101-102.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

In the album, it is exactly this cheerful and well-ordered impression which is sought out by the photographer. Accordingly, the Ingleside sequence heavily focuses on a human presence that is conspicuously absent in the preceding camp views. Always depicted in groups, the elderly are shown as quietly enjoying communal spaces, for example a group of well-dressed men in the reading room (**fig. 8.26**). Sitting on benches around a fully set table, the men patiently gaze toward the camera. The structure of the horse stable frames the communal space. Yet, instead of encroaching upon the inhabitants, the facility appears spacious and luminous. Each wooden beam to the left and right of the picture is decorated with a tiny American flag. Near of the back of the stable, they merge with a festooned ceiling and a large flag painted on the wall. This clearly staged, ceremonial portrayal of camp life communicated a sense of belonging and of harmony.

The impression of a comfortable setting was enriched by the photograph of a bedroom (**fig. 8.27**). As the most detailed interior view of the album, the image conveys a sense of intimacy and warmth. Framed by two beds and a rocking chair, the small space is rendered welcoming through its personalized decoration. Occupying the entire upper half of the photograph, the wall is decorated with some thirty illustrations, portraits, and clippings. They merge with a shelf and bedside table on which other personal items like books, flowers, and boxes are arranged. As if echoing the visual strategy of the album, the self-curated bric-a-brac on the wall mirrors a form of constructed memory. In the framework of the refugee camp, the keeping of souvenirs implied a regained control of memory by collecting and exposing. The collage of beloved, curious, and religious imagery pointed to the possibility of individual creation, even in a space ruled by conformity. In this, it represented the first step toward reconstruction of domesticity. As if the camera were to comment on its history-making functions, the photograph points to the importance of assembling images in the creation of personal memory. While it is unlikely that the facilities were as personally equipped for all inhabitants, this specific representation of the bedroom exemplifies the belief in images as cherished objects for personal commemoration. As with other relief depictions, the focus on an individual attempt to “regain a sense of normalcy” in the imposed post-disaster living space is made “particularly touching” by singling out a very personal experience of coping with losses and re-appropriating space.⁸⁰

So as to create a linear advancement from camp construction to home creation, the album finishes with an exterior view of Camp Ingleside entitled *Home of the Aged* (**fig. 8.28**). Following the images of communal and private space, this view of the outside shows several facilities veiled by a field and a row of trees. Moving from the description of a “camp” to a “home,” the album visually achieved the task of creating a household for the urban population. Despite its being a shared space, it was portrayed as a welcoming testing ground for homebuilders. As Dyl has recently argued,

⁸⁰ See Weisenfeld, *Imaging Disaster*, 191.

photographs with “bucolic pastoral scene[s]” as Weidner’s were also used to encourage homebuilding outside of the city. Countering anxieties related to unsanitary living conditions or ethnic diversity in urban areas, the portrayal of harmonious country life – first as refuge from disaster, then as new home – was considered particularly appealing.⁸¹ Through such a sequenced, narrative-like depiction of life in refugee camps, the album created an intelligible history of the various possibilities of relief assistance in San Francisco, and similarly sketched out possible futures. Rationally organized cottages and individually designed living spaces merged into a diverse picture which could appeal to city officials and individuals or families. Here, the ordered and sanitized housing standard was solidified by the harmonious representation of individual experience. Through this mixed portrayal of institutional structure and personal realization, the community space was reconstructed. The particular emphasis on Ingleside – conceived as a model camp with shared spaces, purposeful activities, and patriotic design – served as the most important input for achieving a personal connection to the population. The personalized depiction of a fragile part of the community, the elderly and the invalid, alongside the special attention paid to their needs, furnished a valuable addition to the promotion of a seemingly equal relief supply.

This elaboration of a consensual and easily legible portrayal of post-disaster life in San Francisco represents an important part of Weidner’s corpus. As a prominent photographer of disaster scenes – marketed as postcards and in spectacular fold-out leaflets depicting the city before and after destruction (**fig. 8.29**, **fig. 8.30**) – he was sensitive to the needs of both a sensationalist and an investor clientele. The year following his expansive refugee camp documentation, Weidner turned to these latter customers by producing celebratory reconstruction panoramas. A large-scale panoramic view of the city (28 x 64 cm) taken one year later would be captioned “The beginning of new and greater San Francisco showing a large amount of reconstruction in the heart of the city. Millions of dollars spent to make San Francisco one of the finest cities in the world” (**fig. 8.31**). In both wording and visual vocabulary, the panorama corresponded to the strategies used by the California Promotion Committee to attract investors. The emphasis on expansive scaffolding and varied construction material reflected the aesthetics of R.J. Waters’s competition picture. In addition, the use of explanatory dashes – as in album no. 25 – allowed to mark out specific locations downtown. When combined, the two strategies would form a prosperous, forward-looking, and identifiable portrayal of the city space. Through what Weisenfeld has termed the “crystallizing tropes” of jubilatory imagery and vocabulary, an authoritative narrative was hence shaped and solidified. Subsequently, “competing portrayals” of suffering minorities and daily living conditions were “eclipsed.” The control exerted by the camera was not only tangible in the specific technologies of panoramic or aerial

⁸¹ Dyl, *Seismic City*, 117-125.

photography, but also in the material supports chosen for the elaboration of visual histories and their preservation. The apparatus, its output, and its selected formats hence “imposed order.”⁸²

When looking at the urban portrayal in the process of reconstruction leading up to the 1910s, the album again constituted an ample canvas to trace development. Edward N. Sewell, member since the early 1900s and corresponding Club secretary in 1906 and 1907, compiled four albums between 1906 and 1909, which documented the rebuilding of the city right after the disaster and then systematically on every April 18 until 1909. While the Bancroft Library holds all four albums, the California State Library has a similar copy of the 1908 album. These institutions are the only ones to gather material by Sewell, whose output – apart from his sparse involvement with the Club and his photographic display at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition – is otherwise unknown. Due to this lack of additional biographical material, the focus will be set on the content of the 1909 album – the only one in the Bancroft collection to come from the Phelan Estate. As the final product of his long-term documentation, *The New San Francisco* is the most elaborately compiled with detailed captions and large prints (23 x 33 cm). Its chosen title echoes the name of a speech given by Phelan in 1896, in the wake of the Midwinter Fair, when he declared the “imperial destiny” of the city.⁸³ Truthful to this notion, the album opens to a bookplate showing a phoenix rising from a fire next to the seal “San Francisco / Ex Libris / James D. Phelan.”

The entire series focuses on the financial district, notably the business buildings located along Market Street. The combined display of patriotism and fierce civic pride during the aftermath becomes tangible throughout the series, for example in the 1908 album, in a view up California Street with an American flag waving atop an empty iron structure next to a lone street car (**fig. 8.32**). While such depictions appear limited in scale and disclose a glaring need for rebuilding in some sections, the 1909 album portrays reconstruction as completed. The image sequence attests to this idea by showing practically no construction sites. Instead, the financial district is represented in full swing, with busy sidewalks, streetcars and carriages (**fig. 8.33**). The emblematic business features of Market Street before the disaster, including the buildings of Phelan, Crocker, the *Chronicle* and the first National Bank were all back in place. Notably the Phelan Building appeared in its most favorable light. Seen from a slightly elevated perspective, it elegantly towered above an intersection, illuminated by the midday sun (**fig. 8.34**). The numerous stores occupying its ground floor point to a dynamic local market. By the time that Sewell assembled the album, the city was indeed in the process of regaining its position as “the economic center of the American West.” Supported by Eastern

⁸² See Weisenfeld, *Imaging Disaster*, 6.

⁸³ Moore, *Empire on Display*, 76-77, referencing the speech “The New San Francisco” given by Phelan at the Mechanics’ Institute on September 1, 1896.

investment and revised building permits, the financial district underwent rapid transformation. By the close of the decade, the pre-disaster population of some 410,000 was thus solidly back installed.⁸⁴

The photographs taken at street level show not only a bustling urban activity, but also reveal the sophisticated results of rebuilding in detail. A photograph taken from a window down Montgomery Street allowed viewers to make out the bricks and ornate details of five different façades (**fig. 8.35**). The play of light and shadow, from Montgomery leading up to the intersection, underlines the use of various materials and designs on the exterior walls. With the memory of frightful destruction scenarios still vivid, the focus on skillful, aesthetically appealing reconstruction conveyed comfort and safety. As citizens went about their daily activities, the city could once again appear in its desired business light. The space was further depicted as enjoyable in photographs taken at street level (**fig. 8.36**). A clothing store next to a busy sidewalk, populated by well-dressed men and women, could be read as an invitation to stroll the streets and engage in window shopping. The elegance of the attire showcased at the store matched the overall charm of the street scene and its ornate architecture. Architecturally, the city was to reemerge in a “consensus of classical order and rationality,” without official oversight, yet with the shared ambition to promote it once again as the Paris of the West.⁸⁵

To Phelan, the representation of a prosperous, completely rebuilt city materially supported his ambition of an ideal space. When shown around, the delicate tonal range of the prints catered to the elegant architecture of the financial district, in which the ex-mayor’s own building stood out prominently. The album integrated a view taken from its rooftop, perhaps so as to provide a glimpse of the oversight Phelan would have on the city from his property (**fig. 8.37**). It granted a position of mastery to the viewer, immersing in potential new investments and examining dimly visible construction sites in the far distance. As Phelan had predicted that the city could be just as quickly rebuilt since none of the old buildings had been of particular value, the “new” San Francisco became an affirmed fact through the album. Its format and realization corresponded perfectly to the envisioned scenarios of prosperity and beauty for a modern, twentieth-century metropolis. From its carefully assembled composition, it can be assumed that the album was not conceived as a commodity, but rather as an artful object, which in its aesthetics corresponded to the ideal of beauty that the city officials wanted to transmit. As a non-professional, Sewell’s photographic production was all the more appreciated as it was not intended for profit-making. Instead, the photographer, who was not a very public figure, would be characterized by *Camera Craft* as “one of our leading photographic artists” by the mid 1910s.⁸⁶ Since it is not certain how and where the album circulated,

⁸⁴ Davies, *Saving San Francisco*, 112-117.

⁸⁵ Gray A. Brechin, “San Francisco: The City Beautiful,” in *Visionary San Francisco*, 52-53.

⁸⁶ “The Sewell Exhibition,” *Camera Craft* 23, no. 5 (1916): 211.

it can be seen as a collector's object of Phelan's personal library, destined to be shown around as a unique artistic depiction of the new city.

It is exactly this combination of wealth, allure, and artistic dedication, that was embodied by the album and turned it into a powerful material support of Phelan's narrative. Weidner and Sewell, who skillfully exerted their craft, added the necessary coherence and artistry to the project. By tracing a select sequence of interior and exterior, bird's eye and street-level views, the albums conveyed an impression of universality, to which was added the authenticity of a masterful print. Interestingly, from the Club's perspective, Sewell's above-mentioned view taken from the Phelan Building integrates the by-then operational Club headquarters. Their location on the upper floor of the Commercial Building, diagonally across Market Street, points to the popular and commercial atmosphere of the financial district in which the California Camera Club would be re-embedded. Through this lens, indeed, the newly thriving businesses surrounding the headquarters gave members reason to celebrate the reconstruction of what their select social circle considered a "grandier" San Francisco.

*

From this discussion of the various formats, expressions, and itineraries of photograph albums, we come to envision this object as a complex instrument of the narration of visual disaster. Whether in the private or the public realm, its most important feature can be found in the material *trace* it forges. The creation of a self-curated visual history of the event, to be enriched and shared through discussion and preservation, provided a regained sense of control in the face of experienced loss. The material dimension of the album, its thick leather binding and its solid blank pages, were crucial to remedy the traumatic experience, as it physically embodied the start of something new. The purity of its format represented unlimited possibilities for storytelling and self-depiction, shaping thus a hybrid account of images, words, and other objects. Through the position of narrator and author, the compiler of the album re-inscribed him- or herself in space and time. This form of self-inscription was particularly powerful as the album could be deliberately integrated into community history, for example through preservation at local collecting institutions.

Due to the historical and sociocultural information derived from this source, its content cannot be reduced to a formalist evaluation. Instead, it must be seen as a conversational, circulating, and thus densely embedded object, whose full meaning and function cannot be grasped in retrospect. In the light of this imposed rupture, we are invited to reconstruct its production context and to imagine the diverse uses of its contents. Therefore, when approaching the albums made by middle-class San Franciscans and by Club members, the panoply of uses and ideas attached to the object cannot be fully recovered. Instead, it is useful to examine the sources through the prism of a desired form of visual self-representation, which had been a common form of narration in the city from the mid

nineteenth century. The earthquake and fire constituted a particularly valuable occasion for the production of such narratives, as has been demonstrated in the previous chapter. As the supply market for photographic equipment quickly expanded, citizens were encouraged to create their own memory.

As to the question of whether the narrative of the personal photo album diverged from the popularly distributed disaster stories, the answer cannot be as clear-cut. On the one hand, the individual album allowed for a more intimate, less excessively optimistic representation of the event. Through the compilation of personally taken photographs of cherished places and sensationalist imagery of the damaged city, a therapeutic process of coming to terms with the losses was initiated. In this case, self-identification was augmented, as the compiler was free to decide how to assemble the story – including personal anecdotes and political commentary at his or her own disposition. Yet, as in the case of Van Wyck, and to a lesser degree of the CHS albums, the transition from the private to public realm – from a personal vision to a historically representational function – has repercussions on the album's conception over time. Here, self-representation in the form of communal belonging and patriotic resilience come to mirror the dominant vocabulary of the period. Due to the aforementioned shortcomings in reconstructing the original context of conception and use, it is challenging to provide a definitive answer as to how strong the impact of popular discourses on personal memory-making could have been.

Yet, with regard to the members of the California Camera Club, we can certainly detect an extension of the prevalent portrayal of the disaster and its aftermath. Capitalizing on the reassuring material format of the album, the photographers compiled appealing sources for promoters. The memory of erasure through disaster was annihilated in the physicality of the album, which through its weight and ordered conception pointed to re-creation. Here, the expectations toward the medium came full circle, as visual content and material support worked in tandem to sustain the promoted history. The expertise and the aesthetics of Californian practitioners – cultivated for more than a decade within Club circles – provided adequate tools in the shaping of a “grander” San Francisco. In this form of instrumentality, the albums reflect not only the adopted stance of their makers. More importantly, they reveal the persisting embeddedness of the Club at the heart of a wealthy urban elite with a universalizing vision of the community.

Through these myriad personal and public uses, and their archival itineraries over time, the photograph album constitutes a crucial medium to be considered when approaching the visual outpour of the San Francisco earthquake and fire. As an object to be leafed through, to be narrated, and to be preserved, it embodies the diverse attempts of grasping the meaning and consequences of a disruptive event. In this, it enriches our understanding of the camera's uses in a specific historical context of the early twentieth century and illuminates the potential of a particular material support on which identities and histories were negotiated and perpetuated.

Conclusion

If the urban history of San Francisco can be characterized in recurrent apparitions of “instant cities” – in the decade after the Gold Rush, after the disaster, and after the adoption of high-rise architecture in the 1960s – the moment of 1906 stands out as a particularly fruitful occasion to re-envision the city.¹ The notion of an instant city implied a “[coming] into existence Athena-like, full-blown and self-reliant.” Sparked by communal imagination and economic desire, the idea of San Francisco as a pioneer settlement could be employed as a versatile concept to imagine the past, present, and future of the city in the wake of catastrophe.² As reflected in the substantial corpus of photographic and textual material discussed in this part, the disaster represented a fertile terrain to reassert the vision of a grand metropolis, that had been promoted as the city’s destiny since the mid nineteenth century. The practice of the California Camera Club, entwined in the highly visual undertaking of disaster documentation and urban reconstruction, would be taken up anew along these glorifying lines. While the Club’s productions integrated notions of patriotism and sought to insert the narrative of reconstruction into the broader framework of the American nation in the early twentieth-century, they remained at the same time faithful to the cultivation of an idiosyncratic, Californian experience. As the exceptionalist stance of the narrative echoed the common tale of the nation, it was re-appropriated by locals through the emphasis on a “uniquely San Franciscan” scenario. Here, the reliance on pioneer virtues and on a cyclic history of catastrophe and reconstruction helped articulate a particularly local history of resilience.³ In their endorsement of a universalized communal experience, the Club works helped consolidate this myth. Rather than reshuffling the cards of community life and bringing to the forth diverging visions, the disaster led Club members to adapt their practice once again to firmly established paradigms of ‘Californian-ness’ and its related sponsoring institutions.

The adaptability of the CCC’s works reflects the malleable character of the myth itself. The diverse strategies of ruin depiction point to this malleability as the urban damage represented a conflict between investors and promoters of the City Beautiful. Yet, both opponents and supporters of ruin imagery rediscovered in the dense fabric of Californian mythology useful elements to nourish their vision. In both contexts, the notion of California as an American Mediterranean functioned smoothly. It had been used from early on to create “fictions of space” that found a fertile breeding ground in the encounter with the changing landscape, and much more so after the destruction of it.⁴

¹ See Godfrey, “Urban Development and Redevelopment in San Francisco,” 309-333.

² Barth, *Instant Cities*, xxv-xxix.

³ Leikam, *Framing Spaces in Motion*, 263-265.

⁴ Starr, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915*, 365-414; Wyatt, *The Fall into Eden: Landscape and Imagination in California*, 206-210.

While adversaries of urban ruins downplayed the damage, and focused on the region's favorable climate to both health seekers and investors, proponents of a ruin iconography embraced its full potential so as to draw anew historical and aesthetic parallels with great Western civilizations. The two strategies had found their onset in the mid-nineteenth century history-making and promotion of California. The Club catered to both ideas in diverse material forms, and thereby showcased the versatility of its practice and membership. Consequently, members would fill the void by creating coherent visions of the past, present, and future, that appealed to their own agenda and to the diverse interests involved in their network. The visual interpretations provided for further understanding of the event were facilitated and solidified by a strong material culture of photography. Both the Club and its network grasped the importance of this materiality when confronting such significant loss and seeking to alleviate it.

The myriad material supports on which the experience of disaster was negotiated – magazines, postcards, prints in panoramic or hand-format, and albums – furnished tools to cope with and narrate the event. The writing about and visual representation of the disaster constituted a therapeutic activity, which not only helped remedy a traumatic past, but also served to physically re-create. If the familiar city had been erased and one's own possessions wiped out, the practice of photography allowed to reshape this experience by creating something new on a blank sheet. Just like the annihilated city space was subject to diverse imagined scenarios, the material supports for photographic representation were mobilized for diverging interpretations. Again, here, the urban tabula rasa was as flexible as the photographic narrative for which it was mobilized. Therefore, the different material forms of disaster history through photography, in the broadest sense, constitute a challenge to historical research on the event.

Be it in Stellmann's Premoette account, Keeler's popular history illustrated by Maurer and Lange, or Sewell's reconstruction album, the material culture of the San Francisco earthquake and fire was largely an expression of the dominant societal groups. In their highly visual character, their solid material support, and their archival and digital preservation, they have indeed come to shape what Birt described a difficult-to-challenge "accepted history."⁵ While not all depictions were idealized and promotional in the first place, it was their specific material context, their targeted dissemination, and their subsequent preservation which has consolidated the dominant narrative scheme of April 1906 and its aftermath. Therefore, when approaching this material in digital format, we need to address the question of their original function and shifting uses over time. Otherwise, in the blending of textual and visual material, the "instrumentality" of such sources and their rich historical tissue runs the risk of being reduced to "indexicality," that is, its represented content.⁶

⁵ Birt, *History's Anteroom*, 18.

⁶ Schwartz, "Coming to Terms with Photographs," 155.

Especially since the centennial of 2006, the launching of the digital Earthquake and Fire Collection by notable California institutions, and the release of rare private photographs on the occasion of each anniversary, these questions have become more pressing. The digital format of photographic documentation appears easily accessible and seemingly comprehensive, and the opportunity to share intimate moments of disaster history with digital communities has great advantages for local historical research and communal instruction. However, at the same time, an awareness of the photographic object's complexity and its itinerary over time needs to be cultivated, if a more complex visual history of the disaster is to emerge. Generated by the mass of cameras in 1906, used in personal albums or letters, photographs can be found on local flea markets and end up as digitized items on online newspaper websites. The variety of photographs published and shared on each anniversary demonstrates the extent to which the disaster is cherished as part of a vivid local memory. The "ritual marking" of the event on each April 18 with sirens at 5.12 a.m., followed by songs and speeches, is conceived as an homage to the resilience of the community – and to alert locals of the persisting risk of seismic shocks. While the constant addition of material to the bulk of the disaster corpus is extremely valuable, it also requires an in-depth examination in relation to the more complex aftermath and its main actors.⁷ An analysis of the existing sources through the prism of instrumentality can shed new light on their makers. In other words, through the emphasis on the agency and the various uses of disaster-related photographic material, forgotten photographers are brought to the fore, next to the organizational structures that they assisted. This approach to photographs as circulating objects and tools can lead to a more informed understanding of the power relations at stake within photography, history-writing, and preservation in the immediate and the long-term aftermath.

Historians who have examined different aspects of the disaster over the past two decades, including Fradkin, Davies, and Leikam, unanimously agree on the prevalence of authoritative accounts and the difficulty to locate alternative sources. As an accessible and appealing instrument, the use of the camera and its material output have contributed to the perpetuation of these select accounts, in which a specific portrayal of the population is provided. Through the longstanding promotional ties of the Club and its self-representation as a uniquely Californian organization, the narrative of a resilient community could be enriched with an aesthetically appealing and historically meaningful dimension. These practices and engagements have led to the preservation of a visual

⁷ On the occasion of the 112th anniversary in April 2018, more than one hundred photographs were published online, see Bob Bragman, "The resurrection after 1906: Rare, private photos of SF clawing back after the earthquake," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 18, 2018, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/1906-sf-earthquake-fire-anniversary-photos-12842529.php#photo-12666358>. On the annual ritual, see Sophie Haigney, "Tradition reigns at ritual marking 112th anniversary of San Francisco's '06 quake," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 18, 2018, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/SF-s-112-year-Great-Quake-anniversary-event-12844425.php#photo-7157891>.

history which does not grant much room to discordant voices or dissonant portrayals. We can see the impact and reach of such an optimistic community and city representation not only in the preservation of the Weidner and Sewell albums in the Phelan estate at the Bancroft Library. Other micro-moments of perpetuation can be found when broadening the scope to historical photograph collections. As an example, the Roy D. Graves collection (discussed in Chapter 4), is commonly considered one of the richest inventories of historical urban documentation and spans more than a century. The sheer quantity of this 23,000-item collection qualifies it as a tool of collective memory, in which the development of urban life can be meticulously traced. It includes the series of Turrill & Miller's views produced for the California Promotion Committee, and thus showcases and preserves a considerable portion of the desired reconstruction imagery.⁸

In adopting this critical itinerant and materially informed stance, that considers the biographies of both the photographic objects and their makers, we come to understand that the Club network of the early twentieth century indeed reflects the notion of "historical imagination" developed by Elizabeth Edwards. In their aesthetically and historically sensible productions, the members of the Club did "carry the weight of history."⁹ They actively contributed to and shaped the imagined history of San Francisco and of the broader region in the wake of a profoundly disruptive event. Through a strategic performance – that implied practice *and* production – they provided a remedy for their own material caesura and the void created in the urban space. As the Club had consciously defined its practice and its output along the lines of a Californian myth, the uses of the camera were made subject, once again, to this performative visual vocabulary after April 18, 1906. Eventually, in a place that functioned through such ideologically charged forms of memorization, the photographic output of the disaster – be it Club-related or not – requires an analysis through the lens of an imagined communal history.

With an outlook on the following decade, the question of long-term Club development needs to be addressed. After the experienced material rupture and rapid economic reconstruction, the CCC's cultural role in the city and the state over the course of the early twentieth century requires critical examination. If the initial up-surge of photography in the wake of the disaster allowed the membership to enthusiastically take up their practice and reassert their role as Californian practitioners, we need to ask how this stance would fare over the following decade in which the prospect of a world's fair and the threat of a world war appeared on the horizon. In a period defined by swift technological development and changing artistic styles, the turn-of-the-century ambitions of the California Camera Club would have to rapidly adapt. Its demands for cultural legitimization of

⁸ See the Roy D. Graves Pictorial Collection (Series 1: San Francisco views; subseries 2: San Francisco Earthquake and Fire), the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

⁹ Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, xii.

both the medium and the state, formulated in a remote frontier rhetoric, would appear increasingly outdated. Regarding the strong visibility of the Club at local level and its conspicuous absence from national photography circles, it needs to be asked how this form of regional representation could be sustained in a meaningful way in the run-up to the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915 *and* in its aftermath. With regard to the material and the developments discussed in this part, one question for the fourth and last part will be whether the caesura of the disaster and the resulting dispersion of the Club's corpus has eventually reinforced the formulation of a history of photography that tends to relegate its collective practitioners to the fringes.

Part IV: Demise (1909-1939)

The California Camera Club is the most unique institution of its kind in the United States, and also has the largest membership. It not only provides a rendezvous where advanced photographers may meet, compare notes and do their own photographic work, but it also forms a complete school of instruction for beginners and amateur kodakers. In addition to being the official headquarters of the craft generally, the California Camera Club is undoubtedly one of the greatest publicity mediums of the State through the wide distribution given its pictorial productions; therefore, it is an institution whose growth should be fostered and work encouraged, by every citizen who has the interest of the State at heart.

Prospectus of the California Camera Club, dated ca. 1915 (Ephemera file, California State Library).

A fine collection of spontaneous snapshots (of individuals and groups) as well as many studies of outdoor scenes in California. [...] Nice record of leisure time spent outdoors in California — and doubly so, being the photographic record of an amateur photographer.

Description of photograph album documenting California Camera Club Outings, 1917-1924, provided by seller Schoyer's Books (2000), preserved at the Huntington Library, San Marino.

In rapt attendance was the young San Franciscan Ansel Adams, whose thirteenth birthday coincided with the opening of the fair. His father, recognizing the Exposition's educational potential, gave him a season's pass in lieu of school for the year. In an oral history from the 1970s, the legendary landscape photographer and environmentalist was asked about his experience of the PPIE [Panama-Pacific International Exposition], and several observations stand out, including his interest in the abstract art shown in the Annex, which he preferred to the "God-awful, bad, romantic and arid sculpture" on the grounds. But at least in hindsight, he claims to have taken issue with the photographic offerings. In reference to the pictorial gallery, which he misremembered as containing works by members of the California Camera Club exclusively, he recalled "the Camera Club show was so dreadful I looked at part of it and just left."

James A. Ganz, "Exposing Photography at the Fair," in *Jewel City: Art from San Francisco's Panama-Pacific International Exposition*, ed. James A. Ganz (San Francisco and Berkeley: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and University of California Press, 2015), 247-248.

In the mid-1920s, a lanky young pianist-turning-photographer named Ansel Adams met Dasonville at a Camera Club meeting. "Dasonville, he learned, was a neighbor," Nancy Newhall writes. "Dropping in to see him now and then, Ansel absorbed the idea that photography could be an art." Adams remembered the older photographer from these years as "very kind to me" and generous with technical information unlike other photographers who "just hated to give away secrets."

Peter E. Palmquist, "William E. Dasonville: An Appreciation," in *William E. Dasonville: California Photographer, 1879-1957*, eds. Paul Hertzmann and Susan Herzig (Nevada City: Carl Mautz Pub., 1999), 25-26.

Introduction

By the time that the Panama-Pacific International Exposition opened in San Francisco in February 1915, the earthquake and fire were located in the remote past and the region started to look out on a twentieth-century dominated by American leadership – whilst the European continent was in a state of war. The fairgrounds would embody the “coming-of-age” of a long underestimated city and would thus allow its citizens to leave the “turn-of-the-century era” behind. This “self-assertion” was demonstrated particularly by the display of architecture and of fine arts in which Californian works figured prominently.¹ Next to this showcasing of Western cultural refinedness, which had been sought after for decades, art from the newly emerging European Modernist movements was first introduced to the general American public on the fairgrounds.² Representing a transitional moment in many ways, the Exposition, its preparation and aftermath, *and* the parallel developments in American photography of the time, can be taken as a backdrop to discuss the sociocultural changes at the heart of the California Camera Club, which would lead to the eventual demise of its original setup. Situated between, on the one hand, an ideologically charged celebration of Western expansion, and, on the other, a gradual transformation in the conception of photography, the years around 1915 would see the final expression of “turn-of-the-century” strivings for local promotion. These came to overlap with new concepts for photographic practice and organization, eventually leaving the Panama-Pacific International Exposition (PPIE) as the last moment of a California Camera Club representation in its original form and ambition.

Rather than defining this period as the extinction of Pictorialism and the foundation ex-nihilo of a notorious movement of Californian adherents to “straight photography,” the years around 1915 must be described as a transitional moment in which a number of factors – among which a new generation of members reshaping the organization – led to the modification and the dispersal of the CCC to spheres other than “Pictorialist” or “straight.” The following examination of the corpus and activities of the Club in the run-up and the aftermath of the fair seeks to reconstruct its situation upon entering its third decade of existence. A two-fold material and sociocultural evaluation will help to trace the Club’s persistent bond to a promotional leisure agenda and its changing structure in the face of newly appearing figures, organizations, and trends. It is from this embedded network-perspective that the display in the PPIE’s “pictorial section” of the Department of Liberal Arts needs to be understood. While they are often considered the pioneers of a new photographic style, deliberately at

¹ Starr, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915*, 298-305.

² The recent centennial of the PPIE sparked a significant output of literature: for a general history, see Laura A. Ackley, *San Francisco’s Jewel City: The Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915* (Berkeley and San Francisco: Heyday and California Historical Society, 2015). For a detailed overview of art at the fair, see James A. Ganz, ed., *Jewel City: Art from San Francisco’s Panama-Pacific International Exposition* (San Francisco and Berkeley: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and University of California Press, 2015). Critical scholarship on representations of art, gender, and race by Sarah J. Moore and Abigail Markwyn will be cited specifically throughout the text.

odds with earlier aesthetic ideals, the photographers of the mid-1910s will be approached from the perspective of a three-decade-long network production. In doing so, we discover well-known actors in the “Pictorial section,” consisting of a committee on selection that united an exemplary board of professional photographers, Club members, and *Camera Craft* contributors – Howard Tibbitts, Fayette Clute, and William E. Dassonville. Alongside Anne Brigman and Edward N. Sewell, they would manage the submissions and display of works by a blend of well-established and fairly new practitioners. Among these figured CCC members as well as two young photographers – Imogen Cunningham and Edward Weston.³ These latter names, emerging two decades later as canonic figures of Modernist photography, cannot be considered lone practitioners. Instead, Cunningham and Weston – alongside the thirteen-year old fairgoer Ansel Adams – have to be inserted in the photographic exchange of San Francisco in which the Club, its publication platform, and its professional anchorage provided stepping stones for later careers. In this, the PPIE can be conceived as a first moment of encounter between these new figures and the dense fabric of local photography established many decades earlier. As has been done with the emblematic names of photography in the nineteenth-century West, this fourth part is going to revise the monographic, canonical conception of photographic practice by inserting commonly lauded individuals into a dynamic exchange perspective, thereby eventually coming to fill the gap in the narrative from “Watkins to Weston.”⁴

In the linear conception from Pictorialist to straight photography, the 1910 International Exhibition of Pictorial Photography at the Albright Gallery in Buffalo is oftentimes labeled a watershed. However, what is described as “Stieglitz’ last major blow on behalf of photography”⁵ constitutes just as much a transitional moment, which implied the end of the Photo-Secession as “an institution” and subsequently opened up the field to a “pluralism of Pictorialism,” continuing until the 1950s.⁶ As has been amply demonstrated, California’s photographers remained for the most part detached from the East Coast movements of the time. For this reason, they were not represented as such in the Buffalo show. Apart from expected contributions by Brigman and Genthe, it seems that the Western network of photographers remained somewhat unaffected by this moment of alleged rupture.⁷ However, the idea of a pluralistic scene emerging by the 1910s can certainly be seen as a

³ *Final Report of Theodore Hardee, Chief of the Department of Liberal Arts to the Director of Exhibits* (San Francisco: Panama-Pacific International Exposition, 1915), 264-267; “The Awards in the Pictorial Section, P.-P.I.E.,” *Camera Craft* 22, no. 10 (1915): 411-412.

⁴ See Fels, ed., *Watkins to Weston: 101 Years of California Photography, 1849-1950*.

⁵ Bochner, *An American Lens*, 25.

⁶ Peterson, *After the Photo-Secession: American Pictorial Photography, 1910-1955*, 17-18. McCarroll likewise acknowledges the longevity of Pictorialism in the Californian context, see “For the Encouragement of Better Photography,” 24-37. For a study on Pictorialism up to the 1960s, see Griffin, “Amateur Photography and Pictorial Aesthetics.”

⁷ See *Catalog of the International Exhibition of Pictorial Photography. Albright Art Gallery, November 3 to December 1, 1910* (Buffalo: The Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, 1910). Genthe and Armer showed in the open section, while Brigman was included alongside other Photo-Secession members in the invitational section. Apart from a brief announcement in

useful category to apply to the local photographic circles, in which diverse forms of practice and ideas about photography had merged since the late nineteenth century. Instead of looking at the CCC's development of this period through the lens of a well-known East Coast chronology, the idea for this part is to examine the changing nature of photographic practice within the context of a world's fair in the city. Here, the particular function of local photographic production is again disclosed, notably its strong liaison to outdoor practice, state promotion, and the striving for institutional recognition.

When looking at the increased dispersion of the CCC's activities over the decade of the 1910s and the appearance of new practitioners on the horizon, the PPIE represents an important pivot. In its run-up, the Club experienced a considerable shift in membership with some of the last appearances of longstanding members like Oscar Lange or Howard Tibbitts, Oscar Maurer who had settled in Berkeley, and Archibald Treat who would vanish from the photographic scene. The figure around whom the Club then gathered was Edward H. Kemp. As new president by the summer of 1911, he was the only active Club photographer with ties to the turn-of-the-century era. Yet, having set up an expansive business of stereopticon supply and travel photography, Kemp and his wife Josephine cultivated a novel outlook on Club practice by introducing moving pictures and by reinforcing the already existing entertainment agenda. By the mid 1910s, the Club boasted of expansive amusement features, including regular dances, Halloween and Christmas festivities, and of course, excursions to the local surroundings. A decade later, *Camera Craft* described the Club membership as consisting of "some of the best known photographers in the country," next to

many who follow photography not as a profession but merely as an adjunct to some other hobby or sport, such as hiking, or who snapshot pictures for the pleasure which they get from seeing familiar faces and places permanently recorded.⁸

With the simultaneous emergence of other photo-clubs in the region that cultivated a distinctive definition of either style or ethnic origin (notably Japanese), it will be of interest to examine the changing role of a Club that had aspired to unite a great variety of practitioners under its "California" banner. Its function within an increasingly fragmented environment with myriad styles, uses, and goals, must then be subject to close examination.

In order to fully understand the development of a scattered activity and new membership, as well as the subsequent oblivion of the CCC in the light of a newly emerging Modernist style and practice, this fourth part will be divided in two parts. The first part consists of a chapter dealing with the activities of the Club in the context of the PPIE and its sustained implications in the promotional network during the run-up. In the first place, it seeks to provide an understanding of the identity-

the *Camera Craft* volume of 1910, no coverage or debate on the event among San Franciscan photographers could be found.

⁸ Karl A. Baumgaertel, "What the California Camera Club is and does," *Camera Craft* 32, no. 8 (1925): 410.

building and self-asserting function of a fair that celebrated the reconstruction of the city within less than a decade. The local pride taken in this event was closely interwoven in the achievement of a grand national engineering endeavor with the completion of the Panama Canal in 1914, that would henceforth ratify San Francisco's stronghold on Pacific trade. From this perspective of local identity-building through photography, this part will illuminate the role photographers were to play at the fair and in the city in the years following the event. Furthermore, the chapter will provide a detailed overview of the produced works and documented activities during the 1910s and 1920s, set against the background of a transition in photographic practice and an eventual demise of its original membership. Of particular importance will be the role of its self-ascribed 'Californian-ness' and how this rallying factor would be used before and after the fair to draw new members. In this regard, a comparison to other formations of photographers springing up in San Francisco and Los Angeles is necessary, so as to grasp the changing function of the CCC in the years following the fair. Reaching into the 1920s, this discussion of the Club photographers' corpus and activities seeks to furnish possible explanations of how a camera club with clearly demarcated goals came to disperse into a much broader social organization over the course of three decades, two world's fairs, and an earthquake.

In the epilogue, which will treat this development from a historiographical point of view, the overarching theme of a "master narrative" of Californian photography will then be revised. Addressing both the longevity of Pictorialism as a neglected phenomenon and the claims of Modernist self-invention as advanced by Adams (with rhetorical support from Alfred Stieglitz), this second and last section comes full circle on the historiographical stance of this thesis. By looking at processes of photographic collection-making in the Bay Area of the 1930s, it is going to reconstruct the selection at the heart of the medium's legitimation, which eventually led to the disappearance of more complex collective organizations like the CCC. In this, the aim will be to re-embed a far-reaching network of practitioners, activities, and themes in a chronology that demonstrates a gap – both profound and consistent – for the two decades of the turn of the century.

Chapter 9

The Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915 and the redefinition of the California Camera Club in a new decade

The February 1911 decision to grant federal support to San Francisco for hosting a world's fair to celebrate the completion of the Panama Canal four years later sparked enthusiasm among the city's business leaders, promoters, and large parts of the state's population. The following month's issue of *Camera Craft* opened with an appeal to local photographers entitled "Let us all help," which rhetorically asked:

[I]s it not the duty of our Western photographers, and particularly these photographers, the amateurs, who are supposed to be above the mercenary consideration, to employ their ability and their equipment in showing the rest of the world the beauties of the country we are asking them to visit in 1915?¹

The question was put forth by C. Willard Evans, an amateur photographer and member of the California Camera Club. He urged photographers to cooperate with both the Exposition and the "State Promotion Committee" (i.e. the California Promotion Committee) so as to circulate postcards and lantern slides advertising "the scenic wonders, the varied industries, and the agricultural possibilities of this favored section of the country."² This suggestion, which basically summarized the activities of the CCC's professional and amateur membership over the past two decades, was met with enthusiasm from the editors. While the proposal of an exclusive "amateur" production was used once again to point out a more honorable form of photographic practice, the goal of the desired corpus remained the same: it targeted a heightened visibility of the state and aimed for a cultural, historical, and socioeconomic legitimation of California as a result.

After a period of physical and mental reconstruction in the wake of the earthquake, the preparation of the PPIE presented an unprecedented opportunity to renew claims of regional identity. In order to understand how a collective photographic practice was reinfused with dynamism in the wake of the fair and how it became increasingly fragmented in its aftermath, it is important to grasp the material and ideological importance of the PPIE. If it can be seen as the last expression of Club rallying for the sake of local legitimation, we need to examine its cultural weight and its intended function in Californian history. At the close of a twenty-five year chronology of collective practice, it can be said that the fair would unite two imaginary spaces that had animated photographic production from the onset. The passage through the Isthmus of Panama and the ensuing facility to reach the Californian coast had triggered the imagination of American publics from the mid nineteenth century. Here, dreams of travel and expansionism merged with the access to a promised

¹ "Let us all help," *Camera Craft* 18, no. 3 (1911): 143.

² *Ibid.*

territory on the Pacific coast. What Sarah J. Moore described as “a real and imagined territory” had been treated in a series of articles on the Gold Rush in *Camera Craft* in the early 1900s, when the Club embarked on local history-making, as illustrated in Chapter 4. By the time of canal construction, from 1904 onward, “two charged spaces,” that is, “the western frontier and the Central American isthmus” came to link “continental [...] [with] imperial expansion.”³ These two regions were combined in the visionary yet physically accessible space at the fair. Staging the nation’s rise to grandeur, the fairgrounds furnished tangible forms of success in the shape of monuments, spectacles, and myriad activities. As a purposefully fashioned space, the fair guided its visitors toward an appreciation of the nation in a location safely detached from the political disorder, technological speed, and cultural change that the decade of the 1910s represented. It allowed fairgoers to “ostensibly escape” an unstable global context and to immerse in select patriotic pleasures.⁴

An essential element of the PPIE that made it a meaningful event for the California Camera Club was its overlap of national achievement and local weight. Having sought out expressions of national relevance in the local landscape and history for a long time, the Club could approach the fair through its long-cultivated search for national recognition and local uniqueness. The process of instant history-making, so common to the history of the American West, was rapidly implemented on the national level by former President Theodore Roosevelt. As president of the American Historical Association at the time of the fair, he desired to cement the historical legacy of his administration by linking it to the realization of the Canal.⁵ Seized after the French abandonment of the Canal Zone in 1889 due to critical climatic, sanitary, and engineering conditions, construction work by the American government between 1904 and 1914 would become an ostentatious display of both domestic and international power, and “marked the emergence of the U.S. as a world leader” in the midst of World War I.⁶ Furthermore, due to its chronological overlap with the outbreak of war in Europe, the fair must be seen in its relationship to “the rise of reactionary patriotism,” alongside a strongly bolstered campaign of tourism within the United States, in which the American West – and the PPIE as an invitational playground for envisioning an American empire – figured prominently.⁷ As numerous publications on this event have remarked, the PPIE mirrors the period of American imperial expansion in which a “colonial empire” was built, including annexations in the Pacific and the Caribbean. The imperial ideology of the years between 1898 and 1916 served as backdrop to various events – like the earthquake and the fair – and therefore, they necessitate closer scrutiny with

³ Moore, *Empire on Display*, 43-44.

⁴ Abigail Markwyn, *Empress San Francisco: The Pacific Rim, the Great West, and California at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 2-13; Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair*, 219.

⁵ Moore, *Empire on Display*, 52-53.

⁶ Julie Greene, *The Canal Builders: Making America’s Empire at the Panama Canal* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2009), 2-9.

⁷ Marguerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 33-36.

the regard to the uses of imperial rhetoric in the shaping of a twentieth-century American identity.⁸ In short, we need to look at the Club's output through Jackson Lears' notion of "empire as a way of life," that is, the translation of imperial desire into a common rhetoric so as to uphold the image of a triumphant nation.⁹

In the San Franciscan context, this national triumph was supplemented by a local narrative of reconstruction within less than a decade after the country's worst disaster. While the fair had been envisioned by the city's merchants and boosters from 1904, it was endorsed even more vigorously after 1906 to renew the promise of speedy rebuilding.¹⁰ From a cultural and an economic point of view, the representation of San Francisco as "the ruined metropolis" constituted a "threat" to investment in the long term. Hence, the organization of a grand festivity could re-channel disaster memories and serve to "establish [the city] as the epicenter of culture on the West Coast."¹¹ An important occasion to showcase the capacity of hosting an international event in the city came in 1909, when the 140th anniversary of Don Gaspar de Portola's disembarkation at San Francisco Bay was celebrated – a clear alignment with the Spanish colonial heritage of the state. The festival was held over five days in October (for four consecutive years in the run-up to the fair), and its numerous parades, with an overall attendance of half a million people were taken as a testing ground for the PPIE.¹² Perpetuating the fable that led from Spanish outpost to American frontier and Pacific metropolis, the fair's official historian Frank Morton Todd proposed the following:

By 1906, a hundred and thirty-seven years later, there was a flourishing commercial city, a city like old Antwerp, rich, proud, and beautiful, at the tip of a peninsula up which Portola and his hungry crew had toiled. Then, one spring morning, the "giant tread of the earthquake" broke up the city's water mains and within four days fire had laid waste its whole business district, its commercial core, destroying twenty-eight thousand buildings, bankrupting hundred of its most energetic citizens. [...] Followed three years of the tremendous individual effort that American institutions encourage, effort in which every man, acting for himself, contributed in the most effective manner to the benefit of the whole: and the business heart of the city was restored. [...] Then, though the city was far from rebuilt, the community drew the deep breath of relief over peril of existence passed, and a group of energetic business men resolved to express its exultation and crown this miracle of achievement with a civic celebration of such a victory of man over loss and discouragement and vast disaster as had never been exhibited to the world before.¹³

The control of the disaster narrative in historical form had been put into place from the summer of 1906, as emphasized in the previous part. However, in the PPIE context, the narrative was

⁸ Robert W. Rydell, John E. Findling, and Kimberly D. Pelle, *Fair America: World's Fairs in the United States* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 45; see also Greene, *The Canal Builders*, 10-13; Moore, *Empire on Display*, 3-14.

⁹ Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920*, 285.

¹⁰ Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, 212-214.

¹¹ Ganz, introduction to *Jewel City*, 11-12.

¹² Markwyn, *Empress San Francisco*, 7-8.

¹³ Frank Morton Todd, *The Story of the Exposition*, Vol. 1 (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 1921), 43.

accompanied by a reenactment of disaster scenes. Echoing the notion of an “instant city,” conceived within a mere three years and permanent merely for one, the fairgrounds provided ample opportunity to allude to the swift reconstruction of the city. Furthermore, the deliberately sought-after appearance of “ancientness” of the fair’s architecture reiterated the use of Neoclassical parables in the wake of the disaster. To push this specific form of memorization further, a “Nine Years After” festivity was held in April 1915. For six days, the fair’s emblematic Tower of Jewels, consisting of thousands of little mirrors, created the impression of a flickering flame, while an old ship and a fake refugee shack were burned at the harbor in front of cheering publics.¹⁴ These forms of “replica disasters,” as Kevin Rozario has termed them, had emerged on Coney Island in the late nineteenth century and would include, by 1907, simulations of volcano eruptions, floods, and earthquakes – all referencing recent catastrophes. Observed from a safe distance, these were well-conceived spectacles that nourished both the desire for “disorderly fun” and the “drive for mastery.”¹⁵ In the San Franciscan context, the command of the disaster narrative was thus exerted in two different strategies that complemented each other. The initial formulation of a history of the event in dramatic and yet optimistic terms circulated in books, magazines, and brochures. It would be ratified during the PPIE, not only through the demonstration of a reconstructed city space – real and imagined – but also through the controlled reenactment of disaster scenes. The fairground, its participatory spectacle, and its ensuing history hence “formalized the story of regeneration and progress.”¹⁶

As the CCC’s implication in the “formalization” of this narrative after 1906 has been amply illustrated in the two preceding chapters, it will be important in the following chapter to trace the longevity of the photographers’ relationships to promotional organs before, during, and after the fair. This network-related analysis will illuminate the Club’s outdoor agenda after 1915 and its continuous self-definition as operating in the interest of the state. The Club’s direct involvement in the promotion of the fair can be traced via the members of the PPIE board of directors that had been formed on the occasion of the Portola Festival. The “group of energetic businessmen” Todd referred to in the official history of the fair consisted of well-known figures who had been involved in urban investment and promotion from the time of the Midwinter Fair. It included representatives of the city’s major newspapers, the *Call*, *Chronicle*, and *Examiner*, the presidents of the merchants’ exchange and the chamber of commerce, as well as the manager of the Southern Pacific passenger department familiar with the outing agenda of the CCC, James Horsburgh. A women’s board, formed later on, was led by philanthropist and UC regent Phoebe Hearst. Almost identical to the membership of the California Promotion Committee, the “nucleus” of the male board convened at the Bohemian Club after the

¹⁴ Dyl, *Seismic City*, 254-269; see also Todd, *The Story of the Exposition*, Vol. 3, 48-49.

¹⁵ Rozario, *The Culture of Calamity*, 123-127.

¹⁶ Dyl, *Seismic City*, 263.

Portola Festival of 1909 to collect funding.¹⁷ The gathering of powerful business actors at the most prestigious intellectual venue of the city discloses the continued overlap of economic and cultural interests. As the tentacles of this board spread into all parts of public life, it will be of interest to reconstruct the mobilization of the CCC for these purposes. While the Club's direct involvement is reflected for example in its photographic contributions to Morton's official history, there are numerous other instances of less direct yet just as effective support on the part of the Club.

The following sections of this chapter are going to trace these collective implications in the organization of the fair, while at the same time illuminating the broader development of a shifting photographic practice during the 1910s and 1920s. The exposed material at the fair points to the notion of a transitional moment, as its two defining displays in culture and technology would hint at the transformations that local photography was to undergo. On the one hand, the PPIE demonstrated a heightened pre-occupation with the fine arts – much more so than previous fairs. On the other hand, its prominent technological display heralded the automobile as the defining feature of twentieth-century life. As a result, a total of more than 11,000 paintings, drawing, outdoor sculptures, and photographs were exhibited on the grounds, next to a Ford assembly line producing 18 cars per day.¹⁸ The diversification of the arts and the enormous upturn of technology were two developments which eventually trickled down to the basic level of local photography, leading to an increased fragmentation in the practice. As such, photography came to stretch out in both of these directions, one turning toward a continued fine-art occupation and the other engaging with new technologies for leisure and amusement. Shifting between a renewed interest in Pictorialist photography accompanied by the fine arts and the idea of a leisure practice with the latest gems in transportation technology, the PPIE's display embodied the diverse spectrum of tastes and practices that had been unified within the CCC before. As an international event which, despite its overlap with World War I, drew nine million visitors and resulted in a profit of about \$2.4 million, the San Francisco world's fair stands out as a key event in the early twentieth-century development of culture and the arts, technology and politics.¹⁹

9.1 *The Club in the run-up to the Exposition: a new president, a new program?*

The years between the San Francisco earthquake and fire and the Panama-Pacific International Exposition saw the Club reassembling its membership and reshuffling its goals, while new groups with diverging definitions of photographic practice progressively formed. What used to be united under the banner of the CCC slowly spread into different directions, animated on the one hand by the

¹⁷ Markwyn, *Empress San Francisco*, 8-9, 17-20; for a complete list of board members, see Morton, *The Story of the Exposition*, 47-48.

¹⁸ Rydell, Findling, Pelle, *Fair America*, 65.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 68.

reorganization of the Club under Kemp and, on the other, by a notable formation of artistic exchange in Berkeley – a precursor to a movement that would become increasingly “pluralist” by the early 1920s. Before discussing the activities of the Club around the time of its twentieth anniversary and its activities in preparation of the PPIE, it is important to briefly illuminate the alternatively emerging Berkeley circle as its participants represent a first moment of local dispersion.

In late 1908, two exhibitions were organized on the East Bay that united practitioners formerly affiliated with the CCC. An “Arts & Crafts Exhibition” at Idora Park in Oakland brought together the photographers Anne Brigman, Laura Adams Armer, Emily Pitchford, Adelaide Hanscom alongside Maurer, Dasonville, and O.V. Lange.²⁰ Apart from the latter, who was a Berkeley resident but would remain active in CCC circles, the rest of the group came to form the nucleus of the Berkeley Art Association. This Association was detached from the Club in San Francisco and cultivated strong ties to Keeler’s Hillside Club and its ideals of craftsmanship and appreciation of the local environment. Within the Berkeley Art Association, women held influential positions on the board of directors, and the aforementioned female photographers established close friendships. With a background in the fine arts gained from the Mark Hopkins Institute, Hanscom, Pitchford and Armer soon came in contact with Anne Brigman. These women had exhibited their works at the third San Francisco Salon in 1903, and held studios in the city in the early 1900s (notably Hanscom and Adams Armer), but then increasingly shifted their activities toward Berkeley. There, Keeler’s Hillside Club organized outdoor theater and engaged in exchanges with artists William Keith and Xavier Martinez, or architect Bernard Maybeck.²¹

The Berkeley Art Association held an exhibition in late 1908 in which Pictorialist works of these female and male photographers figured prominently next to painting, sculpture, pottery, and textiles. Rooted in the local context, its established goal was “to promote the welfare of art in the city of Berkeley, by giving appreciative encouragement to all local art workers” and to “[maintain] a permanent art collection in the city.” Operating in the interest of “[t]he whole community,” the Association mirrored the goals of the CCC and yet opted for a more restrained membership and a more institutionalized appreciation of the local arts.²² In scholarship, especially on Brigman, the broader Berkeley circle has gained increasing attention. Their anchorage in the arts and crafts, and the environmentalist-inspired movement by Keeler in cooperation with the Sierra Club – rather than the CCC – is clearly demarcated in the circulation of their work.²³ The increasing attraction of the

²⁰ See Annie W. Brigman, “The Prints at Idora,” *Camera Craft* 15, no. 12 (1908): 463-466.

²¹ Hery et al., *Berkeley Bohemia*, 69-83. For further information on the Berkeley art community in the early twentieth century, see Robert W. Edwards, *Jennie V. Cannon: The Untold History of the Carmel and Berkeley Art Colonies* (Oakland: East Bay Heritage Project, 2012).

²² Quoted from exhibition catalog, see *Second Annual Exhibition of the Art Association of Berkeley. November 17 to 20, 1908* (Berkeley: The Needham Press, 1908), n.p.

²³ See Ehrens, *A Poetic Vision: The Photographs of Anne Brigman*; Brown, “Staging the Mystical: The Photographs of Anne Brigman and the Mystical Philosophy of Edward Carpenter”; Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice*, 63-103.

Club's foremost "Pictorialists" to these circles, rather than to the CCC, points to the diverging interests among the latter's large membership.

Another early instant of dispersion in this period can be found in the 1909 International Photographic Exhibition in Dresden. Advertised in *Camera Craft* two years earlier as "a marking point in the history of photography" for its unification of diverse applications and industries,²⁴ the exhibition included only sparse contributions from California. The Club representatives, who in previous years had rallied for collective submissions to such events, remained silent in the pages of the magazine – a fact probably related to the post-disaster circumstances. While Brigman would show her work alongside Stieglitz, Coburn, Steichen, Annan, Demachy, and others in the section dedicated to the International Society of Artist Photographers at Dresden, there was a much broader "America" section with some 130 contributors from all over the country, yet still based mostly in the East. Here, Emily Pitchford of Berkeley showed a print of mother and child next to two landscapes by Walter A. Scott and Gustav Eisen, both members of the CCC, yet indicated without affiliation in the catalog.²⁵ Criticized in *Camera Work* for its absence of "explicit hierarchy," the exhibition showcased "an inventory of photography," its techniques, potential artistic expressions, and industries. Because of its display of such a variety of applications, it was nonetheless considered a major photographic event in Europe before World War I.²⁶

The Californian editors of *Camera Craft* praised Brigman's inclusion in the international section and considered the rest of the "Pacific Coast representation" as "quite gratifying." They explained the absence of other contributions by the fact that the exhibition was "mainly devoted to manufacture" and thereby joined the East Coast endorsement of "a more purely photographic exhibition."²⁷ As Californian contributions to such international exhibitions had remained extremely rare over the twenty-year chronology of the Club's existence, the Dresden exhibition does not reveal much new development concerning the CCC. Yet, as an international event, the exhibition's sheer amount of material pointed to the myriad styles, techniques, and ideas about photography – a new kind of "photographic heterogeneity" in the words of Vanessa Rocco. The medium's "struggle for

For more information on these female photographers, see Palmquist, *Shadowcatchers II: A Directory of Women in California Photography, 1900-1920*; Wilson, "Northern California: The Heart of the Storm," 12-16; for later works by Laura Adams Armer, see Palmquist, "Waterless Mountain," in *Perpetual Mirage: Photographic Narratives of the Desert West*, 119-123; for Hanscom, see Dimitri Shipounoff and Gail Marie Indvik, *Adelaide Hanscom Leeson: Pictorialist Photographer, 1876-1932* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1981).

²⁴ "International Photographic Exhibition at Dresden in 1909," *Camera Craft* 14, no. 5 (1907): 248.

²⁵ *Offizieller Katalog der Internationalen Photographischen Ausstellung, Dresden, 1909* (Dresden: W. Baensch, 1909), 200-203, 231-236. While there is little information available on Eisen, who had served as Club librarian in the early 1900s, Scott was more closely involved. Despite the large collection of Scott's works stored at the San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park (see photographers' directory in bibliography), the photograph submitted to the Dresden exhibition could not be identified.

²⁶ Information retrieved and translated from Franziska Brons, *Exposition eines Mediums: Internationale Photographische Ausstellung Dresden 1909* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2015), 11-19, 80-81. On the versatility of the Dresden exhibition and its local repercussions, see Joschke, *Les Yeux de la Nation*, 291-317.

²⁷ "The Dresden Exposition," *Camera Craft* 16, no. 7 (1909): 282.

identity and the resulting conflicts amongst art, populism, commerce and industry were played out” at the exhibition and can thus be seen as a precursor to the “intensify[ing] dialectics” of the early 1920s. Such struggles become tangible in the international reviews of the exhibition which discarded Brigman’s nudes as “uncomfortable” and “far-fetched.”²⁸ Despite minor submissions to the display, the Californian presence at this event – including Club members and Berkeley practitioners – allows us to situate them within the far-reaching debates on the interpretation of the medium and its shifting role within the arts and society at large.

At the same time, around the 1910s, the Club was renegotiating its local role. To this end, members engaged in a number of activities which reflected the major occupation prior to and immediately after 1906, that is, the promotion of the state on a variety of material supports, be they for instruction of local publics or for fine-art appreciation. On the occasion of its twentieth anniversary, in March 1910, a banquet was organized at the headquarters in the Commercial Building where secretary Miss Voy was declared honorary life member for having provisionally hosted the Club offices in her home after the earthquake and fire.²⁹ The same year, former president James W. Erwin, who had strongly shaped Club practice along promotional lines, gave a lecture on the “Golden West,” including lantern slides of California, Oregon, and the Yellowstone.³⁰ Erwin’s impact remained tangible throughout this period, through both his lectures and his insistence on local subject matter. His idea for the 1901 outing to “impress San Francisco on a thousand plates” was taken up once again in late 1910. *Camera Craft* announced an outing for October of the following year in which Club members would take to the streets in order “to compare, pictorially, the old and the new San Francisco.” The first urban excursion was remembered as crucial to the Club’s history since “[n]othing which the Club has undertaken during its existence resulted in wider publicity.” Furthermore, “[e]very member having any negative of San Francisco, made prior to the disaster of April 18th to 21st, 1906, [was] earnestly requested to furnish at least one print from each.” Like ten years earlier, an inventory approach was advertised, including the storage of two prints from each “good negative” at the headquarters.³¹ And yet, there would be no more mention of either the excursion or the fate of the photograph collection after this announcement.

In the light of these persistent difficulties to reconstruct the Club’s corpus, it is important now to turn to one of the most remarkable productions of its members in the post-earthquake period. Published in 1911 and 1913, respectively, two lavishly illustrated books entitled *California the Beautiful* and *The Old Spanish Missions of California* brought together a considerable number of

²⁸ Vanessa Rocco, “Pictorialism and Modernism at the Dresden Internationale Photographische Ausstellung,” *History of Photography* 33, no. 4 (2009): 385-386, 390-391.

²⁹ “Camera Club Anniversary,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 7, 1910, 15.

³⁰ “Camera Club Lecture about Golden West,” *San Francisco Call*, June 17, 1910, 5.

³¹ “Photographing San Francisco,” *Camera Craft* 17, no. 12 (1910): 467.

practitioners under the editorship of Paul Elder (**fig. 9.1, fig. 9.2**). Conceived in the same lay-out as Stellmann's *Vanished Ruin Era*, or Genthe's *Old Chinatown*, the books were printed on heavy textured paper and included tipped-in images. These were halftones, yet they appeared more prestigious through the addition of a black frame and the lay-out on a double-page spread with a juxtaposed poem. Elder's collaborations with local photographers have been remarked in numerous histories of Californian Pictorialism and, in this, researchers have come to acknowledge the instrumental function of "resident photographers" as "boosters for their state."³² Yet, it is crucial to notice the longstanding affiliation of these contributors with the Club and the latter's connection to promotional state organizations. Even though the CCC was not explicitly mentioned in Elder's publications, the Club's self-definition and characteristic works were strongly mobilized for the books' contents. What becomes tangible in these works is the framework of Club practice – out-of-doors and collective. This aspect of photography turns the contributions to Elder's books into testimonies of the collective appreciation of the local environment.

As has been demonstrated with reference to the salons of the early 1900s, the sponsored outdoor practice was essential to the shaping of the Club's corpus. Elder's publications, notably *California the Beautiful* produced with "camera studies by California artists" materialized the artistic legitimation of place and practice that the Club had striven for from the start. Poems by emblematic figures like Bret Harte, John Muir, David Starr Jordan, Will Irwin, Ina Coolbrith, and Charles Keeler were supplemented with Pictorialist imagery from the Bay, the Yosemite, Lake Tahoe, and the Spanish missions. Adorned with evocative captions, Maurer's frontispiece *The Golden Gate* (**fig. 9.3**) was joined by works from Lange, Tibbitts, Genthe, Sewell, and Stellmann in the following pages. Photographers deeply embedded in the Club network could hence affirm the "representative" character of their works as artistic productions forged in a uniquely inspiring setting. Well-known imagery like Lange's *Berkeley Oaks*, which had been part of his UCB lecture in the 1890s, and Genthe's *Old Chinatown* reconfirmed their prominent position in the local iconography (**fig. 9.4, fig. 9.5**). In the combined display with verse from acclaimed local writers, the photographers were assigned a form of agency that they could not have achieved through blatantly commercial publications like *Sunset*. The material format of Elder's publications and its interweave in the arts and crafts aesthetics solidified this position as artists in a long-established local canon.

Through this choice of subject matter, Club members contributed to the typical Californian iconography and its declared representative features were reasserted. Next to the perpetuation of stereotypical depictions of Chinatown as "the real heart of San Francisco,"³³ the missions were

³² Rosenblum, "California Pictorialism," 66-67; Palmquist, "William E. Dassonville: An Appreciation," 21.

³³ Will Irwin, quoted in Paul Elder, *California the Beautiful. Camera Studies by California Artists; with Selections in Prose and Verse from Western Writers* (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company Publishers, 1913), 44.

depicted as “California’s first page of written history.”³⁴ Two years later, Elder would take up the extremely popular subject of mission history in a dedicated publication. His “historical and descriptive sketch” relied on Hubert Howe Bancroft’s “monumental history” for dates and was enriched by writings from authors like Helen Hunt Jackson (*Ramona*), George Wharton James, and Mrs. A.S.C. Forbes from the Landmarks Committee and the former LACC.³⁵ Each of the 21 missions in the state was depicted in a chapter, completed with dates and illustrated with photographs. These were principally drawn from Dasonville and Tibbitts’s expansive mission photography carried out for *Sunset* magazine a few years earlier. Additional works by Sewell, C.C. Pierce of the former LACC, and Adam Clark Vroman were reproduced (**fig. 9.6**). Interestingly, Charles B. Turrill’s expertise on visual arts and mission history was requested by Elder. The volume included two photographic reproductions of mission paintings held in his collection (**fig. 9.7**). Around the same period, Turrill had written on the importance of “historical photography” as a purposeful leisure practice in *Camera Craft*.³⁶ To further this ambition, he marketed these early representations from his personal collection in a booklet of postcards that provided a short historical sketch for each edifice. The 48 views were drawn from paintings, photographs, or “rare daguerreotype[s].”³⁷ Yet, rather than using older mission photographs by well-established figures like Taber or Watkins – on whom Turrill was likewise knowledgeable – Elder relied exclusively on the works of contemporary photographers. Many of them were closely connected to the publisher, his bookshop, and the défilé of local bohemia paying regular visits.

This kind of collaboration demonstrates the lasting ties between the CCC membership and the state-wide cultural network. It brings to the fore the influential position of local photographers in the creation of an idiosyncratic practice of the arts and in the popular understanding of regional history. Elder himself contributed to the preservation of this material by donating a signed copy of *California the Beautiful* to the Library of the University of California at Berkeley, where he had conducted research to compile writings by local poets.³⁸ Drawing on the idea of a unique local scenery, first proposed in magazines like the *Overland Monthly* of the late 1860s, the network of photographers, poets, collectors, and boosters all worked in tandem in the publication of Elder’s books. At its heart was the closely knit network, spanning the state from North to South, which has been extensively discussed in the second part of this thesis. The persistence of these connections demonstrates again

³⁴ David Starr Jordan, quoted in Elder, *California the Beautiful*, 28.

³⁵ See acknowledgment in Paul Elder, *The Old Spanish Missions of California. An Historical and Descriptive Sketch by Paul Elder. Illustrated chiefly from Photographs by Western Artists* (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company Publishers, 1913), n.p.

³⁶ See Turrill, “Historical Photography,” 531-535.

³⁷ See Charles B. Turrill, *Missions of California: Historic Monuments of California’s Early Civilization. From Photographs in the Charles B. Turrill Historical Collection* (San Francisco: Pacific Novelty Co., 19--), n.p. The booklet is held at the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

³⁸ The signed copy, including a note to the librarian, is preserved today at the Bancroft Library.

that individual photographers selected by scholarship – like Maurer or Vroman – did not merely concur with the styles propagated 5,000 km away from their home. Instead of carrying these out in a seeming void, the photographers operated, for more than two decades, in a dense local tissue in which questions of cultural legitimization and commercial appeal were equally negotiated.

From this perspective, Elder's publications appear as one of the last vigorous affirmations of the photographers' earlier goals in an otherwise rapidly evolving environment. The earthquake and fire, which appear to be the catalyst of these changes, must be seen here not only as a moment of rupture with inestimable losses, but also as the trigger of a "diaspora."³⁹ In the five years between the Club's twentieth anniversary and the PPIE, important changes occurred within the CCC, starting with the progressive disappearance of afore-mentioned practitioners like Maurer or Treat from the Club rooms and the pages of *Camera Craft*. While Dassonville and Tibbitts remained engaged in the broader context of local production – through their participation in the PPIE selection committee – this development continued at a steady pace between 1910 and 1915. Another event in this short chronology of swift changes in the Club's original setup was the death of Oscar V. Lange in December 1913. Identified by *Camera Craft* as "one of the most notable exponents of photographic art on the Pacific Coast," Lange was posthumously praised for his three-decade-long work in the Bay Area. His widely noted flower studies displayed at the San Francisco salons, as well as his UCB photographs shown at the Midwinter Fair, were declared his best contributions – the lecture "Through the University of California with a Camera" being singled out as the most important achievement "enjoyed" by Lantern Slide Interchange members and publics "throughout the country."⁴⁰

Lange remains remarkable not only for his diverse productions as a professional and an "art" photographer, but also for his agility in adapting to the various publication formats – ranging from exhibition frame to lantern slide to albums and halftone prints. His mastery of technical matters, his appealing use of local aesthetics, as well as his awareness of local photographic history qualify him as an emblematic CCC member. His quasi-absence from the history of photography is all the more remarkable, as his works run like a red thread through the entire chronology chosen for this thesis. It has therefore been deemed of utmost importance to revise this glaring omission from Californian photography – even more so since Lange was a well-known and widely appreciated photographer at the time. His important status and profound involvement in local culture, be it through leisure or professional photography, instruction or preservation, was also remarked by the editors of *Camera Craft* and by local journalists of the time. In early December 1913, the architectural department at UCB held an exhibition with his work, while the recently opened Berkeley Public Library had

³⁹ Miottel, "Rebellion in Photography," 26.

⁴⁰ "Professor Lange Passes Away," *Camera Craft* 21, no. 1 (1914): 32.

benefited from much of his rallying communal support.⁴¹ His membership in both the PCAPA and the CCC, as well as his acquaintance with local figures like naturalist Joseph LeConte or daguerreotypist William Shew, indeed turn his output into a significant embodiment of Californian photography for the period between 1890 and 1915.

It is from this historic perspective of recovery and rapid change in the years following 1906 that we need to understand the only official publication by the Club, issued in 1912. Next to the assertion of a local revival, the *First California Camera Club Annual* served as a brief historical brochure with numerous contributions by its members. Its cover reproduced for the first time the later oftentimes used logo of a bear operating a camera on a tripod, surrounded by typical Californian flora (**fig. 9.8**). With a heightened awareness in the wake of its twentieth anniversary, the *Annual* reified the Club's diverse achievements and provided a complete list of its membership. It opened with an introduction by Club secretary Poehlmann who sketched the "high ideals" of the organization by underlining its intense exchange with other local organizations.⁴² Tying in with the notion of "usefulness" emphasized in *Camera Craft* a decade earlier, the statement declared:

The California Camera Club has been extending its field of usefulness so that it has led in movements for the beautification of the city and environs, and has co-operated with other clubs and leagues in civic work. [...] It is more even than a State organization, for by its aid the entire Coast has from time to time received great benefit, through the publicity resulting from the exhibiting of numerous sets of lantern slides in all the principal cities of the United States, Canada, and sometimes abroad.⁴³

This emphasis on the local anchorage of members as well as their purposeful engagement in the city and the state further nourish the discussion of the preceding chapters. The importance of on-site work and of photographic involvement in state matters was exactly what was considered the heart-piece of the Club from its creation. Like the salon catalogs ten years earlier, the *Annual* confirmed the members' local embeddedness not only through the adopted discourse, but also through its strategic use of advertisement. Next to Kodak and Ansco, ads for Paul Elder's "book and art rooms" and the Mount Tamalpais Scenic Railway were featured in the *Annual*. The lantern slide business of then-president Edward H. Kemp – located in the same building as the CCC headquarters – also occupied a prominent position among the ads.

As members had taken considerable pride in their offices, publicizing floor plans and interior images in their own journal and in local newspapers, the recently rebuilt headquarters in the Commercial Building were depicted in the first pages of the *Annual*. Accompanying Poehlmann's opening words, two interior views served as visual testimonies to the secretary's statement on the

⁴¹ Ibid.; see also the O.V. Lange Papers 1887-1913, the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

⁴² Maude E. Chase and Herman S. Hoyt, eds., *First Annual California Camera Club* (San Francisco: California Camera Club, 1912), 11.

⁴³ Ibid., 9.

Club (**fig. 9.9**). As Herman Hoyt was one of the editors – the traveling photographer who had visited the LACC club rooms a decade earlier, and returned quite disappointed, – it was deemed of great importance to showcase efficient and well frequented meeting venues. The highly sought-after skylight on the top floor of the building was showcased in a spacious studio setting, furnishing ideal conditions for portraiture. The commitment to such high-quality standards was supplemented on the facing page by a group portrait of some thirty men and women about to enjoy the “social following the annual meeting.” The representation of such diverse activities, combining sophisticated photographic work with congenial exchange and entertainment, visually undergirded the secretary’s proposition to join the ranks of “this worthy institution.”⁴⁴

A membership list of the entire Club was added, including addresses of all honorary, life, active, corresponding and subscribing members – adding up to a total of some 350. In the category of honorary life members, James W. Erwin and Edward H. Kemp were listed next to Miss Voy. Lange, D’Arcy Power, Mrs. Kemp, as well as the former astronomers of the Lick Observatory, Barnard and Burnham, were honorary members. Among the 230 active members, Maurer, Genthe, Stellmann, Cohen, and Sewell remained from the earlier roster, while Dassonville, Tibbitts and Treat had disappeared. All in all, the membership included some twenty percent of women, most of whom were either wives of active members or subscribers.⁴⁵ To revise this male-dominated rollcall, Josephine A. Kemp, the wife of president Kemp, reached out to other female practitioners in the *Annual*, urging that “we would like to have more ladies [...]; we are so few now, that we find it hard to hold our own against the large roll of “gentleman” members.”⁴⁶ This absence of active female contributors is also tangible in the article submissions – written exclusively by male members. They reported on general activities and pre-occupations of the Club, like regular print exhibitions whose “foremost” contributors were O.V. Lange and Edgar A. Cohen.⁴⁷ Both of them provided short additions on their favorite subjects, the former speaking of “Flower Studies” and the latter of “Beauty-spots in California.”⁴⁸ As a regular attendant of Club outings, Cohen gave readers details of his photographic equipment alongside a list of his favorite locations, all the while encouraging Californian practitioners to “leave the beaten paths.” In this, he bolstered a renewed attempt to explore the local surroundings since “[n]o one has pictured this country as it deserves.”⁴⁹

Alongside these general contributions by members, the *Annual* provided both a backward- and a forward-looking perspective on the Club. The history of the CCC was not only expressed in general terms, as Poehlmann did, but also recounted through specific events. Curator Robert H.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 48-56.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 18.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 15.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 30-35.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 33.

Fletcher of the Mark Hopkins Institute (after 1906 renamed San Francisco Institute of Art), who had served with CCC members on the executive committee of the salons, reminisced on the extraordinary character and novelty of photographic salons a decade earlier. Desirous to close the debate on whether photography was an art, Fletcher identified the salons as major achievements in the quest for recognition. Furthermore, several contributors to these exhibitions had become, according to the author, “household words in the annals of the profession.”⁵⁰ The Club’s role in the art history of the medium was validated here through the evaluation of a curator from a well-known local institution.

Interestingly, the appreciation of artistic achievement was extended in an article by Stellmann in *Photo-Era* the same year the *Annual* was published. In a three-page illustrated piece, featuring Sierra views by Cohen, Stellmann recounted the history of the Club from the “very exclusive” PCAPA to the founding of the CCC by Reed, Andrews, Tibbitts, and others. Next to the recent twentieth anniversary and the two-decade affiliation with the Interchange, the salons were likewise selected as decisive events that had catapulted San Francisco on the national scene. Stellmann drew on the notoriety of Arnold Genthe, who had recently left the city to settle in New York, so as to reconnect the latter’s artistic success to his photographic initiation at the California Camera Club.⁵¹ The common parlance in local newspapers on his portraits – “‘That’s a Genthe’ is a remark frequently heard” – certainly incited the Club, of whom Genthe was still listed as active member in 1912, to identify him as an early and successful participant. The appropriation of Genthe’s fame to appreciate local culture was common around the time of his embarkation for New York – a departure which was felt as another loss in a series of withdrawals, as one newspaper wrote: “One more artist whom San Francisco can ill afford to lose.”⁵² In the light of the numerous escapes from the city after 1906, the history of the Club had to be portrayed as flourishing – a representation to which the reputation of personae like Genthe certainly added a glamorous aspect.

In order to forecast a similarly promising future for the Club, the *Annual* relied on current involvements and upcoming projects. Two undertakings were chosen to depict exciting prospects for the following years – one being a social and increasingly festive atmosphere among members, the other being the preparation of the PPIE. Both of these undertakings must be related to Edward H. Kemp, who served as Club president in the transitional period. By the time he came to lead the organization, from the summer 1911 to the summer of 1913, Kemp had become a renowned figure of local photography. Operating a lantern slide business in San Francisco since 1900, he was involved in Club activities from early on, by showing works in the first San Francisco salon, the first American salon, and by regularly advertising his supply. Both Edward and Josephine Kemp were drawn to the

⁵⁰ Ibid., 39-40.

⁵¹ Louis J. Stellmann, “California Camera Club,” *Photo-Era* 18 (1912): 171-174.

⁵² Quoted from newspaper clippings, dated 1904 and 1911, in “Scrapbook of clippings relating to photographer Arnold Genthe,” (1902-1916), 2, 9 (BANC MSS 75/84 c), the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Native American cultures of the American Southwest, and produced extensive series of colored lantern slides and moving pictures, presented as lectures over a period of three decades.⁵³ Josephine's article "Photographing in Hopi Land" in *Camera Craft* of 1905 had inspired members to embark on the heretofore discussed trip to Navajo County to witness the snake dance ceremony.⁵⁴ Through their stereopticon business, the couple became increasingly interested in motion pictures, and "show[ed] some films exhibited for the first time in San Francisco" with their "moving-picture machine" as early as 1904.⁵⁵ Looking back on his twenty-five-year career in photography in *Camera Craft* in 1914, Kemp reminisced on his first attempts to climb the mountains in the proximity of the city with heavy photographic equipment. By linking his undeterred outdoor practice to the constant improvement of his work, he positioned himself amid other well-known nineteenth-century photographers. As an answer to the question of what the next decade would have to offer, Kemp predicted "[a]nimated photography" as "the popular work of the future."⁵⁶

Faithful to this prediction, Kemp strongly engaged in the spreading of such "popular work" during his Club presidency. In a series of outings to the San Francisco parks and beaches, mission San Jose, and Mount Tamalpais, undertaken in late 1912, he took motion pictures "recording the scenery and many of the events which occurred." This form of production, quite new to the CCC's agenda, functioned in tandem with the establishment of an entertainment committee that was to organize holiday festivities and dances, at which the projection of moving pictures was to become a common element.⁵⁷ Apparently, the couple's intense engagement with motion picture technology was subject to much discussion – and entertainment – within the Club, as a series of lantern slide cartoons in the CCC collection at the Los Angeles Public Library show. Made by the relatively recent member, professional photographer Mervyn Silberstein, the slides gently mocked the typical pursuits of several Club officials. In Edward Kemp's case, a cartoon showed him operating a "Kemp motion picture machine" that recorded a snail race (**fig. 9.10**). Caricaturing his apparent desire to turn any event into a motion-picture sensation, the slide can be seen as part of the entertainment program Kemp himself had initiated. By the summer of 1913, his influence on Club activities was "evidenced by the fact that

⁵³ See directory of photographers in bibliography for a list of institutions with material by Kemp. Most of these include lantern slides, yet none hold moving picture material. Further information on the Kemps is in the Palmquist Collection of Male Photographers in the American West (Box 440), and the Palmquist Collection of Women in Photography (Box 267).

⁵⁴ See "The Santa Fe trip to Moqui Land and the Grand Canyon," 267: "So many readers have asked for information concerning the interesting trip which Mrs. Kemp so ably described in her article on the Snake Dance in our last December issue that we are pleased to at last be able to announce, through [...] the Ticket Agent of the Santa Fe, the following particulars concerning the party which he will conduct to Moqui Land." See also Josephine A. Kemp, "Photographing in the Hopi Land," *Camera Craft* 11, no. 6 (1905): 247-255.

⁵⁵ "Club Notes," *Camera Craft* 9, no. 6 (1904): 262.

⁵⁶ Edward H. Kemp, "Twenty-five Years in Photography," *Camera Craft* 21, no. 3 (1914): 126-127.

⁵⁷ "The California Camera Club," *Camera Craft* 20, no. 1 (1913): 39.

the number of those attending [outings] is constantly increasing.” His attraction of new members and his insistence on excursions as “promoter[s] of sociability” were widely appreciated.⁵⁸

In the *Annual*, the congenial aspect of CCC membership was constantly underlined with regard to both the monthly lectures *and* the collective excursions. Describing the outings to beaches and forests, the shared picnics, dinners, and train rides, the authors insisted on the “jolly good” atmosphere, to the point that one could almost overlook the fact that this was a camera club program. The invitation to locals read: “let’s get acquainted for we’re a large and growing family, remember.”⁵⁹ In late 1913, San Franciscan newspapers reported on this “opening of a social series,” starting with two California Camera Club dances in December and January.⁶⁰ The *Call* spoke of the Club “initiat[ing] [a] new spirit,” animated by “some of the younger members,” among whom Silberstein, the Kemps, as well as Dr. E.O. Jellinek and Dr. Percy Neymann,⁶¹ two local physicians who would both contribute to the Club’s PPIE display later on. These new forms of social gathering and entertainment, depicting the Club like a “family,” gave way to quite elaborate documentation in the upcoming years, as will be exemplified in the last part of this chapter. A glimpse of the second CCC dance in January 1914, held at Native Sons’ Hall, can be provided by a group portrait taken on the occasion (**fig. 9.11**). The venue chosen for the dance – the headquarters of the Native Sons of the Golden West – ties in with the continued patriotic rendering of the Club.

It is through this lens of light-hearted amusement, embrace of new technology, and local pride that we can approach the Club’s preparation of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. Again, here, Kemp’s photographic engagements during his tenure as CCC president are key to understanding of how San Franciscan practitioners prepared for this international event. A hint of Kemp’s commitment was given in his foreword to the *Annual*, written on April 25, 1912:

My unforeseen and very hasty departure for Panama and the Canal Zone has prevented me from preparing in regular form of suitable “Foreword” for this, the first Annual of the California Camera Club. In lieu thereof I am writing a somewhat informal or open letter while on the train passing through beautiful orange groves backed by snow-capped mountains.⁶²

While his departure for Panama in the spring of 1912 might have been speedy, it was certainly not his first visit to the Canal Zone. Rather, in his desire to make motion pictures the photographic activity of the future, Kemp actively engaged in the still and moving-picture documentation of the Canal in the 1910s. An example of his on-site work during the trip of spring 1912 was later reproduced in the *Annual*, showing works on the Culebra Cut (**fig. 9.12**). A year before the official Club publication, the Kemps had already organized a series of lectures on the construction of the Panama Canal

⁵⁸ “Club News and Notes,” *Camera Craft* 20, no. 5 (1913): 241.

⁵⁹ *First Annual California Camera Club*, 16-17.

⁶⁰ “Camera Club is Host at Successful Dance,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 7, 1913, 64.

⁶¹ “Camera Club Dance Initiates New Spirit,” *San Francisco Call*, December 5, 1913, 8.

⁶² *First Annual California Camera Club*, 12.

throughout California. An announcement for such a lecture under the auspices of the CCC was published in March 1911. Featuring “original moving pictures and colored slides,” it treated “work in progress on the canal, the machinery in operation, the locks and dams, the native life, the buildings, streets, living conditions and, in fact, all matters of interest in the canal zone.” The ad emphasized the importance of Kemp’s images, which had been requested by George A. Loud, a Republican U.S. Representative from Michigan and member of the Isthmian Canal Commission. With Kemp’s photographs circulating to the national capital and shown before Congress, they gained in importance for local publics.⁶³

While documentation on the specific display of these photographs and motion pictures in Washington is missing, it is clear that Kemp’s work was but one venture in the vast informational and promotional campaign launched during canal construction. On his first trip to Panama in 1906, Roosevelt’s inspection of the site was widely covered and resulted in an official report with twenty-six illustrations. The aforementioned Isthmian Canal Commission also hired a photographer, Ernest Hallen, who documented the construction and final results for over three decades.⁶⁴ However, a great number of other photographers were drawn to the construction zone and, as such, Edward Kemp could provide additional coverage to be used by politicians at both national and local level. The dissemination of his photographs for political and promotional purposes outside California can be traced in two instances. A dozen of Kemp’s photographs of Canal Zone construction were included in an album documenting the opening of the Panama Canal and given as a gift to the family of the former ambassador to United Kingdom, Whitelaw Reid. These images which “celebrat[ed] the opening of the Panama Canal” were combined with photographs of San Francisco and the exposition site by R.J. Waters and other local photographers.⁶⁵ Later, a number of Kemp’s construction views were published by Detroit Photographic – a collaboration which reinforces the photographer’s connection to the above-mentioned Michigan Representative.⁶⁶

Next to these nationally relevant publications, the Kemps lectured on the Panama Canal across California between 1911 and 1912 – on numerous occasions in San Francisco, but also in Los Angeles and Santa Cruz. In the latter location, the lecture was given twice in a weekend with a matinee and an evening program, both of which were apparently so well attended that “hundreds had to be turned away.” The here-cited *Santa Cruz Sentinel*’s coverage gave details on the content which was very much in line with a local understanding of patriotic achievement. The journalist – *Overland Monthly* writer Josephine Clifford McCracken – furnished an enthusiastic account. As Mrs. Kemp “reminded

⁶³ “Panama Canal to be Displayed in a Pictured Lecture,” *San Francisco Call*, March 3, 1911, 10.

⁶⁴ Moore, *Empire on Display*, 56-61.

⁶⁵ The album, entitled “Universal Exposition San Francisco 1915” is in the Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress (LOT 8050 (G)).

⁶⁶ These views are stored in the Edward H. Kemp collection at the New Mexico History Museum.

[viewers] that as early as 1520 the same canal had been dreamed of,” the author was overwhelmed by the showcasing of national engineering success and concluded that “[a]ll this have the Americans done.”⁶⁷ In San Francisco, when hosted by the CCC, the events combined patriotic sentiment with local charity, as for example the benefits of a Panama Canal lecture in May 1911 went to the city’s children’s hospital.⁶⁸ This intense lecturing was also gently mocked in the Club lantern slide cartoons. Here, Josephine Kemp was represented as “Mrs. E.H. Kemp of the C.C.C., none more popular, none more clever.” Pointer in hand, her cartoon double was engaged in sketching a map of the Isthmus, exclaiming: “Allow me to introduce the Panama Canal! The greatest ever!” (**fig. 9.13**).

With regard to the declared “usefulness” of the Club in the *Annual* and the emphasized “duty” of local photographers in *Camera Craft*, the celebration of the completed Panama Canal constituted an important vitrine to showcase support of the community and to collectively reaffirm the state’s potential. Even though the original CCC membership was disbanding around the same period, the preparation of the fair provided the necessary motivation to hold the network together. The collaborations among the community, between professional, amateur, and Club photographers, can be traced in a series of albums made by Howard C. Tibbitts in the run-up to the fair, probably around the time of decision-making in Congress in 1911. An exemplar held at the Bancroft Library – leather-bound and dedicated in gilt-print letters to Alabama Representative, Navy Admiral, and Spanish-American War veteran Hon. Richmond P. Hobson – mirrors the continued sociopolitical and commercial engagement of the San Franciscan photographic network. Another version of the album, identical in content yet dedicated to a U.S. Representative from Iowa, is held at the Getty Research Institute. Entitled “San Francisco, California: Site of the Proposed Panama-Pacific International Exposition, 1915, celebrating the completion of the Panama Canal,” the album was published by Tibbitts with the support of the Exposition Committee. In its photographic content and material form, it embodied a refined showcasing of the city and the larger region, depicted in twenty-five images preceded by three pages of explanatory text.

The narrative sequence of the images moved from the recently rebuilt city to the larger Bay Area, the state’s natural parks, and the expansive region of the American West, including the Grand Canyon and the Yellowstone. Even though the work is emblematic in style and sophistication of Tibbitts’s earlier commissions for the Southern Pacific – by whom he was still employed at the time – the photographer also collaborated with at least one CCC member in the compilation of the album. Destined to appeal to politicians’ and investors’ interests, the album’s written introduction connected the afore-mentioned “imagined spaces” of the Pacific port city with the Isthmus. The story of the rebuilt, resilient San Francisco – on which the alleged sum of three hundred million dollars had been

⁶⁷ Josephine Clifford McCracken, “Pictures and Lecture on Canal,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, March 26, 1911, 8.

⁶⁸ “Benefit Lecture Tonight for Children’s Hospital,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 19, 1911, 4.

spent – was used to reassure the congressional decision-makers of the city’s capacity to host an international fair. The narrative developed in the album’s photographic sequence was anticipated in the introduction, which channeled the viewer’s imagination toward the future:

[San Francisco] is to-day the last word, architecturally, among the nation’s great cities, with block after block of business buildings, hotels, apartment houses and private residences, all new, substantial and artistic, with every modern equipment. In the nine years that will have elapsed between the burning of the city and the date of the Exposition, the city will have been entirely rebuilt and should of itself prove an object of peculiar interest to all who were thrilled by the story of the city’s destruction.⁶⁹

In order to depict San Francisco’s being “naturally the one fitting point” for such a celebration, local business and cultural venues were the first locations to be shown. The systematic addition of printed captions to the images took the viewer on a guided tour through the reconstructed downtown area. Reminiscent of Sewell’s post-earthquake series, Tibbitts’s album showed the Crocker, Chronicle and Phelan Buildings as exemplary structures on an elegant, well-frequented Market Street with an efficient infrastructure (**fig. 9.14**). Since a fair not only demanded investment capital, but also a sufficient number of entertainment venues, the photographic tour switched between business and amusement districts. Golden Gate Park, where the Midwinter Fair had taken place two decades earlier, was introduced as “a highly cultivated tract of about 1,000 acres” and “a popular playground with many attractions for sport and recreation” (**fig. 9.15**). The inclusion of Spreckels’s Temple of Music, built in the wake of the 1894 exposition, provided the desired Neoclassical architectural touch to underline cultural refinedness and aesthetic sensibility. Moving on to “the fashionable café and theater district” (**fig. 9.16**), the album emphasized the city’s dynamic cultural scene that could correspond to a broad range of tastes. The “cosmopolitan” character of the urban environment, with which San Francisco had adorned itself from early on, was completed with a photograph of a rebuilt section in Chinatown (**fig. 9.17**). While one half of the sidewalk was occupied by Chinese laborers carrying produce, the other half showed two well-dressed, presumably American women next to an automobile. This depiction of the “‘Little China’ of the Occident” suggested access to a reconstructed, notoriously “exotic” location. As the actual fairgrounds had to abandon the project of an “Underground Chinatown” with opium dens and gamblers due to fierce Chinese opposition,⁷⁰ the focus was shifted toward the rebuilt neighborhood and its commodification as amusement district. Like in Elder’s *California the Beautiful*, Tibbitts’s Chinatown became a safe tourist destination for pleasure-seekers familiar with the reputation of the old district, whose inhabitants were relegated to a nostalgic past.

⁶⁹ Howard C. Tibbitts, “San Francisco, California: Site of the Proposed Panama-Pacific International Exposition, 1915, Celebrating the Completion of the Panama Canal” (San Francisco: Panama-Pacific International Exposition Co., ca. 1910-1911), n.p.

⁷⁰ Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair*, 229.

With the representation of San Francisco as an economically stable and culturally attractive venue reestablished, the album moved on to the state's "natural attractions." From a bird's eye perspective, the viewer was invited to zoom out of the city and immerse in the overall attraction of the region. A photograph taken on Mount Tamalpais with an expansive overview of the Bay stretching out on the horizon was used to introduce "the big wonders of the West" (**fig. 9.18**). Next to views of missions in the vicinity of San Francisco captioned with details on travel, the Yosemite and the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees figured prominently. As Tibbitts's preferred motif – widely advertised in *Sunset*, the San Francisco salons, and Kodak ads – the Wawona tree was featured with a group of men on horseback, again specifying in the caption: "easily reached from San Francisco" (**fig. 9.19**). The photographer's continued involvement in the CCC's network becomes tangible in this latter section of the album to which Walter A. Scott contributed a view of the Grand Canyon (**fig. 9.20**). As short-time CCC president in 1909 and amateur-turned-professional in 1910, Scott was involved in all kinds of photographic endeavors at the time, including a submission to the Dresden exhibition and contributions to Club lectures. While his main interest were marine views, he also traveled the region and hence could furnish useful additions to Tibbitts's promotional publication.⁷¹

What becomes clear in this collaboration of local photographers in the run-up to the fair is the overlap of promotional endeavor with territorial practice. The photographs used by Tibbitts mirror the desired representational works of the CCC in the early twentieth century and incorporate the idea of an outdoor practice. The sophisticated workmanship with which the photographs were assembled further reflects the photographers' ambition to partake in the refinement of local culture. Like the Club contributions assembled in Paul Elder's books, the album integrated the appreciation of local surroundings through an expansive practice. Beyond its aesthetic appeal – or very much in line with it – the album acquired an economic and even a political dimension. Conceived to convince the nation of San Francisco's uniqueness and California's attraction, it reiterated and celebrated the pre-occupation of the local photographic community. Tibbitts's craftsmanship would be joined by Kemp's attraction to and documentation of the Canal Zone. In both cases, the professional practice of photography was paired with a patriotic understanding of the local past, present, and future. It came to serve as a rallying tool among the local community and across the nation. In the light of these continued sociocultural implications and the gradually shifting interests within the Club membership, the following section will discuss the concrete productions conceived for and made at the fair in 1915.

⁷¹ See "Guide to the Walter A. Scott Photograph Collection, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park," Online Archive of California, accessed March 6, 2018, <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/c8jd5049>.

9.2 *Photographing the Exposition: the Club's final as "state organization"*

As demonstrated earlier, as soon as the PPIE was officially announced, local photographers considered it their task to represent both their own work and their region in a desirable light. However, as with the numerous preceding fairs, be it in Chicago or in Saint Louis, the exclusion of the medium from the fine arts department as well as the photographic concession to an official firm were subject to heated debates. Since none of these developments are particularly new in the chronology of world's fairs between the 1890s and 1910s, the debates in the run-up and the final display will be discussed only briefly here. During the recent centennial of the PPIE, an exhibition at the Legion of Honor Museum by James A. Ganz has substantially treated the fair and its photography section. Much of the contextual information in this discussion will be derived from his catalog.⁷² What will be of greater importance in the long run and in the majority of this section is the coverage of the fair by members of the California Camera Club, for instance in the shape of lectures and contributions to official publications. After discussing the particularities of the photographic display at the fair itself, the majority of the discussion will be consecrated to the various undertakings of members in order to illustrate their continued involvement in state matters, as announced in the *Annual*. A combined evaluation of photographic displays at the fair and locally engaged practice allows us to trace the diversifying strands of photography that crystallized at the time.

From early 1913, when the emplacement of photography in the department of liberal arts was announced, it was contested by CCC members and *Camera Craft* contributors. In an editorial in April, Dr. H. D'Arcy Power called it an "unfortunate" decision, "unjust" to the youngest member of the fine arts."⁷³ Classified in Group 33 of the Palace of Liberal Arts, "pictorial photography" was shown alongside technical apparatus and processes. The widespread discontent, voiced not only by older members but also by relatively new figures like Edward Weston, considered the place granted to Pictorialism insufficient – "hidden away" in a corner of the building.⁷⁴ Furthermore, in order to finance the booth, exhibitors were charged a dollar per accepted photograph, and an additional dollar for framing. Due to these restrictions, many practitioners, like Sigismund Blumann from Oakland, withdrew their work. To get ahold of this conflict-ridden management, the chief of the Department of Liberal Arts, Theodore Hardee, assembled "a special honorary advisory committee," including Howard Tibbitts, Fayette Clute of *Camera Craft*, William Dasonville, Edward Sewell, as well as the

⁷² Ganz, "Exposing Photography at the Fair," in *Jewel City: Art from San Francisco's Panama-Pacific International Exposition*, 237-249.

⁷³ Dr. H. D'Arcy Power, "Photography at the Panama-Pacific Exposition: A Protest," *Camera Craft* 20, no. 4 (1913): 183.

⁷⁴ Edward Weston, quoted in Ganz, "Exposing Photography at the Fair," 238.

former Secession affiliates and Albright exhibition contributors Anne Brigman and Francis Bruguière.⁷⁵

Throughout 1914, *Camera Craft* published calls for submission to the display in the Palace of Liberal Arts, while the special advisory committee sought to secure support from the East Coast. The camera club from Buffalo, as well as East Coast Pictorialists Clarence White, Alvin Langdon Coburn, and Karl Struss sent in their works. Alongside the committee members' submissions, local contributions were received from Laura Adams Armer, Dr. Percy Neymann and Louis A. Goetz from the CCC, as well as Imogen Cunningham from Seattle and Edward Weston from Tropic, near Los Angeles. In the ambition to create an honorable display, Brigman and Bruguière reached out to Alfred Stieglitz, writing in a telegram that they would "feel it would be a good thing for photography" if he could send twenty to thirty prints at their charge. The telegram was not answered and thus Brigman chose to show her emblematic *Soul of the Blasted Pine* that had been featured in *Camera Work* in 1909 (see **fig. 5.43**). All in all, the Pictorialist display included 148 prints by 47 photographers. The entire photography section was awarded prizes by a committee consisting of Dr. Percy Neymann and George Habenicht from the CCC, as well as the president of Motion Picture Operators Anthony L. Noriega.⁷⁶ The awards in the pictorial section went to Brigman (grand prix), Adams Armer and Neymann (both silver), as well as Weston (bronze), Dasonville and Cunningham (both honorable mentions).⁷⁷ Both the names of the contributors and the heterogeneity of the selection committee point to the diverging strains of photographic activity at the time. This form of fragmentation between Pictorialist and popular practice would intensify in the photographic salons organized after the fair.

Since *Camera Craft's* coverage of the photography show was rather sparse and a substantial criticism as in the case of the salons a decade earlier was missing, the specific Club discussions on fair contributions are difficult to reconstruct. As in the case of the preceding world's fairs, a collective Club display was similarly absent. Therefore, it appears more relevant at this point to discuss the on-site practice and documentation of the Exposition itself by members. Concerning the practice of photography on the fairgrounds, a concession was made to the Cardinell Vincent Company which caused less discontent than the announcement of a daily fee. By late 1913, the Club and its magazine led a petition "signed by over seven thousand amateur photographers of this city and State" to protest against a fee that was considered "as unjust and unfair as it is ill-advised and uncalled for."⁷⁸ The protest also played out in local newspapers, led by Club member and pharmacist Dietrich H. Wulzen,

⁷⁵ Ganz, "Exposing Photography at the Fair," 237-239; "Photography at the Panama-Pacific," *Camera Craft* 20, no. 4 (1913): 182-183; Francis Bruguière was based in San Francisco during the CCC's most active period, but never contributed to the Club, for further information on his work see, James Enyeart, *Bruguière. His Photographs and His Life* (New York: Knopf, 1977).

⁷⁶ Ganz, "Exposing Photography at the Fair," 238-243.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 242-243; "The Awards in the Pictorial Section, P.-P.I.E.," 411-412; see also Hardee, *Final Report*, 266-267.

⁷⁸ "An Unjust Tax on Amateur Photography," *Camera Craft* 20, no. 11 (1913): 531.

who advocated in favor of his amateur friends. Claiming that the entire local community was “anxious to perpetuate the memories of the greatest and most beautiful exposition that ever took place,” he joined the memory-making vocabulary of Eastman Kodak – of which he sold supply at his local drug store. Since the concessionaire’s photographs were “lacking in pictorial qualities,” the amateurs’ depictions would record a cherished moment of community life.⁷⁹ By the time the fair opened, in spring 1915, an editorial in *Camera Craft* announced a daily fee of 25 cent (“it really is not an excessive one”) and the permission to use formats up to 4" x 5" without a tripod. Since “local dealers” advertised high-quality enlargements even from pocket formats, the tidal wave of complaints was fended off by the progress made in hand-held camera work and developing.⁸⁰

Unaffected or at least not discouraged by these restrictions, Club photographers engaged in the documentation of the fair from early on. While Kemp had initiated this interest in the run-up, he was strikingly absent from Club activities during the actual year of the fair. Under his guidance, members had visited the construction site of the PPIE at the Marina in 1913.⁸¹ They would return as a group to the actual fairgrounds in late summer 1915 to engage in “the securing of a great number of studies of the Panama-Pacific Exposition.”⁸² It is in the specific make-up of the Club’s board in the year of the fair that we see the commitment to local promotion again fully reflected. Replacing Kemp, the 1915 board of CCC directors – with the two physicists Dr. Percy Neymann as president, and Dr. E.O. Jellinek as vice-president, accompanied by the writer Louis J. Stellmann as secretary – prolonged the interest in official documentation and the circulation of photographic works.⁸³ This pre-occupation becomes tangible in a California Camera Club lantern slide collection of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, whose 124 items are stored today at the San Francisco Public Library.⁸⁴ While the collection includes a dozen different contributors, the Club’s president and vice-president, as well as the secretary, stand out in both their actual contributions to the set as well in their subsequent uses for other publications. The set could well have been assembled during a collective excursion to the fair, yet it also includes a number of night views of otherwise empty fairgrounds, which could imply a special concession granted to the photographers.

Generally, the lantern slide set covered the emblematic venues of the fairgrounds, like the Court of Abundance, the Court of the Universe, or the Tower of Jewels. Standing out among these structures was the Palace of Fine Arts, which made up more than ten percent of the entire set. Among

⁷⁹ D.H. Wulzen, “Kodakers at the Exposition,” *San Francisco Call*, May 25, 1913, 42.

⁸⁰ “Cameras at the Exposition,” *Camera Craft* 22, no. 4 (1915): 139.

⁸¹ “Club News and Notes,” *Camera Craft* 20, no. 9 (1913): 442.

⁸² “Club News and Notes,” *Camera Craft* 22, no. 10 (1915): 422.

⁸³ This board was elected in April 1915, see “The California Camera Club,” *Camera Craft* 22, no. 6 (1915): 236.

⁸⁴ “California Camera Club Lantern Slide Collection of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco History Center,” Online Archive of California, accessed March 10, 2018, <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/c87w6hsf>.

the few national pavilions in the series, two-thirds were consecrated to the Italian building, its inner court, fountains and statues. Tying in with the long-cultivated interest in Italian art, the slides reflected the general public's preferences with regard to world's fair coverage since the mid nineteenth century. As with stereoscopic views of the Paris Universal Exposition in 1867, the focus on Italian art, and especially sculpture and architecture, was strongly marked.⁸⁵ The coverage and later projection of views of arcades in the Italian court, as by Neymann (**fig. 9.21**), allowed the photographers to demarcate their aesthetic sensibility toward artistic tradition. Furthermore, hand-colored slides like Stellmann's view of Court Verrocchio reproduced a palette of Mediterranean tones with which the Californian landscape had also been associated (**fig. 9.22**). Through the combination of Italian arts with a Pacific Coast setting, ideas about the state as an "American Mediterranean" could be reemphasized. The attraction to arches entwined with blossoms, and to lone courtyards with fountains shimmering in the late afternoon sunlight, echoed the motifs Californian photographers had persistently sought out in the Spanish missions. In this choice of subject matter for the PPIE set, the practitioners' desired alignment with more ancient cultures and aesthetic traditions becomes again tangible.

It is through the depiction of fountains and palaces – oftentimes in dramatic nocturne settings – that Jellinek set himself apart in the lantern slide collection. His attraction to the architecture of the courts and their contrasting shapes illumined by the fair's night lighting was similarly appealing to the Exposition's official historian Frank Morton Todd. His aforementioned five-volume history of the PPIE, published in 1921, was amply illustrated. It would include 23 full-page reproductions by Jellinek. Represented in all five volumes as well as the annex, the CCC vice-president's work accompanied illustrations by other photographs, notably the official concessionaire Cardinell Vincent and William Hood, a civil engineer of the Southern Pacific. Jellinek's photographs were not only credited but already appreciated in the foreword to *The Story of the Exposition*, in which Todd singled out his nocturnes as "remarkable studies conveying the very feeling of the Exposition after nightfall."⁸⁶

The dramatic and yet refined atmosphere of Jellinek's nocturnes underlined the symbolic message of the favored architectural structures on the fairgrounds. Several locations stand out in his contributions to the CCC set, notably the Arch of the Setting Sun and the Palace of Fine Arts. The exact reproductions of these lantern slide images were later included in Todd's official history. Located at the center of the Exposition, at what was called the Court of the Universe, the Arch of the Setting Sun featured an ensemble of sculptures made by Alexander Stirling Calder (**fig. 9.23**, **fig.**

⁸⁵ See François Brunet, "Voir et revoir l'exposition en petit volume. La couverture stéréographique de l'Exposition universelle de 1867," *Transbordeur* 2 (2018): 132-134.

⁸⁶ Todd, *The Story of the Exposition*, Vol. 1, xvii.

9.24). The group consisted of a pioneer woman, a Spanish explorer, a French trapper, as well as a cowboy and a pioneer, above whom “the Spirit of Enterprise [...] presided over the march of progress and civilization.” This “foundational narrative,” as described by Sarah J. Moore, reflected the general tenor of the fairgrounds’ architecture. It recounted a history of conquest in “gendered terms,” and was poetically enriched by the inscription of Walt Whitman’s *Facing West from California’s Shores* on its Eastern façade. The “seeking of what is yet unfound,” evoked by the poet, was exemplified in the “tireless” track of the sculptural ensemble.⁸⁷ In unmistakably racialized terms, Todd’s *Story of the Exposition* identified them as “waste-conquering, desert-spanning breeds” of “aspiring and achieving races,” like the Italian, Spanish, French, or Anglo-Americans. Embodying “the thrusting heave of western ambition and progress,” they towered above the fairgrounds so as to proclaim a new century of American imperialism, envisioned from California.⁸⁸ The reproduction of Jellinek’s nocturne arch in Todd’s second volume, several pages before this grandiose description, anticipated a monumental interpretation of the westward-oriented structure. By the same token, when projected in front of local and national publics, Jellinek’s slide of the arch could provide a common ground of identification for viewers. Since the rhetoric with which it was entrenched in Todd’s publication mirrored the vocabulary used by the CCC, the photographer members aligned themselves with the historical grandeur and artistic achievement conveyed by the structure. Its reference to Mediterranean civilization and the spreading of progress had been a long-established trope in the Club’s work, manifested most visibly in coverage of the Californian missions, and thus, the history of territorial conquest and ‘civilizational’ advance.

Another structure that figured prominently in both the Club’s Exposition set and the official history was the Palace of Fine Arts. Designed by Berkeley architect and Hillside Club member Bernard Maybeck, the Palace and its location on the fairgrounds – facing the Palace of Machinery – were envisioned as the “combined expression of a civilized nation’s command of technology and embrace of the arts.”⁸⁹ Its appreciation in the lecture and as the most emblematic site in the official history point to its uses in the quest for cultural recognition. Jellinek’s nocturne photograph of the Palace’s colonnade – framed by Corinthian columns even more immense than the pines surrounding them – achieved the kind of aesthetic refinement which Californians had long sought (**fig. 9.25, fig. 9.26**). In Todd’s *Story*, the architectural achievement of the Palace of Fine Arts was said to have been appreciated by “qualified art critics, and visitors in general.” A fairgoer from the former group, a professor of Dutch art at Columbia University, was quoted exclaiming:

⁸⁷ Moore, *Empire on Display*, 109-112.

⁸⁸ Todd, *The Story of the Exposition*, Vol. 2, 302.

⁸⁹ Moore, *Empire on Display*, 113-115.

The Palace of Fine Arts is so sublime, so majestic, and is the product of such imagination that it would have graced the age Pericles. [...] It is not only the glory of San Francisco, but it ought to be the pride of all America. Nothing in any eastern city is at all comparable with it.⁹⁰

Bringing together notions of an American Mediterranean and localized expressions of national pride, the Palace would become the embodiment of the Californian quest for cultural recognition. After the fair, several attempts were made to preserve the building as the first permanent museum. Since the de Young Museum – a remnant of the 1894 Midwinter Exposition – had transformed into “an omnivorous all-purpose institution,” the need for a fine art institution was more strongly felt.⁹¹

The photographers’ exclusive focus on the Palace of Fine Arts and their complete omission of the Palace of Liberal Arts – where their works would be shown – reflects the continued need to insert the photographic productions of the fair into an artistic canon. Jellinek’s expansive coverage of the Palace in both the Club lecture and in Todd’s *Story of the Exposition* reveal the usefulness of such motifs to the prevalent Californian discourse (fig. 9.27). What merged on the fairgrounds and in its representations were hence associations with ancient civilizations of the Mediterranean, as well as their art and history. They became props assisting in the formulation of a new national history inspired by the closing of the frontier and the announcement of California as Pacific power. The representational tropes which had crystallized during the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893 could thus be reenacted, two decades later, in a local setting. By the time that the PPIE’s exhibits were shipped to San Diego in early 1916 – for the continuation of the celebration in the shape of the Panama-California Exposition – the “perpetuat[ion] [of] California as a scenic, bountiful paradise with a distinct regional history and ethnic flavor” was achieved from North to South.⁹² Despite the absence of a typescript accompanying the Club’s PPIE lantern slide set, it can be assumed that it integrated exactly these discourses. The adaptability of Jellinek’s nocturnes to Todd’s official history mirrors the persistent versatility with which Club photographers achieved to place their works into the broader context of cultural legitimation.

In the light of the intense output of promotional, illustrated literature on the PPIE, there is a broad range of other sources which could be mentioned.⁹³ As one of the city’s foremost arts and crafts publishers, Paul Elder produced *A Pictorial Survey* of the fair treating its architectural and landscape-gardening projects. Like Todd’s *Story*, it included official views by Cardinell Vincent alongside productions by local photographers, for example Jesse T. Banfield, who had been a member of the

⁹⁰ Todd, *The Story of the Exposition*, Vol. 2, 315.

⁹¹ The Palace of Fine Arts eventually became incorporated as the San Francisco Museum of Art in 1920 and initiated its role as fine art and collecting institution by the 1930s. See Ganz, introduction to *Jewel City*, 29-34. For further information, see also epilogue.

⁹² Bernstein, “Selling California, 1900-1920,” 98-99.

⁹³ For an exhaustive list of publications, see entry on 1915 in Marvin R. Nathan, *San Francisco’s International Expositions: A Bibliography* (Corvallis: Lawthorne Press, 1995).

CCC in the 1910s.⁹⁴ However, the last and most striking contribution to be discussed here is more directly related to the aforementioned Club board that was active during the year of the fair. Published with H.S. Crocker and Company, one of the oldest printing firms in California, Louis J. Stellmann's *That was a Dream worth building* came out in 1916 (**fig. 9.28**). It featured "camera studies" by the photographer, hand-colored by his wife.⁹⁵ In its lay-out that combined arts and crafts ornaments on thick paper with photographs juxtaposed to verse, the book reflected Stellmann's earlier publication *Vanished Ruin Era* with Paul Elder. It opened to a view of the exposition at dusk whose tonalities very much reflected earlier depictions of the ruined city (**fig. 9.29**). Its coalition of a husband's photography and a wife's handcraft embodied the aesthetic agenda of similar publications by Charles and Louise Keeler in the 1900s. Furthermore, it upheld the fable of the "great fire" which "was near to our undoing," while "the earthquake was a little thing beside it."⁹⁶ As in the post-disaster narrative, this framing allowed the author to develop a cathartic depiction of the catastrophe and to represent a resilient community.

When comparing Stellmann's contributions to the CCC set on the PPIE with the views reproduced in Crocker's publication, we can detect a marked interest in the coloring of images. The hand-colored illustrations by his wife in *That was a Dream worth building* may be seen as an extension of his experiments within Club circles during the fair. In addition, the Crocker company was a valuable collaborator, as it had been very active in the run-up to the event, publishing a series of panoramic views of the construction site that are stored at the Library of Congress today. Stellmann assembled the photographic prints, from which the twenty colored illustrations in the Crocker publication were taken, in an album in 1915. Including a total of 100 photographic prints and postcards, it showed daytime, nocturne and aerial views of the site. The focus on the Palace of Fine Arts, reproduced on the cover of Crocker's publication, is likewise present in the album which features the same view (**fig. 9.30**). While it is not clear whether the album was a personal assemblage or a professional commission, it can be guessed that it served as precursor to Stellmann's collaboration with the Crocker company. It may also integrate the products of the Club's outing to the fairgrounds in the summer of 1915.

Reproduced from myriad perspectives in the album and the book, the colonnades of the Palace of Fine Arts served as visual backdrop to the narration of "Dream Builders" who worked collectively

⁹⁴ Paul Elder, *The Architecture and Landscape Gardening of the Exposition: A Pictorial Survey of the Most Beautiful of the Architectural Compositions of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition* (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1915). On a one-man show by Jesse T. Banfield at the CCC in 1913, see E.B. Auerbach, "The Work of Jesse T. Banfield," *Camera Craft* 20, no. 2 (1913): 53-60.

⁹⁵ Louis J. Stellmann. *That was a Dream worth building: The Spirit of San Francisco's Great Fair Portrayed in Picture and Words. Reproductions from the Author's exclusive Camera Studies as colored by Edith Kinney Stellmann* (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Company Publishers, 1916).

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

toward the construction of an imaginary city (**fig. 9.31**, **fig. 9.32**). In a clear alignment with his earlier narrative of San Francisco in ruins, Stellmann reiterated the community dimension of construction in the wake of the disaster. Just like the city destroyed by fire was to rise from the ashes, the PPIE would be the product of communal imagination. This project was envisioned from and enriched by the harmonious narrative shaped by post-disaster publications. As such, San Francisco became linked once again to the nation, as Stellmann specified:

[A]ll [were] building a dream together in accord and amity, in zeal and efficiency incomparable. Under them an army of trained and united workers, back of them a city, a state, a country – nay, a world of watchers and well-wishers.⁹⁷

Stellmann's portrayal of San Franciscans as city builders and entrepreneurs was echoed in the Crocker publication through the showcasing of the instantly and collectively created "dream city," to which historical value was added in writing. The history-making dimension of *That was a Dream worth building* becomes tangible throughout its pages, through numerous allusions to the catastrophe, the rapid return to construction, and the imagination of the exposition site, which by the time of publication was already an event of the past. Here, the rebuilt city and the city of the PPIE merged into an imaginary space whose ideological value was nurtured by both. While the recently destroyed and rapidly rebuilt San Francisco represented an almost supernatural achievement, it was the Exposition city which attested to the long-advertised "spirit" that Stellmann, Keeler, and many other authors of the time had pointed out. Through these assertions, the book with its picturesque illustrations functioned to reinforce the decade-long mythology of the state. As Gray Brechin summarizes:

The Panama-Pacific International Exposition was a communal re-creation of a make-believe past for the raw, young settlement in California, an "ancient" walled city of plaster and lath lasting only nine months and then falling as in some biblical calamity. The romanticism of the fair was uniquely Californian [...] and was the cumulative product of the court scheme, illumination, color and – most of all – material.⁹⁸

The attraction to a cyclic depiction of ruination and rebuilding was embodied not only in Stellmann's lyrical portrayal in the Crocker book. It likewise constituted an important part of his individual album, which showed photographs of the construction site (**fig. 9.33**). Instead of focusing on scaffolding or machinery, Stellmann picked out an ensemble of sculptures stretched out on the ground in front of the Palace of Transportation. While, on the whole, the sculptural representations at the PPIE served to emphasize "a manly American empire,"⁹⁹ these gigantic, somewhat dormant,

⁹⁷ Ibid., 16.

⁹⁸ Gray A. Brechin, "Sailing to Byzantium: The Architecture of the Fair," in *The Anthropology of World's Fairs. San Francisco's Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915*, ed. Burton Benedict (London and Berkeley: The Lowie Museum of Anthropology in association with Scholar Press, 1983), 101.

⁹⁹ Moore, *Empire on Display*, 107.

figures of antiquity seemed to await their orders. Reminiscent of the colossus that Phelan envisioned overseeing the Pacific, the sculptures were to lend monumental grandeur to the fair. Rather than unmasking the processes of fair construction, in Stellmann's photograph they appeared as tools to be activated by the local fair-builders. This display of control – of fairground and of narrative construction – came full circle at the end of the fair in early 1916. While Stellmann did not cover views of fairground demolition in the album or the Crocker book, their destruction and its documentation became an essential feature of narrative closure for the period between 1906 and 1915 (fig. 9.34, fig. 9.35). The showcasing of monumental arches and sculpture ensembles toppling down provided more narrative value than the Nine-Years-After spectacle. It displayed the exertion of control over destruction processes and rooted the ruin iconography unmistakably in the past. This form of “ritual reenactment-in-reverse” of April 1906 was hence a clear demonstration of achievement. In other words, the demolition of the exposition city was “conceived and executed by rational and human rather than by mysterious and natural means, and therefore capable of yielding a pleasurable sadness rather than fear or horror.”¹⁰⁰ It was this cyclic and ritualized dimension which allowed Stellmann to speak of the “dream city” from a nostalgic point of view.

As Stellmann's collaboration with Crocker and Jellinek's work for Todd demonstrate, the Club's photographers remained loyal to their longstanding agenda of promotion, aesthetic appreciation, and historical narration. By engaging with all kinds of material supports, from lantern slides to albums and books in the run-up, staging, and aftermath of the fair, the network of local photographers once again displayed its strong anchorage in the state's sociocultural and commercial spheres. Even though Club affiliation itself was never precisely mentioned, as in the vast majority of preceding collaborations, the credit given to photographers and the agency they gained from these publications would mark their impact on the representation of the state. In the framework of the years between 1911 and 1915, the California Camera Club can still be considered a dynamic platform of exchange and communication for photographers with diversified interests, be they promotional, professional, or artistic. In this regard, the Club indeed fulfilled its self-proclaimed role in the *Annual* of being “more even than a State organization.”¹⁰¹

However, as the actual display of photography at the fair was a source of conflict and of diverging interest, it will be of interest in the following section to examine the activities within the CCC and its broader network in the ten years after the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. While the fair served as cement to hold together members in the communal project of Californian promotion, numerous other projects were pursued in parallel by members in the East Bay – and, increasingly, in

¹⁰⁰ George Starr, “Truth Unveiled: The Panama Pacific International Exposition and Its Interpreters,” in *The Anthropology of World's Fairs*, 161.

¹⁰¹ *First Annual California Camera Club*, 9.

San Francisco itself. It is from the perspective of the 1916 photographic salon at the Palace Hotel that these undertakings surfaced and two divergent strands of practice – one firmly rooted in Pictorialism, one increasingly attracted by outdoor leisure – ensued.

9.3 *The aftermath of 1915: toward a transitional moment in the local photography scene*

By the time that the Fifth International Photographic Salon was held under the auspices of the California Camera Club in the Palace Hotel in November 1916, the PPIE had been long removed from the city. With regard to the aftermath of the fair, photography collector Michael Wilson has remarked the following:

The enthusiasm and energy of the early Northern California Pictorialists was on the wane, but the movement was far from dead. Reinforced by a second generation of photographers centered primarily in Southern California, Pictorialism continued to be practiced until the Second World War. However, without the dynamic leadership which Stieglitz had provided for the early Pictorialists, the movement split into several branches and evolved in new directions. Many of the new generation followed the lead of British Pictorialists, treading the well-worn path of traditional themes, content to continue to produce landscapes and portraits in the style of turn-of-the-century photographers. Their names are mostly forgotten today.¹⁰²

In the light of these continued Pictorialist interests, the CCC's introduction to the salon catalog ties in with this long-advocated artistic stance. It claimed that the organization of an international exhibition was to "justify its own existence as a camera club," and "indicat[ed] in no uncertain way that the organization stands in its field for the highest expression of artistic achievement."¹⁰³ As these standards were sustained not only amid the CCC's Pictorialist affiliates, but also by other organizations, the dispersal of the movement into "several branches" cannot be exclusively related to the disappearance of the Photo-Secession. Both the Buffalo exhibition of 1910 and the last issue of *Camera Work* in 1917 have been considered watershed moments in the history of American photography, introducing a decade of new, yet less clearly defined styles, notably due to Stieglitz's dismissal of Pictorialist aesthetics. This stance, suggested by Wilson's catalog and other West Coast histories of photography,¹⁰⁴ does not take into account, however, the varying functions of the California Camera Club as hosting institution and exchange platform for photographers along the Pacific Coast.

As has been amply demonstrated throughout this thesis, East Coast developments of photography rarely triggered disruption within the local photographic scene. Instead, what needs to

¹⁰² Wilson, "Northern California: The Heart of the Storm," 17.

¹⁰³ *Catalogue of the Fifth International Photographic Salon* (San Francisco: California Camera Club and Taylor & Taylor, 1916), n.p.

¹⁰⁴ See Barich, "Acts of Attention," in *Picturing California: A Century of Photographic Genius*, 12-14; See also Sandra S. Phillips, "In the Beginning: Photography at the New San Francisco Museum of Art," in *San Francisco Museum of Modern Art: 75 Years of Looking Forward*, eds. Janet Bishop, Corey Keller, and Sarah Roberts (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2009), 95.

be considered with regard to the decade following the PPIE are the inner dynamics of the California Camera Club's membership. Having brought together practitioners with diverse interests under the banner of the state, the Club's local identity-building program shifted after 1915 and, in itself, developed different outlooks on photography as practice and style. If Pictorialism became more pluralistic and sought out different venues for appreciation, we must continue to focus on the CCC and the role it would assume – or not – in these endeavors. It is from this perspective that we need to approach the Club's adopted stance on Pictorialist practice as well as its newly introduced entertainment agenda of motion pictures and outdoor leisure. Moving from the development of a second-generation Pictorialism in the Bay Area and in California at large to the expanded social program of the Club, the rest of this chapter is going to reconstruct the various activities of which the Club both gained and lost hold. This network-based discussion allows us to understand how the CCC became a venue for newly emerging and later well-known photographers, while at the same time leaning toward an increasingly casual organization of its membership – which perhaps reinforced its oblivion in the long run.

Before turning to the Club's local activities rooted in the entertainment and leisure realm, it is important to examine its function as the host of a renewed and widely shared Pictorialist practice. The complex development of the local photographic scene, reaching out toward Southern California and diversifying in membership and in style, was reflected in *Camera Craft* from the first year after the PPIE. By October, the fifth salon was announced, aspiring to “measure up to the highest standard of artistic expression.”¹⁰⁵ Including 240 prints by 87 contributors, selected out 1,500 submissions, the salon was defined as a landmark event in the post-disaster chronology of local photographic activity.¹⁰⁶ A twelve-page criticism of the event was written by Sacramento photographer, Club member, and soon-to-be regular *Camera Craft* contributor John Paul Edwards. He insisted on the salon's novelty since 1906 and declared it “the only photographic exhibition of note that has been given on the Pacific Coast in years.” Emphasizing the necessity of salons on a repeated and geographically widespread scale, Edwards advocated for photography to “claim the high standing which is its due.” The article, which in its appraisal of Pictorialist aesthetics and quest for recognition mirrored photographic criticism of the early 1900s, selected Brigman as a source of inspiration. Camera Club members who had contributed to the PPIE display, like Neymann or Goetz, presented similarly dramatic nudes-in-landscape compositions at the exhibition, which were then

¹⁰⁵ “Fifth California Camera Club Salon,” *Camera Craft* 23, no. 10 (1916): 417. While the three salons held between 1901 and 1903 lay in the distant past, there is no information available on a fourth salon, its location, participants, or dates. No scholarly work or catalog on the period mentions a fourth salon. Apart from Kemp's announcement in the *Annual* of a salon to demonstrate the resilience of local photographers, it seems that the labeling of the event as “fifth salon” was simply erroneous.

¹⁰⁶ Numbers retrieved from *Catalogue of the Fifth International Photographic Salon*, n.p.

enthusiastically reproduced in *Camera Craft* (**fig. 9.36, fig. 9.37**).¹⁰⁷ Local newspapers – praising the staging of an internationally appealing event including prints from across the country as well as Canada and England – mused in the same turn-of-the-century vocabulary of Pictorialism. One *Chronicle* critic wrote: “The mechanical aspect of photography seems almost to have disappeared; lines have lost their hardness; perspectives are far-reaching and delicate, and light shifts and shimmers in accordance with the gravity of the subject.”¹⁰⁸

Interestingly, the jury of the salon and the list of contributors mentioned in the catalog foreshadow the intricate network of Californian Pictorialists of the following decade. Bringing together acclaimed critic Sadakichi Hartmann with renowned practitioner William Dasonville, the jury otherwise consisted of painter Xavier Martinez and architect Bernard R. Maybeck, who were prominent members of the aforementioned Berkeley circle. Contributors to the salon included, among others, the increasingly well-known CCC members Sewell, Stellmann, Neymann, and Goetz. They were joined by Imogen Cunningham from Seattle, as well as Louis Fleckenstein and Arthur Kales. The appearance of these latter three contributors pre-figures important developments which would take place in California during the following two decades. Cunningham, who had worked with Edward Curtis in Seattle and owned a portrait studio, would move to San Francisco the year after the 1916 salon.¹⁰⁹ While a new group of practitioners was to gather in the Bay Area, Los Angeles became a center for aspiring photographers by the late 1910s. Embodying the pull toward Southern California, Arthur Kales and Louis Fleckenstein represent an important link in the state’s artistic exchange axes. As collaborator of Curtis Bell in the Salon Club of America in the mid 1900s, Fleckenstein had been a central figure in the propagation of Pictorialist practice across the country. Moving to Los Angeles in 1907, he was considered, as Dennis Reed put it, “the first photographer of national reputation to settle in the area.” By 1915, he had become treasurer of the second-generation of the Los Angeles Camera Club (whose earlier version had disbanded in 1904), whose membership soon turned toward the Southern California Camera Club (SCCC). This Club expanded its network by inviting Bay Area Pictorialists like Laura Adams Armer or John Paul Edwards for lectures.¹¹⁰

A group formation that is more often remembered than the SCCC and in whose activities Fleckenstein, Kales, PPIE exhibitor Edward Weston and his then studio assistant Margrethe Mather became involved, were the Camera Pictorialists of Los Angeles. Founded in 1914, they held the first exhibition in 1916 at the Museum of Science, History and Art, and initiated a series of salons in 1918 that would continue until the 1950s. Weston had dropped out even before the first exhibition, yet in the early 1930s, his works were still reproduced as full-page illustrations in the deluxe edition of the

¹⁰⁷ John Paul Edwards, “The California Salon,” *Camera Craft* 24, no. 1 (1917): 3-15.

¹⁰⁸ Anna Cora Winchell, “Artists and Their Work,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 3, 1916, 18.

¹⁰⁹ Davis, *An American Century*, 134.

¹¹⁰ Reed, “Southern California Pictorialism: Its Modern Aspects,” 68-69.

Camera Pictorialists' catalog, alongside Cunningham, Fleckenstein, and Kales.¹¹¹ The latter praised these salons, which soon acquired a prestigious international dimension. Interpreting them as proof of California's "independent" art scene, Kales – who had moved from San Francisco to Los Angeles in 1917 – saw their widespread attraction as even more "remarkable when one considers their isolation."¹¹² The works shown in Los Angeles in this period became well-known for their "decidedly dramatic, staged look," inspired by the local movie industry. In the emerging Hollywood scene, Kales took portraits of actors like Gloria Swanson. He was joined by his student William Mortensen, a vigorous advocate of Pictorialism, who drew on stage props to create dramatic, somewhat Surrealist settings. The movement was joined by former Photo-Secession affiliate Karl Struss, who served as salon juror and engaged in motion picture production by the late 1920s. The booming entertainment environment, in which familiar elements of Pictorialist theatricality were exhilarated by the aesthetics of motion picture technology, became characteristic of Southern Californian practice in the interbellum period. It fostered an increased exchange among local photographers and the culture industries, which led to an appreciation of high-quality photographic illustration. In this context, collaborations between film and photography, paired with the affluence of tourism and renewed discoveries of oil in the region, constituted strong pull factors from North to South. It pushed newly appearing as well as leading Bay Area figures, like Anne Brigman, toward a move from San Francisco to the Los Angeles area.¹¹³

The attempt to demarcate a Californian Pictorialist style was reaffirmed in the pages of *Camera Craft* in this period. By late 1917, John Paul Edwards and Arthur Kales, as well as Edward Weston and Margrethe Mather, contributed to the London Salon of Photography, acknowledged as probably the most prestigious international exhibition venue of the time. As the only Californian, Weston was admitted membership to the Salon – a selection which was the source of great pride among West Coast photographer circles.¹¹⁴ The California Camera Club seized the occasion in November 1917 to exhibit "[a] collection of seven of Edward H. Weston's beautiful platinum prints" and recommended "all lovers of the art should not miss seeing them."¹¹⁵ While Weston's early Modernist work is exemplified in his sharp-edged still lifes of peppers and shells, as well as his contribution to the emblematic Film und Foto exhibition in Stuttgart in 1929, his strong involvement

¹¹¹ Ibid., 69-70; Peterson, *After the Photo-Secession*, 127, 134.

¹¹² Arthur F. Kales, quoted in *Photo-Era* (1919), taken from Reed, "Southern California Pictorialism: Its Modern Aspects," 71.

¹¹³ Reed, "Southern California Pictorialism: Its Modern Aspects," 71-74, 81; Peterson, *After the Photo-Secession*, 68-71.

¹¹⁴ "Our Workers at the London Salon," *Camera Craft* 24, no. 12 (1917): 516; see also Beth Gates Warren, *Artful Lives: Edward Weston, Margrethe Mather, and the Bohemians of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2011), 119-120.

¹¹⁵ Quoted from *California Camera Club Calendar for November 1917* (Ephemera collection on California Camera Club, California State Library, Sacramento).

in Pictorialist circles, notably around the time of the PPIE, cannot be denied.¹¹⁶ Portrayed as the catalyst of a revolt in photographic circles of the 1920s, “[taking] on the Pictorialists at every turn” by criticizing low-quality reproductions in *Camera Craft*, Weston can easily be portrayed as a West Coast avant-gardist.¹¹⁷ Yet, looking at his work solely through the lens of Modernist aesthetics means denying his engagement in the exchange network put into place by the California Camera Club decades earlier. Indeed, when evaluating a chronology of exhibitions featuring Weston’s work in the 1920s, his inclusion in the Southern Californian network – which at the time exhibited Karl Struss and Edward Curtis alongside Weston – becomes more strikingly visible. With his companion of the time, Margrethe Mather, he also held a joint exhibition at the California Camera Club in the summer of 1921.¹¹⁸

Rather than dividing Californian photographers in two incompatible stylistic categories, it is important to draw connections between them in the shape of renewed North-South ties and mutually beneficial platforms of visibility. In spite of the dominant narrative of Modernism, the development of photographic aesthetics between the 1910s and the 1930s has been rightly and recurrently described as “a highly diverse and complex phenomenon.” What appeared modern in subject matter – industrial landscapes, cities, abstract shapes – would be depicted in soft focus at the salons held in this period. Japanese aesthetics merged with geometric forms and produced a style that many critics found just as difficult to reckon.¹¹⁹ The intricate *mélange* of subject matter was likewise palpable in the techniques that were employed by salon photographers. As demonstrated by Keith Davis, the wide range of contributors to such exhibitions maintained, on the one hand, the Pictorialist manipulation of the print as testimony to the artistic potential of the medium, and, on the other hand, embraced the technicality of the medium as “straight photography,” using sharp focus and glossy paper. What was heralded in retrospect as a “straight” style in fact “represented an integral element of the overall salon aesthetic.” Held across the country and internationally, the salons were inclusive events that drew large numbers of practitioners and served as a first stage of visibility. In the East, this new form of inclusiveness was encouraged by the establishment of the Clarence White School in 1917 and the foundation of the Pictorial Photographers of America, which White oversaw with Käsebier and Struss.¹²⁰ Through these overlapping exhibition platforms and indiscriminately supportive structures, like *Camera Craft*, the later generation of well-known Modernist photographers were first granted a voice.

¹¹⁶ Davis, *An American Century*, 132-134.

¹¹⁷ Therese Thau Heyman, “Modernist Photography and the Group f.64,” in *On the Edge of America: California Modernist Art, 1900-1950*, ed. Paul J. Karlstrom (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 245-249.

¹¹⁸ Warren, *Artful Lives*, 350-351.

¹¹⁹ Reed, “Southern California Pictorialism: Its Modern Aspects,” 75-77.

¹²⁰ Davis, *An American Century*, 122-130.

An indispensable figure of both the post-PPIE history of the California Camera Club and of the heretofore illuminated local photography development was William Dasonville. As remarked in a rare and richly detailed biographical sketch by Peter Palmquist, Dasonville would be mostly remembered, in retrospect, for the fabrication of Charcoal Black Paper, which he started marketing as a brand in 1924. Sold across the U.S. and appearing in salon displays as far as England, the Dasonville Photographic Paper Company products had “matte surface and velvety tones” which “became a favorite of other Pictorialists of the era.”¹²¹ Photographs by Dasonville printed on his own paper in the mid 1920s embody the intertwined stylistic and technical development of the time (**fig. 9.38, fig. 9.39**). In the first, he showed the construction of the Russ Building in San Francisco from afar – with smokes ascending toward the sky. He framed the city through trees whose delicacy emulated the Japanese aesthetic. The second, a study of an oil refinery tank in Richmond, revealed contrasting geometric shapes, smoothed out by the soft tonal range of the print. In this, the varied practices of many photographers of the 1920s come to the fore, being “Modernists in subject matter and perspective” yet “remain[ing] Pictorialists in style.”¹²²

While Dasonville continued to be engaged in the CCC network, by giving lectures in the 1920s and demonstrating the favorable effects of his paper,¹²³ he also committed to the organization of a new photographic society, which has been largely omitted from the history of photography. It seemed that after three decades and four salons, the overarching presence of the California Camera Club in matters of Pictorialism, professionalism, and leisure practice did not suffice for its former affiliates. By late 1920, the Pictorial Photographic Society of San Francisco emerged and came to host five salons until the end of the decade. Its announcement in *Camera Craft* emphasized the importance of photographic exhibitions and considered the three salons held in the early 1900s as “long ago,” with the 1916 salon as a notable exception. Like the Camera Pictorialists in Los Angeles, the San Franciscan Society sought “to advance the position of photography among the fine arts” and strove for collaboration with museum institutions. Its membership included honorary CCC member Dr. H. D’Arcy Power, former CCC board Dr. Percy Neymann and Dr. E.O. Jellinek, as well as other Club members like John Paul Edwards. A recently unknown figure added to this list was Dorothea Lange, who had come to San Francisco in 1918 after having trained in Arnold Genthe’s New York studio and at the Clarence White School.¹²⁴ In its advocacy for exhibitions as the most powerful proof of photography as a fine-art medium, the new Society followed the appeal made by John Paul Edwards in the wake of the 1916 salon.

¹²¹ Palmquist, “William E. Dasonville: An Appreciation,” 22-24; Davis, *An American Century*, 130.

¹²² Wilson, “Northern California: The Heart of the Storm,” 18.

¹²³ Palmquist, “William E. Dasonville: An Appreciation,” 22.

¹²⁴ “New Society and a Coming Salon,” *Camera Craft* 28, no. 11 (1920): 378-379. The catalogs of the 1920s salons do not reveal any further involvement by Dorothea Lange. Information on Lange retrieved from Barich, “Acts of Attention,” 14.

While the role of and affiliation with the CCC were never mentioned and its members' relations to the new organization remains unclear, the Pictorial Society's first activities embody a clear departure from former Club practices. When the Emporium Department Store held its first photographic contest, sponsored by its photo supply department, members of the Pictorial Photographic Society donated a special loan exhibition which was "not entered for competition and [was] hung on separate screens."¹²⁵ The display – a small-scale staging reminiscent of the strict rules applied to loan exhibitions of the Photo-Secession – was envisioned as an explicitly non-commercial, high-quality body of work. Working toward the acceptance of the medium within museum walls, the Society's members collaborated with John Nilsen Laurvik, who, in 1920, was appointed Director of the recently incorporated San Francisco Museum of Art (SFMA). An art critic and journalist from New York, he was familiar with the country's photographic scene, having published on Anne Brigman in *Camera Work* and hung his own autochromes at 291 Gallery in 1909. As a result of his commitment to the Department of Fine Arts at the PPIE, Laurvik had acquired national fame.¹²⁶ In 1918, when involved with the San Francisco Art Association, he announced California at the forefront of the cultural scene, producing "[t]he most distinctively national expression in American art."¹²⁷

Laurvik was approached by the Society's photographers for improving the display of the first salon, held under the auspices of the SFAA. Sharing his knowledge on the curation of an exhibition space, he advised the photographers to opt for the use of uniform borders and mounting, so as to avoid the cluttered impression of salons in previous years.¹²⁸ A photograph of the salon space, reproduced in *Camera Craft*, was to alert contributors of this new practice (**fig. 9.40**). It was published by Oakland photographer Sigismund Blumann, who had refused to submit his work to the Pictorialist display at the PPIE, due to its imposed fee and the staging in the Palace of Liberal Arts.¹²⁹ As editor of *Camera Craft* between 1924 and 1933, Blumann would continue to encourage this form of devoted Pictorialist practice, praising the salons yet at the same time insisting on the inclusiveness of photography as an art form.¹³⁰

By the time of the third salon of the Pictorial Photographic Society in the fall of 1924, the jury of selection consisted of Laurvik, alongside Dassonville, John Paul Edwards, and Louis Goetz. It featured 278 works by 118 contributors, among whom Anne Brigman and Karl Struss, as well as a remarkable number of European photographers from Belgium, France, or Spain, as well as Austria

¹²⁵ Edgar Felloes, "Emporium Photographic Salon," *Camera Craft* 29, no. 7 (1921): 213-214.

¹²⁶ Ganz, introduction to *Jewel City*, 23-24, 33-34.

¹²⁷ Laurvik quoted in Nancy Boas and Marc Simpson, "Pastoral Visions at Continent's End: Painting of the Bay Area, 1890 to 1930," in *Facing Eden: 100 Years of Landscape Art in the Bay Area*, ed. Steven A. Nash (San Francisco and Berkeley: The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and University of California Press, 1995), 31.

¹²⁸ Sigismund Blumann, "Hanging Salon Prints," *Camera Craft* 29, no. 8 (1922): 379-381.

¹²⁹ Ganz, "Exposing Photography at the Fair," 238.

¹³⁰ Christian A. Peterson, "Sigismund Blumann: California Editor and Photographer," *History of Photography* 26, no. 1 (2002): 57-65.

and Czechoslovakia. Next to ads for *Camera Craft* and Charcoal Black Paper, the small catalog announced a collaboration with Laurvik's museum, notably "[a] selection of the exhibits [being] purchased for presentation to the permanent collection of the San Francisco Museum of Art."¹³¹ While the ambition to preserve photography in Western museums has been traced back to Ansel Adams, who is seen at the forefront of this development through his collaboration with both the San Francisco Museum of Art and the de Young Museum¹³² – the details of which will be discussed in the epilogue, – it is important to acknowledge this first attempt at institutional appreciation, instigated by photographers emerging from the California Camera Club's network. Eventually, the third salon could not live up to its preservation project due to administrative conflicts that would result in the dismissal of Laurvik in 1925. The following years, the salons were held at the California Palace of the Legion Honor, which had opened in November 1924 and served as temporary exhibition venue for all SFAA and SFMA activities until 1932. A replica of the French pavilion of the PPIE, the Palace had been sponsored by Claus Spreckels and his wife, and was considered a prestigious venue.¹³³ Even though they granted local, national, and international photographers unprecedented visibility on the West Coast, the salons did not result in the desired preservation amid the fine arts.

The salons held between 1924 and 1928 are noteworthy nonetheless in that they brought together affiliates of the CCC in a new structure, which was then enriched by a younger generation of photographers who would gain international recognition in the twentieth century. The fifth (and last) salon of 1928 is especially interesting in this regard, as it included contributions by Oscar Maurer and Arnold Genthe. Having disappeared from the local photographic scene for more than a decade, the two photographers joined the ranks of former Club colleagues like Dassonville and John Paul Edwards, accompanied by Karl Struss, and Laura Gilpin. The show, hosted at the galleries of the Legion of Honor in early fall, also included three prints by both Imogen Cunningham and Edward Weston. The former's *Glacial Lily* (**fig. 9.41**) prefigured just as much the sharp-focused aesthetics of the soon-to-be-formed Group f.64, as did the latter's *Shells* (**fig. 9.42**).¹³⁴ The crisp fossils, emblematic of Weston's dawning rejection of Pictorialist themes and techniques, would become his "best-selling print," taken after a trip to Mexico in the mid 1920s which had profoundly inspired his working process. While the formation of Group f.64 and its closer relationship to the CCC circle will be subject to closer examination in the epilogue, it is important at this point to emphasize the renewed encounter between former PPIE contributor Cunningham and Weston at the San Franciscan Society, as well as the opportunity the Salon provided for younger photographers. In this traditional Pictorialist

¹³¹ *Third Annual International Exhibition of Pictorial Photography. Held by the Pictorial Photographic Society of San Francisco* (San Francisco: Taylor & Taylor, 1924), n.p.

¹³² Phillips, "In the Beginning: Photography at the San Francisco Museum of Art," 95-100.

¹³³ Ganz, introduction to *Jewel City*, 34.

¹³⁴ *Fifth International Exhibition of Pictorial Photography. Held by the Pictorial Photographic Society of San Francisco* (San Francisco: (no publisher identified), 1928), n.p.

environment, Weston singled out Cunningham's *Glacial Lily* and wrote to her in admiration of the print. It was during the same exhibition that the Salon host John Paul Edwards – member of Pictorial Society and CCC – would introduce his daughter's companion Willard Van Dyke to Edward Weston. Through this acquaintance, Van Dyke came into contact with the broader photographic network emerging in Oakland, both at Brigman's studio at 683 Brockhurst Street and Cunningham's home in the same neighborhood.¹³⁵ As has been remarked with regard to the 1928 Salon, its peculiar mixture of Pictorialist meeting place and testing ground for new aesthetics made it a key event for aspiring photographers. The young Ansel Adams also figured among these and, as Anne Hammond put it, "it would have been odd if Adams, who lived not far from its exhibition venue, the Palace of the Legion of Honor, had not also visited it."¹³⁶

The works shown in the late 1920s salons can and must be connected to another movement, in which both Weston and the broader Pacific Coast photographic circles became involved. The inclusion of some ten Japanese photographers in the Fourth International Exhibition of Pictorial Photography at San Francisco in 1926 marked the opening of the local photographers' network and its move from a distanced adoption of aesthetics to a hands-on exchange with a formerly despised minority group. Weston, who had been introduced to the Japanese Camera Pictorialists of California (based in Little Tokyo in Los Angeles) by his companion Margrethe Mather, would show his post-Mexico work at their venue between 1925 and 1931. Other local photographers, like Arthur Kales, were likewise acquainted with the bustling network. Inspired by the formation of the Los Angeles Pictorialists under Weston in 1914, the Southern Californian group of Japanese photographers adopted a similar elitist approach and spent much energy and money on the organization of exhibitions. Its official formation in 1926 can be located within a broader chronology of Japanese camera club creation in the West, starting with the Japanese Camera Club of San Francisco in 1922 and the Seattle Camera Club in 1924. Both the Seattle and the Los Angeles groups have gained much critical attention in recent years, however, little is known of the San Francisco-based formation, which yet seems to have been "both the earliest and the largest Japanese camera club in America," with a membership of 120 in the early 1930s.¹³⁷ In the fourth salon, photographers from all three Japanese camera clubs from the Pacific Coast were represented, including submissions by K. Takahashi from San Francisco, Koryu Shindo from Los Angeles, and Hideo Onishi from Seattle. While single contributions by Japanese practitioners would be displayed before and after 1926, the fourth salon

¹³⁵ Mary Street Alinder, *Group f.64: Edward Weston, Ansel Adams, Imogen Cunningham, and the Community of Artists Who Revolutionized American Photography* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 18-22, 31-35, 48.

¹³⁶ Anne Hammond, "Ansel Adams and Objectivism: Making a Photograph with Group f/64," *History of Photography* 22, no. 2 (1998): 170.

¹³⁷ Reed, *Making Waves: Japanese-American Photography, 1920-1940*, 14-21, 40-49, 157. See also Martin and Bromberg, *Shadows of a Fleeting World: Pictorial Photography and the Seattle Camera Club*.

demonstrated a culmination of their impact, summarized in the catalog as “the most distinctive collection of pictorial photographic work ever exhibited in San Francisco.”¹³⁸

The aesthetics of Japanese photography and art in general had rarely been questioned by Pictorialist practitioners. Personal communication and exchange with these first-generation immigrants, however, was a novelty for San Franciscan photographers. Until the time of the PPIE – which in its organizational management by the city’s business elites was steeped in anti-Japanese sentiment, – local photographers had engaged in a process of “othering” of all productions originating in Asian communities. While the *mélange* of patterns, asymmetrical shapes, and two-dimensional compositions was as widely admired as the visual contemplation of water and mountains, the actual makers of these compositions were rarely granted a legitimate place. Japanese photographers remained “consistent with their artistic heritage,” yet also added elements of modern urban life, leading to a considerable body of work compatible with Californian productions of the 1920s.¹³⁹ As the Japanese camera clubs gained visibility, their influence would be contested and their photographs dismissed as “queer” compositions. Yet, confident personalities like Dr. Kyo Koike, founder of the Seattle Camera Club, asserted the idiosyncrasy of their style as a Japanese tradition adopted to the landscape of their new homeland of choice.¹⁴⁰

These discussions played out largely in the pages of *Camera Craft* in the late 1920s under the editorship of Blumann. A venue that would have been unthinkable for Japanese photographers only a few years earlier, *Camera Craft* willingly and enthusiastically reproduced Japanese works in this period. Aligning with their ideas, Blumann “thought they outperformed most American Pictorialists both technically and aesthetically.”¹⁴¹ The impact exerted by the Japanese photographic community on the self-understanding of local workers was strikingly expressed in a 1925 article by Blumann, entitled “Our Japanese Brother Artists” (**fig. 9.43**). There, he declared:

It is becoming an accepted belief that American Japanese are not only advancing in abstract Pictorialism but are impressing something national, something decidedly characteristic upon our art and in certain cases are transforming the stereotypical Salon.¹⁴²

Illustrated with photographs by Koike and other acclaimed photographers, the article saw the reproduction of Japanese works as useful to “further enlighten” local practitioners.¹⁴³ This form of inclusion of minority practitioners into what was claimed to be a strongly regional, Western canon demonstrates their influence and the move beyond prejudice – if only for a brief period until the mass

¹³⁸ *Fourth International Exhibition of Pictorial Photography. Held by the Pictorial Photographic Society of San Francisco* (San Francisco: (no publisher identified), 1926), n.p.

¹³⁹ Reed, “Southern California Pictorialism: Its Modern Aspect,” 83-86.

¹⁴⁰ Reed, *Making Waves: Japanese-American Photography, 1920-1940*, 27-29.

¹⁴¹ Peterson, “Sigismund Blumann: California Editor and Photographer,” 73.

¹⁴² Sigismund Blumann, “Our Japanese Brother Artists,” *Camera Craft* 32, no. 3 (1925): 109.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

incarceration of Japanese-Americans in the wake of the attack on Pearl Harbor.¹⁴⁴ As recently argued by Rachel Sailor, the Japanese Pictorialists of the Pacific Coast can be seen as “self-identified regionalists [seeking] national and international recognition for their work.” Their reliance on the local aesthetics of the American West led to an absorption of their works into a representative communal corpus – a development that was desired by many Californian photographers, as exemplified in Blumann’s appreciation.¹⁴⁵

While it is unclear when the Pictorial Photographic Society of San Francisco disbanded, its peak seemed to have been reached in the mid 1920s. A decade after the PPIE, the photographic scene of San Francisco was thus revived with a photographic organization that rectified the widely criticized flaws in the representation of the medium at the fair – and presented a more restrained alternative to the inclusive CCC. Through collaboration with collecting institutions, curators, and a dense international network of Pictorialism, the Society reestablished the Bay Area as an appealing venue for artistic display. Despite the failure of museum preservation and the recurrent omission of the Society in the history of the medium, its organization by former CCC members needs to be seen as an important springboard for the developments within the local scene in the 1930s. Furthermore, the acceptance and widespread embrace of Japanese practitioners points to a shift in the aesthetic and sociocultural conception of Californian photography. Even though the portrayal of a cosmopolitan San Francisco had appealed to and was used by Club members from the onset, it generally worked in tandem with a despise for minority populations. Before 1915, the emphasis on a pioneer tradition and the notion of Californian uniqueness in landscape, history, and culture prevented other voices and influences from emerging – other than through re-appropriation. The PPIE’s promotion of American imperialism reinforced this stance and re-politicized the practice within parts of the CCC. Yet, at the same time, the nucleus of Pictorialist affiliates who were engaged with the fair’s photography display came to develop a new outlook on the practice – detached from the Club’s dominant discourse. Departing from the self-definition and organizational scheme of the Club, the San Francisco Society conceived photographic practice in more narrow, and less community-rallying terms. While it continued to define and demarcate its style as Californian, it shed the rhetoric of a unique community within the larger context of the nation. With regard to this increasingly visible division, the PPIE indeed represents a transitional moment.

¹⁴⁴ Reed, *Making Waves: Japanese-American Photography, 1920-1940*, 51-57.

¹⁴⁵ Sailor, “‘You Must Become Dreamy:’ Complicating Japanese-American Pictorialism and the Early Twentieth-century Regional West,” 10-11.

9.4 The significance of “California” in the Camera Club after 1915

Having discussed the diversification of styles and techniques within the photographic community after the fair, it is important now to turn to the activities of the California Camera Club in the same period. Even though the Club did not serve as host of Pictorialist salons after 1916, it continued to function as a meeting place and display venue for both well-established figures and new enthusiasts of a hobby practice. The guiding question of this section part must then be what the label “California” would signify in the realm of the Camera Club in the light of these changing conceptions. Which activities were to define it as a local organization with a three-decade history and a firm anchorage in the local territory? And what actual role was to play the *collective* production of photographs?

With regard to Club organization and its available documentation for the years following the PPIE, a number of aspects need to be remarked. On the whole, it appears that by the early 1910s, *Camera Craft* became less devoted to the coverage of CCC activities. As reflected in the 1912 attempt of a *Club Annual* – which remained the sole collective report of annual activity ever published – the Club opted for its own publications instead of relying on coverage in the magazine. This process intensified after the PPIE, in 1917, when it brought out a monthly calendar that listed meetings, lectures, print exhibitions, as well as music soirées and dances at the headquarters in San Francisco and in the nearby Native Sons’ Hall. By 1920, the calendar was reshaped as a monthly, six-page newsletter entitled the *View Finder*. Its scant number of surviving copies in archives across the United States suggests continued publication until at least 1948, that is, six years after the absorption of *Camera Craft* by *American Photography*.¹⁴⁶ The dispersed documentation of Club work makes it more challenging to draw a comprehensive picture of its activities in these years. The Palmquist collection at the Beinecke Library, which includes an expansive file on the California Camera Club, confirms this hypothesis as its documentation of Club works after 1910 is extremely sparse when compared to the two preceding decades.¹⁴⁷

Despite the lack of comprehensive material, one phenomenon stands out among the surviving sources, that is, the Club’s reinforcement of its social agenda. Since congenial, non-photographic activities were a crucial component that attracted and motivated members, it is worthwhile to further illuminate this underestimated part of camera club work, which increased substantially throughout the period between 1910 and 1930. As Christian Peterson has remarked in his expansive study on the longevity of Pictorialism in the first half of the twentieth century, “fellowship and sociability were

¹⁴⁶ The monthly calendars are preserved in an ephemera collection on the California Camera Club at the California State Library, Sacramento. Several copies of the *View Finder* are in the collections of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the George Eastman House, and in the Palmquist Collection at the Beinecke Library. Both *Camera Craft* and *Photo-Era* were absorbed by *American Photography*, which ceased publication in 1953, see Griffin, “Amateur Photography and Pictorial Aesthetics,” 201.

¹⁴⁷ See Palmquist Collection (Box 213, 214).

key elements to success” of a camera club. Rightly noting the often-neglected social component of club activity, Peterson singled out the California Camera Club as a strong supporter of these features:

Pictorialists wanted to have fun at their hobby, not spend all their time hunched over trays of photographic chemicals in the darkroom. Most clubs maintained standing committees to organize a regular schedule of social and other special events, such as outings, dinners, and banquets. [...] The California Camera Club, for instance, made annual treks during the 1910s to Yosemite Valley, where one year more than four hundred club and family members camped for nine days. Annual camera-club banquets were social highlights throughout the post-Secession era. In a mood of conviviality and high spirits, members thanked officers, acknowledged leading exhibitors, and generally celebrated their successes.¹⁴⁸

What is important to realize with regard to this observation is the fact that the CCC had not started its congenial program in the “post-Secession” years. From the 1890s, it would be engaged in outdoor activities, which went far beyond the common framework of Pictorialist practice. Yet, it is true that by the time of the PPIE, the Club as a whole was more well-known for its varied entertainment offers than for its experimentation with photographic chemicals. It has become clear that while the 1916 salon was hosted under the auspices of the Club, a new set of figures crystallized and pushed strictly photographic – Pictorialist – work to new venues. Since Pictorialism was to be practiced, discussed, and displayed at times at the Club but also in the new Photographic Society by well-established figures, the names related to the social organization of the Club remain much more obscure. Through the significant shift in membership in the early 1910s and the disappearance of the first generation of CCC photographers, it is challenging to identify meaningful contributors for the following decades. The main focus will therefore be set on collectively planned activities.

By the time of the Club’s thirtieth anniversary in the spring of 1920, *Camera Craft* published a brief note on its history, recounting the dispute with the PCAPA and its “aim [...] to form of a scientific, social and art center for photographers.” While lectures were praised as attractive to large audiences, the short statement also drew attention to “outings, dances and card parties [...] on the social programme.”¹⁴⁹ In the summer of 1924, when the Club had moved to new headquarters at 45 Polk Street, where it would remain for the next three decades,¹⁵⁰ the improvement of photographic facilities – printing and developing rooms – was considered just as important as the addition of “a large social hall and a lounge [with] room not only for lantern lectures but for dancing, so that it is expected that the social nights will now be well attended.”¹⁵¹ The entertainment feature that had been launched on a broader scale by Edward Kemp – who was also on the entertainment and finance committee of the fifth CCC Salon – was increasingly covered in local newspapers in the late 1910s.

¹⁴⁸ Peterson, *After the Photo-Secession*, 130.

¹⁴⁹ “Club News and Notes,” *Camera Craft* 27, no. 4 (1920): 141.

¹⁵⁰ The *San Francisco Chronicle* published announcements on Club activity as late as 1952, listing 45 Polk Street as main address. For further information on the late history of the CCC, see epilogue.

¹⁵¹ “The California Camera Club,” *American Photography* 18 (1924): 706 (copy in Palmquist Collection, Box 214).

While art critics mused at the quality of Pictorialist work shown at the Palace Hotel in November 1916, the *Chronicle* similarly announced festivities at the Club rooms, like a Halloween party held a few weeks earlier, illustrated with a photograph of Club secretary McIntosh's daughters (**fig. 9.44**).¹⁵²

An important feature of the social agenda, in which entertainment and photographic work continued to merge, was the lecture series. The *Chronicle* announcement of the Halloween festivities is revealing in this regard as it included a notification on a lecture by Frederick Monsen on "Vanishing Indian Trails" at the Club the following week.¹⁵³ The lecture format was particularly appealing since it combined collective entertainment with new technologies and photographic appreciation of the local landscape. As Club officers had shown strong interest in motion pictures since the 1910s, they made it a full-time feature a decade later through the creation of a motion picture committee, designated to provide advice to amateurs.¹⁵⁴ Just like Kemp had predicted in 1914, the production of "moving-picture films of ourselves and relatives" to be "hand[ed] down as cherished heirlooms" came to constitute an attractive component of a hobby practice – and proved just as attractive when envisioned in a congenial framework.¹⁵⁵

In this regard, the Club's making and its use of motion pictures needs to be evaluated in the broader context of the developing entertainment industry in the early twentieth century. Its Christmas celebrations in the early 1900s – which regularly featured vaudeville, including comedians, magicians, and dances – echoed the broader appeal of such shows to "a Victorian middle-class audience." As Rydell and Kroes have demonstrated, vaudeville furnished "light-hearted performances" in an era of rapid social change and "helped sustain dominant beliefs about the presumed elite status of whites." By the same token, the advent of motion pictures – heralded by Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* in 1915 – provided "conduits for perpetuating ideologically laden messages about white supremacy." In the early twentieth century, these two forms of entertainment often went hand in hand.¹⁵⁶ The Club likewise followed this trend, hosting a five-part screening of Martin Johnson's feature film *Cannibals of the South Seas* in the summer of 1919 as part of their regular monthly lecture series. As Johnson's travels had commenced in San Francisco, the film was considered especially appealing to local publics who could identify with the "irresistible craving for adventure and the desire to record the manners and customs of the last strongholds of cannibalism."¹⁵⁷ As the Club had engaged in the re-appropriation and consumption of Asian and indigenous cultures

¹⁵² "Ghosts to meet on Halloween at Camera Club," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 22, 1916, 36.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ "California Camera Club and Motion Pictures," *Photo-Era* 57 (1926): 285 (copy in Palmquist Collection, Box 214).

¹⁵⁵ Kemp, "Twenty-five Years in Photography," 127.

¹⁵⁶ Robert W. Rydell and Rob Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna: The Americanization of the World, 1869-1922* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 23-26, 81; see also David Nasaw, *Going Out: The Rise and Fall of Public Amusements* (New York: BasicBooks, 1993), 19-33.

¹⁵⁷ Quoted from invitation to 345th regular monthly lecture, August 22, 1919 (Ephemera collection on California Camera Club, California State Library, Sacramento).

for decades – and made it an essential component of its leisure agenda in the early twentieth century – the collective screening of such movies can be seen as an extension of this interest. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, the general attitude vis-à-vis such lectures at camera clubs shifted toward pleasure rather than education. With the advent of motion pictures, a great number of clubs came to indulge in these new forms of entertainment.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, as Griffin as shown in his long-term study of camera clubs, the idea of “[t]echnical competence became more bound up with equipment and gadgets” in these years, “and less tied to a knowledge of chemistry and darkroom manipulation.” Through this shift, camera club photography was less exclusively defined as a sophisticated craft, and rather became “an alliance of amateur organizations and the photographic industry.”¹⁵⁹

Still, if moving pictures were to perpetuate dominant ideologies of the region or the nation, they need to be seen in the context of the broader lecturing program sustained by the Club. Shortly after its thirtieth birthday, members could look back on a substantial list of more than 350 illustrated lectures. In the framework of the PPIE and during its aftermath, the lecture series was revived with historical content. Since fairs embraced “a linear and specifically national understanding of history,” the surge in historical re-appreciation in the late 1910s and early 1920s is not surprising. It worked in tandem with the promotion of outdoor leisure and regional tourism – leading to a renewed enjoyment of the local landscape.¹⁶⁰ A remarkable number of lecture programs in the CCC ephemera collection at the California State Library (CSL) confirm this combined interest of historical landscape exploration and regional travel. Between 1916 and 1923, James W. Erwin would return to the Club to give his popular lecture on “Beauty Spots in California.” He was joined by Frederick Monsen who shared his longstanding documentation of Native American life in the Southwest in lectures such as “Vanishing Indian Trails.” Patriotic subject matter was similarly added in his lecture on “The Pioneers of the Great West.” The revival of turn-of-the-century themes was further extended by invitations to George Wharton James who lectured on numerous occasions in the late 1910s on the Franciscan Missions. Wharton James’ Los Angeles publisher, well established lecturer and University of Southern California professor B.R. Baumgardt also joined the lecture series.¹⁶¹ While well-known figures like Mrs. Kemp continued to entertain audiences with Grand Canyon slide shows, new lecturers like Herbert Gleason also made their appearance. As interior department inspector at the National Geographic Society and member of the Sierra Club, Gleason used photography to promote national parks and had illustrated a re-edition of John Muir’s *My First Summer in the Sierra* in 1911.

¹⁵⁸ Spindler, “Windows to the American Past: Lantern Slides as Historic Evidence,” 136-139. For further information on motion pictures, see Nasaw, *Going Out: The Rise and Fall of Public Amusements*, 154-240.

¹⁵⁹ Griffin, “Amateur Photography and Pictorial Aesthetics,” 217.

¹⁶⁰ Cocks, *Doing the Town*, 175-181.

¹⁶¹ B.R. Baumgardt published mission histories and guide books on Southern California with George Wharton James in the late 1890s; he also produced stereo views on Southern California in the 1900s.

At the CCC, he lectured on the variety of national parks in 1919, insisting that “California has more national parks than any other State in the Union.”¹⁶²

As these local lectures at the Club and at Native Sons’ Hall continued to draw considerable audiences, they need to be understood as renewed visual enticements to explore the landscape. The lectures’ invitation to explore the state’s natural sites and to collectively rejoice in the numerous offerings of outdoor leisure in the region was relaunched by Club members after the PPIE. The alignment with the Native Sons of the Golden West for the public lecture program is notable in this regard, as the Sons were strongly engaged in the making of a spatialized history of the state – and of a touristic promotion of “gold country.” By the 1920s, they benefited from automobile tourism to revive access to former mining towns and to eventually establish a “roadside historic marker program.”¹⁶³ While the CCC’s outings were oftentimes framed in the pioneer vein around the turn of the century so as to demarcate an adventurous photographic practice, the announcements of excursions two decades later took on a decidedly inclusive, amusement character.

If, in reality, photography had been one activity out of many during the flag-waving picnics in the early outings – much to the displeasure of members like Oscar Maurer – the late 1910s saw an unprecedented promotion of trips to the Yosemite under the Club banner. The embrace of such an accessible format of Club practice ties in with the development traced by Rachel Sailor for the period of the 1920s during which the notion of a “‘settler/pioneer/frontier’ photographer seemed to breathe a dying gasp as it was replaced by throngs of do-it-yourself ‘Kodakers.’”¹⁶⁴ By May 1917, the CCC announced its first “personally conducted excursion” in the Yosemite Valley advertisement section of the *Chronicle* (**fig. 9.45**).¹⁶⁵ Rather than making it an exclusive Club endeavor with a distinct photographic mission, the organization of these tours sought to attract a large number of local citizens – camera at hand or not. This ever-more inclusive dimension of the Club ties in with its circulating calendar of the period. In the summer of 1918, it urged participants to “Boost the Club! Bring in a New Member!” (**fig. 9.46**) The call for new members was introduced as follows:

You undoubtedly enjoy the privileges of the club, the monthly illustrated lectures, outings, dances and other activities, or you have would long since have resigned. Out of justice to the club which is affording you so much enjoyment for so little expenditure in the way of dues[,] why not tell your friends about the California Camera Club?¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² All information on the lecture program derived from the ephemera collection of the California Camera Club, California State Library, Sacramento. For further information on Gleason, see George Crossette, *The Western Wilderness of North America. Photos by Herbert W. Gleason* (Barre: Barre Publishers, 1972).

¹⁶³ Glassberg, *Sense of History*, 189-193, 197-199.

¹⁶⁴ Sailor, *Meaningful Places*, 135.

¹⁶⁵ “Join the California Camera Club,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 6, 1917, 36.

¹⁶⁶ *California Camera Club Calendar for April 1918* (Ephemera collection of the California Camera Club, California State Library, Sacramento).

The direct emphasis on the amusement features of the Club was made more attractive through the announcement of an inscription fee waiver until the summer of that year. In order to ensure the broadest participation possible, it was underlined that “[i]t is not essential that you have any knowledge of photography.”¹⁶⁷

While the camera and the exhibition of its products were progressively pushed to the margins of the club agenda, the label “California” experienced an upsurge in these years. Inspired by the dynamic lecture program on local subject matter, the outing program was directed toward an exploration of the immediate surroundings. This heightened interest in regional tourism on the part of the Club can be put into the broader context of national park promotion and American leisure in this period. As Lori Vermaas has demonstrated, the number of visitors to the Yosemite in the first two decades of the twentieth century multiplied by more than fifteen, flourishing from some 5,400 visitors in 1906 to 91,500 in 1921. This massive increase was related to the opening of the facilities to automobiles, starting in 1913. Within a decade, two-thirds of Yosemite’s visitors arrived by car rather than train, thus rapidly rendering superfluous the hitherto powerful railroad corporations “whose usage declined [at] an annual average 29 percent over the next ten years.”¹⁶⁸ As car production soared in the period around the PPIE – and was massively advertised on the fairgrounds in San Francisco – Californian publics were lured anew into the state’s parks. The recreational offerings formerly targeting the wealthy were gradually directed toward a middle-class clientele. Tying in with the “See America First” campaign and benefiting from the inefficiencies of train service during World War I, affordable automobile tourism became an appreciated pastime for broader publics. The promotion of this leisure agenda was reinforced by the newly appointed Director of the National Park Service, Stephen Mather, with a vast advertisement campaign that started the year before the PPIE’s official opening. A native of San Francisco and member of the Sierra Club, Mather recognized the appeal of automobile tourism to familiarize local and national audiences with the grandeur of the Western parks. The “easy driving distance” from both San Francisco and Los Angeles to the Yosemite made the idea of camping out in nature – and the prospect of “rejuvenat[ion]” by reconnecting with the natural environment – even more attractive to early twentieth-century urban populations.¹⁶⁹

Within Club circles, the shift in transportation means from train to automobile became likewise tangible. While the Southern Pacific’s facilitation of Club outings would continue for the next two decades,¹⁷⁰ members also became attracted to automobile tourism, especially in the Valley.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Vermaas, *Sequoia: The Heralded Tree in American Art and Culture*, 140.

¹⁶⁹ Hyde, “From Stagecoach to Packard Twin Six: Yosemite and the Changing Face of Tourism, 1880-1930,” 74-78. For further information on the park campaign and the broader development of automobile tourism in this period, see Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940*, 100-103, 130-168.

¹⁷⁰ As late as 1948, newspapers announced a “special coach” for the CCC on the Southern Pacific lines, see “California Camera Club,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, August 19, 1948, 12. The ephemera collection at the California State Library also includes brochures which specify special train service by the Southern Pacific and the Santa Fe railway.

Two slides from a 1919 excursion to Camp Yosemite in the lantern slide collection of the CCC at the Los Angeles Public Library illustrate this development. Here, a group of some eighty, predominantly female, members gathered in front of an imposing Valley scenery (**fig. 9.47**). Instead of proudly attaching the “club yell” to train cars as in previous decades, they held the banner in their hands, just above an inscription on the slide reading “C.C.C. Family.” This somewhat domesticized portrayal of the Club as a family emphasized the congenial dimension of its practice – as if the excursion were the long-awaited summer vacation meticulously planned by the whole group. The documentation of leisure activity in the Valley was supplemented by a slide showing four members about to drive off in a convertible car (**fig. 9.48**). Two other groups of four standing by on the porch at the Yosemite Lodge seemed to prepare for their embarkation on the next set of cars arriving. While this display of amusement certainly served to create bonds among the group when thrown on screen at soirées, it also confirms the increasingly dynamic shape of leisure and its relation to photographic activity.

By the mid 1910s, the local train companies remarked this shift in leisure transportation preferences toward individual automobile travel. To counter this development, the editor of *Sunset* published a call in *Camera Craft* appealing to the increasing diversity within the CCC membership – and photographic practitioner circles in general. Its wording reveals the consistent attraction to legitimize the state in images, yet in a more inclusive manner:

The editor wants pictures that will suggest the attractiveness of out-door life in California and on the Pacific Coast. And do not run away with the idea they want only masterly, artistic productions that portray immaculate dress, luxuriant ease and untroubled leisure, with a background of magnificent landscape. Take the chiquitas, the kids, in their jumpers and overalls, playing amongst the flowers or the fruit [...]; take anything that has some suggestion of the out-of-doors life that our equable climate makes such a matter of course with us, but which is so little enjoyed by out less fortunate Eastern friends. [...] You will not only invite a few dollars' return for your work, but you will help invite our Eastern friend to pay us a visit and perhaps remain.¹⁷¹

The rejection of “masterly” photographic works and the embrace of the authentic, everyday feeling of outdoor life went hand in hand with the mass-marketization of the medium at the time. As both regional tourism and photographic supply became affordable to large publics, the combination of the two was deemed most efficient to renew state promotion. Comfortable train rides, camping in the Valley, and snapshots of the family at play all became important features of California’s cultural representation. Such portrayals of a uniquely congenial lifestyle in tandem with nature’s benefits seems to have resonated with the majority of Club members by the early 1920s. The choice of train or automobile was not considered mutually exclusive, but rather functioned as an offering to attract the broadest base of interested practitioners. In this process, knowledge of the camera became more of a welcome accessory rather than a practical necessity.

¹⁷¹ “Some Pictures Wanted,” *Camera Craft* 20, no. 3 (1913): 133.

The gradual reinforcement of the CCC's outdoor and entertainment agenda is well documented in two albums covering the years between 1917 and 1924. Assembling a total of 650 photographs, the volumes show excursions to more than fifty locations in and around San Francisco. The city's famous venues like Golden Gate Park or Ocean Beach were just as present on the program as places in the vicinity, such as Berkeley or Stanford University. Members also toured Mount Tamalpais, Mill Valley, and the nearby cities of Santa Cruz, Stockton, and Sacramento. The maker of the album – an unknown, probably female member befriended or engaged with another male member who figures prominently in the photographs – mixed excursion with personal views. The mixture of group amusement and personal souvenir is tangible throughout the album: for example, a page in the first volume exposes a photograph of a group of six at Glacier Point next to a portrait of a woman captioned “In Our Garden” (**fig. 9.49**). It points to the voluntary interweave of personal life and Club affiliation. As announced in the CCC's calendar of the period, outings were planned in tandem with amusements at the headquarters in San Francisco – a feature which the album amply demonstrates. Be it a lavishly decorated Christmas tree in the Club rooms in 1917 (**fig. 9.50**) or a group portrait of some fifty disguised members celebrating a “Valentine-Yama-Yama-Party” in 1919 (probably inspired by a song from the Broadway musical *The Three Twins*) (**fig. 9.51**), the impression of a camera club “family” certainly manifests itself when leafing through the pages. Getting together for religious as well as cultural celebrations, alongside the monthly excursion agenda, members would spend considerable time – and money – on the realization of their calendar. On the whole, the Bay Area would remain the pre-eminent location for such staging of friendship and escapade. Exploring the vicinities, Club members continued a tradition that had been initiated thirty years earlier. In line with this custom, the album showcased a substantial number of photographs taken in Golden Gate Park, including the former site of the Midwinter Fair and the Portals of the Past (**fig. 9.52**, **fig. 9.53**).

The mediocre quality of the prints – reminiscent of Crittenden Van Wyck's album – as well as the at times sloppy assemblage of photographs pasted over one another or cropped haphazardly does not necessarily qualify the album as the product of camera club member. As the description by the book dealer from whom the album was purchased indicates:

A fine collection of spontaneous snapshots (of individuals and groups) as well as many studies of outdoor scenes in California. [...] Nice record of leisure time spent outdoors in California — and doubly so, being the photographic record of an amateur photographer.¹⁷²

Interestingly, it is the documentation of outdoor activity in California and the unsophisticated character of the images which is appreciated here – the exact features that *Sunset* magazine also called for in the 1910s. Tying in with the gradual appreciation of snapshots and amateur albums as sources

¹⁷² Description by Schoyer's Books, included in “Photograph album documenting California Camera Club outings 1917-1924” (photCL 438), the Huntington Library, San Marino.

of historical value, worthy of institutional preservation, the purchase of the album in 2000 points to the recognition of its value as an authentic record of American culture. As an historical object encompassing more than simply the activities of a camera club, the album does function as a source from which numerous inquiries of social life and leisure in the early twentieth century could ensue. By the same token, its hybridity and the diversity of covered terrain confirm the hypothesis that photographic work was one out of many aspects of club work by the late 1910s. Within the 650-image sequence, photographic apparatus and Club banners feature only rarely, even though group shots taken during hikes or picnics are quite frequent. The documentation of camera club practice is visible on several occasions, for example in a portrait taken of the maker's companion setting up a tripod in a park in Sacramento (**fig. 9.54**). A page-spread with four images of an outing to Alcatraz and San Francisco Bay in the summer of 1919 also provides a hint at the collective engagement in photographic work, showing the setting up of cameras by the shore (**fig. 9.55**).

Despite the lack of expansive documentation of actual photographic work, the album's dense physicality and its seven-year coverage attest to the constant presence of cameras. Whereas the showcasing of engagement in camera work seemed less important than a few decades earlier, the unifying dimension of the practice – shared by all participants – was the continued interest in the Californian landscape. Rather than depicting themselves as dedicated photographers, the members shown in the album and the lantern slides demonstrate congenial enjoyment and a consuming interest in anything pertaining to the local surroundings. What was at stake here was then less the legitimization of the state as a place of historical meaning or aesthetic value, but rather, the display of a shared enthusiasm for the local community and its environment. In the face of the absence of further information on the album's maker and the object's itinerary over time, it is challenging to draw a comprehensive picture of Club practice in these years. However, given the documentation in newspapers and calendars, alongside the sparsity of Club information in *Camera Craft*, the albums confirm the broader development observed for the post-PPIE period. Remaining a “state organization” in the literal sense, the Club expanded its regional exploration while seeking to draw an ever-increasing number of participants regardless of their commitment to photography.

Since the CCC had defined itself as an important local association – and was listed as such alongside the Bohemian Club in the state's tourist guides¹⁷³ – it came to consider its output as worthy of preservation by the late 1910s. As the *Annual* had asserted the longstanding position of members within the community and the historical role of the Club in promoting the state, it was deemed essential to preserve exactly this form of community engagement in the local collecting institutions. By 1917, the Club started to send its invitational programs of special excursions to the Sutro Branch

¹⁷³ See for example *California Tourist Guide and Handbook. Authentic Description of Routes of Travel and Points of Interest in California* (Berkeley: Western Guidebook Company, 1913), 61-62.

of the California State Library, which had opened the same year. As suggested by a CSL librarian, locally based organizations “were most likely encouraged in the beginning stages of the library to add this bit of history to the California History Collection.” The collection of ex-mayor Adolph Sutro was considered one of the most prestigious in the world during the 1890s, including many rare books and manuscripts. After the opening of the branch in 1917, Club officials sent in calendars, lecture announcements, and brochures for the widely advertised personally conducted Yosemite tours (**fig. 9.56, fig. 9.57**).¹⁷⁴

It is not clear which materials were open for donation to the history file of the CSL, yet it is striking to remark that the material chosen by the Club exclusively reflects its social program. Rather than sending copies of *Camera Craft* or actual photographic works, it was considered important to represent the Club’s involvement in the state. The choices with regard to preservation made in 1917 resonated with the discourse adopted in the *Annual* a few years earlier, which underlined the Club’s role in local boosterism. The donation of items related to the social program confirms an historical awareness of the Club’s interweave in sociocultural life and promotion. Yet, at the same time, it illustrates the continued lack of awareness on the part of its membership with regard to the preservation of its own photographic production. Despite the boastful rhetoric of preservation held before 1906 – and the repeatedly asserted ambition to “secure” San Francisco on “a thousand plates” – it seems that neither the catastrophe of 1906, nor the gradual disappearance of the Club’s first generation of photographers sparked a serious archival undertaking. An actual donation of photography-related material to a local library would not occur until 1935, when the Club’s collection of lantern slides of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition were given to the San Francisco Public Library.¹⁷⁵ Instead of inscribing the members’ works in the history collection of the state, it was decided to pay tribute to the Club’s on-site engagement with the region. In this, the members of the post-PPIE years reiterated the Club’s firm Californian anchorage while at the same time losing sight of its long-advocated photographic work of lecturing, print exchange, and exhibition. With such preference of social features over photographic work, the relevance of these activities for the self-understanding of a camera club is underlined. Through the tracing of this counter-development, we come to grasp the dispersion of San Francisco’s photographic scene in the wake of the fair of 1915.

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Over the course of three decades, the California Camera Club’s self-definition as “a scientific, social, and art center for photographers” was upheld by its diversity of practitioners, who found in

¹⁷⁴ Karen Paige (Librarian, California State Library), e-mail message to author, April 18, 2017; “History of the California State Library,” California State Library, accessed April 9, 2018, <http://www.library.ca.gov/about/history/>. The material is stored in Sacramento today as the history collection was progressively transferred to the state capital. It is accessible in the shape of an ephemera file on the California Camera Club.

¹⁷⁵ Information derived from finding aid to collection, see “California Camera Club Lantern Slide Collection of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition,” Online Archive of California.

the state's environment an inspiration for their work. Yet, in the decade of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition – after the significant rupture imposed by the earthquake and fire – the network expanded and fragmented. While the fair served as a unifying motif, it was the display of fine arts and technology on its grounds, as well as the conflicting dynamics within the photographic section, which laid open an increasingly apparent schism. In the decade following the fair, two tropes of photographic practice hence crystallized. At times, these operated in separated spheres, and yet they remained tied to the original support structure furnished by the California Camera Club.

On the one hand, a nucleus of practitioners related to the first generation of the CCC – notably Kemp, Tibbitts, and Stellmann, – continued to promote the state via their photographic work in official publications, commissioned albums, and lectures. The ideological breeding ground of the fair, its affirmation of San Francisco's geostrategic power, and its unprecedented display of architectural sophistication and fine-art appreciation provided Club members with the necessary tools to reactivate and circulate their shared visual vocabulary. In this, the PPIE provided a logical extension of the collectively developed discourse on the state and its photographic depiction. After the fair, and with the disappearance of a strong rallying motif like an international exposition, the circle sought renewed impetus for its practice in the Californian landscape. However, rather than opting for a legitimizing discourse of aesthetic sophistication and historic depth, the practitioners embraced an inclusive vision by promoting the accessibility of both the surroundings and the photographic medium. In this, they relied on modern technology, including the automobile and the Kodak camera for outdoor leisure use. Through the substantial expansion of a social program with regular entertainments, lectures, and outings – at which the camera figured as a backdrop – this second generation of Club membership embraced new trends, at the expense of the historical role the CCC had embodied. Celebrating the “social” rather than the “art center,” they gradually discarded a hitherto essential aspect of the Club, that is, its active engagement, experimentation, and exchange of photographic work. In this vein, the program was oriented toward the needs of those “who follow photography [...] as an adjunct to some other hobby or sport, such as hiking, or who snapshot pictures for the pleasure which they get from seeing familiar faces and places permanently recorded.”¹⁷⁶ While the embrace of a social program was never an exclusive domain, it nonetheless led to a considerable change in large-scale exhibition or salon projects, which were to be organized by others. Through this gradual shift in the agenda, the desire for a more exclusively photographic circle emerged in the new decade.

This development, on the other hand, concerned a number of affirmed practitioners who had been affiliated – and for a large part remained closely associated with – the CCC. Emerging out of the Berkeley art circles and the PPIE's contributors, Club members like Dassonville or Neymann

¹⁷⁶ Baumgaertel, “What the California Camera Club is and does,” 410.

came to form the new Pictorial Photographic Society. The salon of 1916, held under the auspices of the CCC, can be taken as the onset of this group, which also attracted newly appearing figures like John Paul Edwards. Their program, aiming to appreciate photography as a fine art medium in an institutional setting, was carried out with remarkable ardor in one decade and resulted in five salons, two of which were held at the city's recently opened Legion of Honor Museum. Inviting Japanese practitioners and granting space to the bold aesthetics of sharp-focus and glossy prints, the San Francisco Pictorialists manifested a consuming interest in the possibilities of photographic art. While continuing to appreciate the idiosyncrasies of the Californian landscape, they did not make their work subject to a specific group rhetoric or subject matter. The absence of written sources on the Pictorial Photographic Society seems to underline this stance of a reinforced visual appreciation – rather than a grand collective discourse. Whereas there is no information available on the disintegration of this group, whose records disappear after the 1920s, it constituted a key development in the local photographic scene. It granted visibility to a number of new photographers to showcase their work in an appreciative, institutional setting, and at the same time allowed longstanding figures to explore new venues other than the ever-more-inclusive California Camera Club.

Despite this fragmentation and the Club's leaning toward entertainment and excursion features, its continued role as meeting and exchange platform requires emphasis. Regardless of its reinforced amusement-oriented agenda of the early 1920s, the Club did remain faithful to its versatility as a communal photographic organization. For the period around 1915, this adaptability was embodied by figures like Howard Tibbitts, who promoted the PPIE in commissioned albums conceived with other members, *and* served on the committee of the pictorial section at the Department of Liberal Arts. Louis Stellmann, who published a nostalgic history of the PPIE with H.S. Crocker also remained involved in Pictorialist circles, by submitting articles to Eastern journals or experimenting with hand-colored lantern slides. The consistent overlap of activities is likewise tangible in the Club calendar of 1917, which on the one hand advertised personally conducted tours to the Yosemite, and yet devoted the headquarters' exhibition space to Edward Weston for an entire month. The Club statement of 1915, outlined in a prospectus in its very own grandiose wording, eventually seems to summarize best these overlapping interests:

The California Camera Club is the most unique institution of its kind in the United States, and also has the largest membership. It not only provides a rendezvous where advanced photographers may meet, compare notes and do their own photographic work, but it also forms a complete school of instruction for beginners and amateur kodakers. In addition to being the official headquarters of the craft generally, the California Camera Club is undoubtedly one of the greatest publicity mediums of the State through the wide distribution given its pictorial productions; therefore, it is an institution whose growth should be fostered and work encouraged, by every citizen who has the interest of the State at heart.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷ *Prospectus of the California Camera Club*, dated ca. 1915 (Ephemera collection on California Camera Club, California State Library).

Histories of photography, as dismissive as they may be with regard to the complex histories of camera clubs, have recognized their importance as a network base from which both experienced and new photographers may benefit. In this regard, the CCC continued to furnish the stage for Pictorialist photographers who were strongly engaged in other, more exclusive societies in San Francisco and Los Angeles. Between 1918 and 1935, as indicated in Peterson's long-term study of American Pictorialism, the Club hosted one-man shows by leading figures like Arthur Kales (1918, 1919), Karl Struss (1929), and William Mortensen (1928, 1929, 1934). While these were acclaimed Californian photographers, they did not belong to the Club's membership. The only long-term member regularly honored with solo exhibitions was William Dasonville, who showed his work as late as 1935.¹⁷⁸ This distinction between one-man shows by members and invited photographers is important, in that it reflects the CCC's changing function as a camera club. It held print exhibitions for decades after the PPIE, and yet did not generate a new circle of notable practitioners within its own ranks, as can be identified for the first two decades of its existence. Rather than forging a second generation of photographers, the Club served as a host whose exhibition platform was deeply rooted in the local infrastructure, and ensured substantial visibility and attendance.

It is from this perspective that we must approach the often-mentioned yet rarely fully explored connection between Ansel Adams and William Dasonville. It is in this encounter, and its subsequently diverging narrations, that the importance of the PPIE as a transitional moment in the history of the medium is exemplified. As Peter Palmquist wrote in a biographical sketch, the two met at the California Camera Club in the mid 1920s. Appreciating his hospitality and willingness to share his knowledge as acclaimed professional photographer, Adams would pay regular visits to Dasonville and used his Charcoal Black Paper until as late as 1933. When Adams's lavishly illustrated book publication *Taos Pueblo* came out in 1930, the San Franciscan supplier developed a specially manufactured paper to underline the visual appeal of the architecture and portraits of the ancient Native American community.¹⁷⁹ Its aesthetics, which curator Weston Naef described as "reminiscent of Edward Curtis," as well as its conception with the Santa Fe novelist Mary Austin, makes *Taos Pueblo* a publication that mirrors the persistently popular iconography of the Southwestern landscape¹⁸⁰ – an aspect that was similarly shared among Club members and which Dasonville himself had pursued in his luxurious albums of California missions. The connection between Adams and the CCC member was confirmed by his biographer,¹⁸¹ and was expanded by

¹⁷⁸ Peterson, *After the Photo-Secession*, 181, 192, 197, 205.

¹⁷⁹ Palmquist, "William E. Dasonville: An Appreciation," 25-26.

¹⁸⁰ See Weston J. Naef, afterword to *Taos Pueblo. Photographed by Ansel Easton Adams, and described by Mary Austin* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1977), n.p. For further information on Adams and the Southwestern iconography, see Theresa Salazar, "Ansel Adams and the Spanish Colonial Arts," *History of Photography* 22, no. 2 (1998): 161-168.

¹⁸¹ Mary Street Alinder, *Ansel Adams: A Biography. Revised and Updated Edition* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 31-32.

historian Anne Hammond who stated that “Adams himself also belonged to a Pictorialist group in Northern California, the California Camera Club, where he had met Dassonville in about 1926, and as late as 1930 was involved in organizing jointly an exhibition with him.”¹⁸²

While Adams’s specific affiliation is difficult to verify due to the absence of membership records and his own contradictory statements concerning the Club, it is important to acknowledge his evident outreach to the Club network. Even though the CCC occasionally appears as a side- or footnote to histories of Group f.64,¹⁸³ its function as display venue and meeting point, as well as its firm historical anchorage in the city, are constantly discarded. With the rise of Modernist aesthetics in the early 1930s, Adams’s rejection of Dassonville’s paper, which apparently “broke [the latter’s] heart,”¹⁸⁴ as well as his subsequent collaboration with the de Young Museum, the San Francisco Museum of Art, and the New York MoMA under Newhall in the creation of photographic collections, a selective canon of the medium would be shaped in which there was no space for the diverse aesthetics and undertakings of a local camera club.¹⁸⁵ The narrative of rejection was reinforced in retrospect by Adams himself, who remembered abandoning the PPIE’s pictorial section, since “the Camera Club show was so dreadful I looked at part of it and just left.”¹⁸⁶ Whereas his apparent interest in the radical modern art section at the fair has been affirmed on numerous occasions, his biographer Mary Alinder references Adams saying that “he had no memory of the photographs, although he surely saw them.”¹⁸⁷ Given his well-known attraction to Pictorialist aesthetics in the 1920s, the harsh retrospective judgment on the Club display – which included Dassonville – must be taken with at least a pinch of salt. As Jim Ganz brilliantly disclosed in his 2015 catalog on the fair, one image among Adams’s “earliest known photographs, a view of Maybeck’s Palace of Fine Arts” perfectly illustrates his practice of Pictorialist aesthetics (**fig. 9.58**).¹⁸⁸ In its use of soft focus and its suggestive outlook on the lagoon, the photograph could be smoothly inserted in the Club members’ PPIE works produced at the same moment.

The repercussions of this omission, as well as other instances of discursive framing and selecting, will be more extensively discussed in the following epilogue, so as to understand how the Club and its corpus would gradually lose their place in photographic history in the decades following the fair. However, what this specific encounter and Adams’s photograph demonstrate is the transitional moment of photography that played out at the fair, in its run-up, and its aftermath. As a space where new styles were tested, modern technologies advanced, and old paradigms reactivated,

¹⁸² Hammond, “Ansel Adams and Objectivism,” 170; see also Anne Hammond, *Ansel Adams: Divine Performance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 66.

¹⁸³ See Alinder, *Group f.64*, 21, 31; see also Heyman, “Modernist Photography and the Group f.64,” 269.

¹⁸⁴ Adams quoted in Palmquist, “William E. Dassonville: An Appreciation,” 26.

¹⁸⁵ Philips, “In the Beginning: Photography at the New San Francisco Museum of Art,” 97-99.

¹⁸⁶ Adams quoted in Ganz, “Exposing Photography at the Fair,” 248.

¹⁸⁷ Alinder, *Group f.64*, 53.

¹⁸⁸ Ganz, “Exposing Photography at the Fair,” 248.

the PPIE must be seen as a fertile terrain from which ideas about photographic practice were renegotiated. As the last appearance of the first California Camera Club generation, it provided an ideal moment to reaffirm the vision of a pioneer community and to emphasize its communal role. While the discourse on Californian uniqueness and legitimacy would decline in the following years, the strong anchorage within the photographic community – profoundly shaped by the Club’s decade-long, state-wide outreach – persisted. This affirmed position within the local scene made the Club a key operator for the attraction of new camera enthusiasts, the sharing of knowledge by professionals, and the exchange among aspiring photographers. Even though the demise of the original Club setup and its high-spirited, turn-of-the-century ambition to legitimize and to promote was inevitable in these circumstances, it would remain an important communication organ whose contributors could benefit from three decades of on-site experience.

Epilogue

The “good old California Camera Club” and the institutionalization of photography in the 1930s

Drawing on the extensive analysis of network-formation, Club development and dispersion in the previous chapters, and especially around the time of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, the aim of this epilogue is to provide a new historiographical understanding of Californian photography through the lens of the three-decade history of the California Camera Club and its gradual demise after 1915. Based on the aforementioned, far-reaching changes in the decade of the fair, this discussion seeks to interrogate the sociocultural dynamics as well as the institutional processes that led to the disappearance of the CCC and have reinforced its subsequent oblivion in the history of photography at large. With a focus on the shifting activities of the second-generation CCC and the creation of a photographic history in line with the earlier-mentioned processes of Stieglitz’s and Newhall’s selection, this epilogue will illuminate the early history of photography collections in the Bay Area and the role of individual figures like Ansel Adams in the forging of a deliberately selective canon.

The goal of this historical reconstruction is two-fold: on the one hand, it allows us to illustrate the processes of selection at the heart of the institutional recognition of photography, as well as their actors who made self-conscious choices. A critical outlook on the activities and the convictions of newly emerging and long-established figures, Adams and Stieglitz respectively, helps us trace the processes of canon-formation which functioned at the expense of the CCC’s productions. On the other hand, from the perspective of the Camera Club and its continued involvements in the photographic scene, even after 1915, an attempt will be made to propose an alternative history of photography in which its diverse membership and its versatile understanding of photography may gain its long overdue, visible, and legitimate place. It will be an endeavor to counterweigh the neglect of the CCC, despite its losses in the catastrophe and its lack of comprehensive corpora or sustained preservation. Through this consideration of both historical circumstances and historiographical phenomena, an answer to the lingering question of why the corpus has been forgotten may eventually unfold.

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To understand the relevance of the PPIE for the rapidly emerging formation of a “history of photography” canon, it is useful to point out several encounters that took place on the fairgrounds and are more broadly related to the period around World War I. As has been demonstrated in Ganz’s centennial catalog, the photographic display at the San Francisco fair reflected the firm base of commercial and artistic practitioners in the city. In the former category, prosperous photographer Willard Worden showed panoramas and hand-colored prints which “could be exceptionally delicate and refined, yet [...] [were] looked down upon by such members of the photographic intelligentsia

as Stieglitz and Weston as a cheap corruption of the medium.”¹ While Edward Weston would affirm his role as critic and taste-maker later on, the contemporary impact of Stieglitz’s judgment on such productions is tangible until today. As suggested by Hull with regard to the New York circle, the “power to displace” by discarding entire ranks of stylistically less monolithic practitioners has reinforced the neglect of important commercial photographers.² Worden, whose corpus has been re-appreciated in a recent monograph, remains part of this group which Ganz rightly identifies as “nearly forgotten figure[s] in the history of Bay Area photography between the periods dominated respectively by Carleton Watkins and Ansel Adams.”³ Despite his refusal to collaborate with former Secession affiliates Brigman and Bruguière in the pictorial section at the PPIE, Stieglitz was very much present at the fair. He served as juror in the popular photo contest “America’s 50 Loveliest Women” launched by the Ansco Company – a competitor of Eastman Kodak with a booth located right next to Worden’s. As the company boasted of Stieglitz’s participation on the selection committee, it published a series of ads in *Camera Craft* in the run-up to the fair, qualifying the ensuing exhibition as “the most memorable in the history of the photographic art.” Open to “any style camera, or any film, plate or paper,” the contest attracted amateurs and professionals with prizes ranging from fifty to five hundred dollars.⁴

While Stieglitz’s participation in such popular events with innumerable submissions from across the country has been recurrently remarked by scholars, and similarly discussed in this thesis, it is particularly remarkable in the context of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition where a group newly aspiring practitioners like Adams, Weston, and Strand – whom Stieglitz later acknowledged – was likewise present. As Ganz reveals, Strand wrote to his mother from the fairgrounds, mentioning the enjoyable displays as well as a visit to Anne Brigman’s studio. Furthermore, he experimented with depictions of pedestrians walking amid the columns of the Palace of the Fine Arts which would inspire his emblematic photograph of strollers on Wall Street in the late afternoon light taken the same year (**fig. 10.1**).⁵ Two years later, when Stieglitz published the last issue of *Camera Work*, he included a portfolio with Strand’s abstract compositions. From this perspective, the often-advanced transition from “Pictorialist” to “straight” can be easily illustrated and has become attached not only with a specific visual vocabulary, but also with a clearly defined set of individuals. As Ulrich Keller already remarked thirty years ago: “the undeniable personal relationships between Stieglitz, the art photographer, and Strand and Weston, the leaders of 1920s

¹ Ganz, “Exposing Photography at the Fair,” 242.

² Hull, “Emplacement, Displacement, and the Fate of Photographs,” 174.

³ Ganz, “Exposing Photography at the Fair,” 241. A retrospective was held at the de Young Museum in 2015, see Ganz, *Portals of the Past: The Photographs of Willard Worden*.

⁴ Ganz, “Exposing Photography at the Fair,” 242; see also “\$5,000 Loveliest Women Contest,” *Camera Craft* 21, no. 3 (1914): 153.

⁵ Ganz, “Exposing Photography at the Fair,” 248.

avant-garde photography on the other, lent further credence to the assumption of a smooth stylistic evolution.”⁶ However, Weston would remain reluctant to embrace Stieglitz’s elitism due to several disappointments after having personally confronted his criticism at the 1917 Wanamaker Salon and in New York in 1922.⁷ Instead, the narrative of stylistic unification against Pictorialism was solidified in the encounter of Ansel Adams with Paul Strand in New Mexico, while the former was working on *Taos Pueblo* with Dassonville’s Charcoal Black Paper. This often-mentioned anecdote resulted in what Adams biographer Mary Street Alinder qualified as nothing short of a “conversion.”⁸

The first year of the decade of the 1930s marked Adams’s change in process from matte to glossy, which was subsequently described as an almost spiritual transformation. The dawning decade saw the onset of an art history of photography, sparked by the approaching centennial of the medium’s invention. In this chronology, Stieglitz’s elitism and Adams’s alignment – with it and with curator Beaumont Newhall – came to figure prominently. In order to understand how the encounters and exchanges of the PPIE period had repercussions on the subsequent canon creation and on the collecting endeavors in the Bay Area, it is important to turn to the outreach of San Francisco to New York. This communication – personal and institutional – would lead to the rapid consolidation of a Modernist style at the expense of a still-thriving Pictorialist scene. In this, an often-recounted episode was Adams’s trip to Stieglitz’s gallery *An American Place* in the spring of 1933. After a short encounter with Georgia O’Keeffe during his stay in New Mexico in 1929 – the same year as Stieglitz had opened his new gallery – Adams traveled East a few years later to show prints from his stay in New Mexico and the Sierras. The encounter, at which both men engaged in a vivid discussion on the medium’s capacity of “emotional” expression, would be characterized by Adams’s biographer as “momentous” and “life-changing.”⁹ This wording, similarly used by other historians to qualify the first meeting, has underlined the notion of an “old master” praising the prints of his new disciple as “the finest prints I have ever seen” – a compliment returned by Adams with regard to the gallery having “the finest walls I have ever seen.”¹⁰

Regardless of the retrospectively added framing of the encounter as epoch-making, it needs to be understood as one of the first instances of outreach from San Francisco to New York since the turn of the century. Whereas Club photographers of the 1900s salon series had sought support from Stieglitz and yet remained largely ignored in their request of personal exchange, the 1933 connection between Adams and Stieglitz constituted a deliberate affiliation on the part of a Western photographer with a set of aesthetic criteria and a strategic rhetoric employed in the East. In his desire “to rarify his

⁶ Keller, “The Myth of Art Photography: An Iconographic Analysis,” 23.

⁷ See Alinder, *Group f.64*, 13-16.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 61. See also Davis, *An American Century*, 135.

⁹ Alinder, *Group f.64*, 135-140.

¹⁰ Bochner, *An American Lens*, 293-294.

photography – to create pictures in an elite, ‘high art’ style,” the guidance and visibility provided by Stieglitz proved essential to Adams.¹¹ Operating within a group of Bay Area photographers whose attitude vis-à-vis the New York establishment was conflicted – fascinated and hostile at the same time – Adams “fastened his gaze” on Stieglitz’s strategies of photographic display and legitimation.¹² With the New York photographer as his “mentor of consequence,” he became the foremost advocate of institutional selection on the West Coast.¹³ What is important to notice in this context is the continued friction between the search for recognition from an unceasingly influential Eastern photographer, the desire to shed the image of a cultural backwater, and the ambition to establish an independent style of Californian photography. Among these ambiguous tendencies – tangible in San Francisco’s photographer circles since the turn of the century – Adams would come to negotiate a new form of institutional appreciation, within a reinvigorated local museum scene.

As Peterson has argued, Pictorialism did not wane after 1910 but became increasingly pluralistic in style and appreciated by large audiences. Having realized this potential, late *Camera Craft* editor Sigismund Blumann sought to revive the tradition of local salons installed by the Pictorialist Photographic Society. To this end, he also reached out to Stieglitz, requesting a loan exhibition to be shown at the de Young Museum in 1932. In a letter left unanswered, Blumann urged the New Yorker to reconsider his harsh stance on the Pictorialist style of the turn of the century. He wrote that the Pictorialists of San Francisco “refuse to accept your having thrown over the enthusiasm and philanthropy that is attached in this art to your name,” and, in this, demonstrated a keen awareness of the contemporary changes in the photographic scene. In an appreciative and yet somewhat heavy-handed manner, Blumann addressed (and misspelled) the photographer, insisting that “such a name as Steiglitz [sic], which without flattery I make bold to tell you[,] is historic in the annals of pictorial photography.”¹⁴ With the widely advocated, anti-Pictorialist stance adopted by Adams and Weston, it was increasingly difficult for Blumann to rally support for such an endeavor, especially from the very source which had discarded Pictorialist aesthetics.

Shortly after his nine-year editorship of *Camera Craft* had ended, the magazine became the stage for the voices opposing and embracing the new directions of the medium. In a series of heated exchanges in eight consecutive issues during the spring and summer of 1934, Adams’s stance on “pure photography” was challenged by Southern California Pictorialist William Mortensen’s defense of “the picture-idea.” What played out in this well-known correspondence was the decade-long question of authoritative interpretation of the medium. It was a dispute which, as recurrently

¹¹ Sailor, *Meaningful Places*, 149.

¹² Michael Oren, “On the ‘Impurity’ of Group f/64 Photography,” *History of Photography* 15, no. 2 (1991): 119-120.

¹³ Alinder, *Group f.64*, 139.

¹⁴ Sigismund Blumann to Alfred Stieglitz, June 22, 1932 (The Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O’Keeffe Archive (YCAL MSS 85), Box 9, folder 204).

demonstrated by historians of photography, could not be effectively solved as, by the 1930s, working and printing methods of Pictorialists and Modernists oftentimes overlapped.¹⁵ As a collection of prints by CCC photographer Karl A. Baumgartel of this period highlights, it was the network of local camera clubs, which fostered the co-existence of the two styles. Prints like his *Curves*, echoing the aesthetics of Japanese Pictorialists and incorporating more abstract subject matter, would be exposed for seven consecutive years at camera clubs throughout California, including Oakland, San Jose, and Palo Alto, and traveled as far as Columbus, Rochester, or Brooklyn (**fig. 10.2**).

Much of the turmoil among the clubs and in the magazines had been sparked by the formation of Group f.64 in the fall of 1932. While the history of this group has been extensively treated by scholarship,¹⁶ this discussion is going to focus on the repercussions of its foundation on the narrative of Californian photography and the creation of local collections. When asked in an interview about the Group's establishment, Imogen Cunningham – one of the original members alongside Adams, Weston, John Paul Edwards, Willard Van Dyke, and Sonya Noskowiak – answered the following:

It isn't that it took shape at all that impresses me, but it's the quotations you read about it. I mean if you read in a London magazine it'll mention the f/64 group. It sounds so funny that something that was started in 1932 and didn't last even a year, that wasn't formally organized and wasn't formally dissolved, made such an impression.¹⁷

The “quotations” referred to by Cunningham would outline the narrative of Modernist photographic creation which was advanced in a linear fashion – especially from the late 1930s up to the 1960s, when she gave the interview. The origins of the Group are commonly dated back to Adams's emblematic encounter with Strand in New Mexico, from which the former apparently “returned home to San Francisco determined to assemble a group of like-minded photographers.”¹⁸ Cunningham countered this narrative in the same interview, urging that “I've been told that Ansel Adams claims he started it, but I would swear on my last penny that it was Willard [Van Dyke] who did it.”¹⁹

In wording and outlook, the aforementioned histories of Group f.64 persistently draw comparisons to a “revolution” in photography sparked by its idiosyncratic dedication to “the actualities and limitations of the photographic medium,” as well as the rejection of “ideological conventions of art and aesthetics that are reminiscent of a period antedating the growth of the medium itself,” as the members put it.²⁰ Through scholarship by Wilson, Reed, and Peterson on the longevity

¹⁵ Reed, “Southern California Pictorialism: Its Modern Aspects,” 78-80; Peterson, *After the Photo-Secession*, 40-48; Davis, *An American Century*, 137-138; for a detailed analysis of the debate between Adams and Mortensen, see Alinder, *Group f.64*, 156-168.

¹⁶ For a detailed account, see Therese Thau Heyman, *Seeing Straight: The f.64 Revolution in Photography* (Oakland and Seattle: Oakland Museum and University of Washington Press, 1992) and Alinder, *Group f.64*.

¹⁷ Imogen Cunningham, interview with Edna Tartaul Daniel, (1961): 144 (Regional Cultural History Project (BANC MSS C-D 4036), the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley).

¹⁸ Alinder, *Group f.64*, 73.

¹⁹ Imogen Cunningham, interview with Edna Tartaul Daniel, 139.

²⁰ Group f.64 manifesto, quoted in Alinder, *Group f.64*, 88.

of Pictorialism, notably in the Californian context, a more critical perspective on the Group would be developed. From this perspective, the “alleged break” with turn-of-the-century aesthetics and the Group’s “resolutely innovative” character do not hold, as the members can be smoothly inserted into the broader context of overlapping aesthetics, practices, and exhibition venues.²¹ However, as the Group itself mastered the tools of a secessionist move, it was easily appropriated for a narrative of Modernist self-invention, as Sally Stein suggests: “If one seeks markers of change, the founding of Group f.64 in 1932 fills the bill perfectly and the small band of Bay Area photographers even went to the extreme of issuing a ‘manifesto’ to accompany their first exhibition.”²² It has been argued that it was exactly this avant-garde representation – achieved through the circulation of a pamphlet with shared goals and rigid aesthetics – which was used “to relegate the Pictorialists.” Occupying the former studio of Brigman at 683 Brockhurst Street in Oakland, the Group adopted a three-ciphered label for their gallery, unmistakably modeled upon Stieglitz’s 291. This move, ambiguous in itself as Brigman had been at the heart of high-spirited California Pictorialism for two decades, must be seen as part of the uneasy yet lasting relationship with both the former style, as well as its former advocate and mentor of Brigman, Alfred Stieglitz. Since Stieglitz’s input appeared necessary for appreciation and yet undesirable for its establishment-character, his involvement caused much debate, and eventually was reduced to Adams’s communication with New York throughout the 1930s and 40s.²³

Both the original membership list of Group f.64, as well as its invited guests, including Margrethe Mather, Dorothea Lange, and Consuelo Kanaga, point to a strong involvement with the California Camera Club and its exchange venues. While John Paul Edwards was a Club member from the mid 1910s, Mather had shown her work with Weston at the Club’s headquarters in the early 1920s. Cunningham, coming to San Francisco around the time of the PPIE, would become closely related to both Lange and Kanaga in 1918.²⁴ The latter, a young, socially engaged reporter for the *Chronicle* and later portrait photographer, would insist on the role of the California Camera Club when recounting her first exploration of the medium’s possibilities. Frequenting the headquarters as early as 1916, she discovered issues of *Camera Work* in its reassembled library. With her interest in print-making sparked, she traveled to New York in 1922 from where she cautioned Weston of Stieglitz’s “tremendous” influence on photography. Even though Kanaga did not appear to actively participate in outings or lectures, it was nonetheless the CCC which provided her with the literature and the encounters necessary to build her own network.²⁵ Heyman’s study of Group f.64 further underlines

²¹ See Sally Stein, “Starting from Pictorialism: Notable Continuities in the Modernization of California Photography,” in *Capturing Light: Masterpieces of California Photography, 1850 to the Present*, 121.

²² *Ibid.*, 124.

²³ Oren, “On the ‘Impurity’ of Group f/64 Photography,” 119-121.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 121.

²⁵ Barbara Head Millstein, “Consuelo Kanaga,” in *Consuelo Kanaga: An American Photographer*, eds. Barbara Head Millstein and Sarah Lowe (Brooklyn and Seattle: The Brooklyn Museum and University of Washington Press, 1992), 21-25, 32.

the discovery and exchange venue furnished by the Club to younger photographers. Relying on an interview with Kanaga in 1972, Heyman summarized her early career: “with her interested in photography whetted, she joined the California Camera Club, where she met many “wonderful” people, including Dorothea Lange.”²⁶

Even though exact dates of affiliation with the CCC are missing and the involvement in the Club’s agenda of the time appears challenging to retrace, it is clear that the “revolutionary” group of photographers of the 1930s had strong ties to the far-reaching network that was cultivated by the Club. As much as they would benefit from a retrospective portrayal as radical avant-gardes, their work was largely sponsored by the local scene, including Club acquaintances like Paul Elder, who also showed Weston and Van Dyke in this period.²⁷ Therefore, the CCC connection – as feeble and short-lived as it may have been in terms of actual membership – must be kept in mind when approaching the history of photography collections in the Bay Area.

*

By the time that Adams became acquainted with the director of the Palace of the Legion of Honor and the de Young in 1932, he was increasingly convinced of the importance of a corpus of high quality prints to insert the medium into the museum. This process, which will be illuminated in the following, was accompanied by a hardening of stylistic lines and an increasingly select vision. By the 1940s, when he was involved with the photography department of the San Francisco Museum of Art, Adams insisted that if the museum were to develop a legitimate collection, it “needed to distance itself from the amateur groups that had been given frequent exhibitions in the past”²⁸ – hence discarding any productions generated under the auspices of the Club or its affiliated Pictorialist network. Since institutional legitimacy would also be achieved through a standardized display of photographic works and a uniformity in style – as understood by Stieglitz when launching 291 Gallery – the members who gathered at 683 Brockhurst strove for the same uniform approach. As Jeff Rosen has suggested, “paradoxically, it was uniformity which communicated the photographers’ individuality to the critics.” Since the glass frame took away the medium’s marketing dimension, the critics were made aware of this aesthetic “resistance” and “evaluate it positively as a process of rational legitimation.”²⁹ This choice, of which Adams had become intensely aware when visiting Stieglitz’s *An American Place* would then be implemented in San Francisco’s emerging museum collections. It was a choice that championed uniformity and autonomy over eclecticism and painterly effects – and as such, would brush aside the presence of the numerous camera clubs in the museum.

²⁶ Heyman, “Modernist Photography and the Group f.64,” 269.

²⁷ Weston and Van Dyke exhibited their work at Elder’s gallery in August 1934, see Alinder, *Group f.64*, 304.

²⁸ Phillips, “In the Beginning: Photography at the New San Francisco Museum of Art,” 99.

²⁹ Translated from Jeff Rosen, “Das große Rahmenkomplott: Zur Institutionalisierung der modernen Fotografie am Beispiel von Alfred Stieglitz’ Photo-Secession,” 25-29.

Given the difficulty of Pictorialist exhibitors to maintain their impact and the energetic attempts of Adams and the Group f.64 to display photography in local museums, it becomes clear that by the early 1930s, photography still occupied an unstable place in the cultural landscape. The uneasiness vis-à-vis the medium and its role amid the fine arts is exemplified in a series of encounters and decisions of this decade, starting with the controversial three-year tenure of Lloyd LaPage Rollins as director of the Palace of the Legion of Honor and the de Young museum between 1930 and 1933. Profoundly revising the de Young collection and exhibition policies, Rollins is especially remembered for his interest in photography and contemporary art. Under his curation, the museum held solo shows by Weston, Adams, Cunningham, and Mather, but also Edward Steichen, Eugène Atget, and László Moholy-Nagy. Furthermore, the Camera Pictorialists of Los Angeles and the Pictorial Photographers of America were granted annual exhibition space.³⁰ Appreciating the input, *Camera Craft* saw in the institution a new impetus for cultural legitimation of the West, claiming that “[n]o city in the United States features photography so consistently and continually through each month of the year as does the San Francisco de Young Memorial Museum in Golden Gate Park.”³¹

When Adams met Rollins in October 1932, the curator decided to host a Group f.64 show the following month, dedicating three out of the museum’s forty-eight galleries to the Group and their invited guests. The exhibition included the “manifesto,” next to some eighty prints, and thus granted an unprecedented visibility to the new formation. Not received as a particularly “revolutionary” event – amid the turmoil of the Depression years, – the show was generally praised by the local press. *Camera Craft* editor and “Pictorialist establishment” affiliate Blumann admitted to be “astounded” by the bold compositions and acknowledged the Group’s influence on “creating a place for photographic freedom.”³² From the reactions, it became clear that “photography was a largely uncharted territory in art criticism” – and one which put Rollins’ “already shaky position” at the museum to the test. Having turned the de Young into a hub of contemporary art, the curator had transformed the museum’s former image of an ineffective, late nineteenth-century relic. However, his contemporary taste, spontaneous decision-making, as well as the dismantling of a portrait room dedicated to California’s pioneers did not please the board of the two associated museums. By the spring of 1933, three months after the closing of the Group f.64 exhibition, Rollins was dismissed and instantly left San Francisco – his tenure being then occupied by a specialist in Renaissance art.³³

Within this challenging local environment, it was Ansel Adams who took the lead on photographic criticism. Next to a short-lived attempt to set up his own San Franciscan gallery

³⁰ Alinder, *Group f.64*, 61-62.

³¹ “The de Young Memorial Museum,” *Camera Craft* 40, no. 5 (1933): 216.

³² Alinder, *Group f.64*, 82-88; Heyman, “Modernist Photography and the Group f.64,” 255-256; Sigismund Blumann, “The f.64 Group Exhibition,” *Camera Craft* 40, no. 5 (1933): 199-200.

³³ Alinder, *Group f.64*, 103-107, 132-134.

modeled upon Stieglitz's American Place in 1933, Adams would engage in the writing of extensive reviews on the de Young's photography exhibitions. Selecting a representative canon of the medium through Group f.64, he would situate his peer Edward Weston "within the rarefied league of the greatest art photographers, whom he identified as Atget, Stieglitz, Strand, and Steichen."³⁴ After having had his own exhibition at Stieglitz's American Place in 1936, Adams's work came to the attention of newly appointed MoMA curator Beaumont Newhall. Planning the large-scale retrospective "Photography 1839-1937," Newhall approached the members of Group f.64 who would be represented in the show's "contemporary photography" section by Adams, Weston and his son Brett, and Cunningham. While Stieglitz was only represented with *The Steerage*, the centennial survey largely discarded Pictorialist aesthetics and thus proved coherent with Adams and his peers' aesthetic choices – yet without ever fully detaching themselves from the Secession's impact.³⁵ Even though Stieglitz did not approve of MoMA's collecting techniques and had donated a majority of his Pictorialist prints to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, by then, he was engaged in a similar discursive framing of his early twentieth-century works. As has been recurrently demonstrated by scholars, by 1942, Stieglitz had forged a narrative of *The Steerage* with a strong "formalist emphasis" that could be inserted into the contemporary process of canon-making. Its framing along these lines served to "[advance] photography's status as a modernist medium in the dominant art world language of Clement Greenberg's medium specificity."³⁶

A more intense connection between MoMA's curator and the San Franciscan photographer was forged in 1940, when Adams became vice chairman on the committee for the establishment of MoMA's Department of Photography. The Department's first traveling show being dedicated to "The California Group," it reinforced the careful selection of names in the creation of a meaningful contemporary canon. By the time of the Department's first New York exhibition in late December 1940, "Sixty Photographs: A Survey of Camera Esthetics," Adams had become a "principal collaborator" of Newhall. As such, he secured the appearance of his Californian circle next to the very names of Stieglitz, Steichen, and Strand, with whom he had attempted to align with as photo-critic a decade earlier.³⁷

Not entirely removed from the dynamic developments of the East Coast, San Francisco hosted Newhall's centennial retrospective at the de Young Museum in August 1937. After Rollins' departure, the local photography scene would be revived by the opening of the San Francisco Museum of Art in January 1935. Its first photography show in early summer displayed Peter Stackpole's

³⁴ Ibid., 63-64.

³⁵ Ibid., 240-243.

³⁶ Kroiz, *Creative Composites*, 47; for further discussion of *The Steerage*, see Sekula, "On the Invention of Photographic Meaning," 39-42; McCauley, "The Making of a Modernist Myth," 17-65.

³⁷ Alinder, *Group f.64*, 268-270; Philipps, "In the Beginning: Photography at the New San Francisco Museum of Art," 97-98.

images of the construction of Golden Gate Bridge, which was to be finished the following year. Personally acquainted with the museum's director Grace McCann Morley, Adams donated five of his own photographs the same year of the opening, before having a solo-show in late 1939. After having installed a regular basis for photography exhibitions, Morley would receive a significant donation by Adams with prints of four other Group f.64 members in 1941. It was during this period that the photographer came to advise the SFMA director on matters of photographic appreciation, vigorously rejecting any amateur or camera club work – which the de Young would voluntarily show by then.³⁸ With this first nucleus of West Coast collection-making defined, the most important addition to SFMA's photography collection came in 1952 through the acquisition of twenty-five prints from the Stieglitz estate, next to a donation of forty-two prints and photogravures. The purchase came at a cost of \$2,500 – a price suggested by Georgia O'Keeffe to Adams when in Santa Fe. It was financed through intense local campaigning by Adams and Minor White and was considered a landmark acquisition which would demarcate San Francisco as the only West Coast venue with a notable photography collection.³⁹

With the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century, Adams sparked a re-appreciation of a select Pictorialist circle, which was to be decisive to the residue of camera club history in the Bay Area. Loyal to the collecting principles of Stieglitz – and eager to honor his impact on the history of the medium – Adams became engaged in the reprinting of a series of Arnold Genthe's earthquake views on the occasion of the semi-centennial in 1956. Just like the popular narrative of communal resilience would resurge and solidify in this period, the renewed circulation of Genthe's prints came to qualify him as not only the foremost visual authority of the disaster, but also as a unique artist-photographer of turn-of-the-century San Francisco. The Palace of the Legion of Honor, which had acquired 167 negatives of the disaster the year after Genthe's death, in 1943, commissioned Adams to reprint some of the emblematic earthquake views for an exhibition, including the *Portals of the Past* and the *View down Sacramento Street* (**fig. 10.3**).⁴⁰ Adams decided to reproduce the old photographer's work through his own aesthetic grid by using the gelatin silver

³⁸ Sarah Roberts, "SFMOMA: A Chronology," in *San Francisco Museum of Modern Art: 75 Years of Looking Forward*, 393-399; Philipps, "In the Beginning: Photography at the New San Francisco Museum of Art," 99. After Rollins' dismissal, the de Young hosted salons of pictorial photography, exhibitions by the Japanese Camera Club, as well as photo contests like the Newspaper National Snapshot Award. Information derived from chronology of de Young exhibitions in Alinder, *Group f.64*, 308-311.

³⁹ Philipps, "In the Beginning: Photography at the New San Francisco Museum of Art," 99-100. For further information on Adams's and Weston's connection to O'Keeffe, see Sophie Bernard, "Georgia O'Keeffe. Une Vision Photographique. Le rôle de la Straight Photography dans l'élaboration d'une « Nouvelle Vision » picturale," in *Georgia O'Keeffe et ses amis photographes*, eds. Sophie Bernard and Camille Ducastel (Paris and Grenoble: Somogy éditions d'art and Musée de Grenoble, 2015), 45-57.

⁴⁰ James A. Ganz, *Artistic San Francisco* (San Francisco and Petaluma: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and Pomegranate Communications, Inc., 2011), 42; see also Victoria Binder, "Preserving Images of the 1906 Earthquake," Blog of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, accessed April 1, 2018, <https://www.famsf.org/blog/preserving-images-1906-earthquake>.

process, commonly rejected within Pictorialist circles. As Jacob Birken recently remarked, this retrospective manipulation of Genthe's work demonstrates how his corpus was "consciously adapted to the contemporary canon of art photography." Interestingly, the author identifies Adams as an "authority" within this canon who endeavored to save Pictorialism from its disappearance.⁴¹ This selective appreciation of Pictorialist work, however, must be linked to Adams's longstanding admiration of Stieglitz – who himself had acquired an earthquake view of Genthe's at the 1910 Buffalo exhibition.⁴²

As Birken suggests, Adams's desire to insert Genthe into a meaningful selection of locally important photographer-artists can be dated back to the inclusion of his prints in the "Pageant of Photography" Adams curated on the occasion of the Golden Gate International Exposition (1939-1940). Likewise, he proposed Genthe's work for the 1940 MoMA exhibition "Sixty Photographs." Like Berenice Abbott's reproduction of Eugène Atget's negatives or Steichen's calotype from Henri Le Secq, it was deemed important to develop a historically meaningful corpus of photographic precedent which yet complied with the aesthetic standard of the contemporary period. These conscious choices made on behalf of a corpus of "old masters" came full circle through Adams's contact with Genthe. As he remembered in his autobiography, Adams "almost fainted with relief" when Genthe appreciated the reprinted works for the MoMA show. A decade later, his reproductions of the earthquake negatives, aesthetically readapted to the "new paradigm" of glossy paper and stark contrast, allowed Adams to both secure the presence of an established local photographer and to retrospectively align him with his own aesthetic agenda.⁴³

This moment of deliberate narrative creation and collection-making must be seen within the broader context of institutional appreciation of the medium in the Bay Area in the 1960s, as discussed in Chapter 5 of this thesis. While Adams and the San Francisco museum board would inscribe Genthe into the contemporary photographic aesthetic, another important institution in the region – the Oakland Art Museum – engaged in a comparable search for photographic continuity. Following the Newhallian model and the established narrative of the Photo-Secession, photography curators Margery Mann and Therese Heyman sought to appreciate the local photographer Oscar Maurer's corpus through the same prism. On the occasion of his retrospective with earthquake photographs in 1965, attended by ninety-four-year-old Maurer himself (**fig. 10.4**), Mann's review in *Artforum* emphatically placed the photographer in the intellectual company of Arnold Genthe and Alfred Stieglitz.⁴⁴ Without mentioning any dimension of Club membership, Heyman's retrospective on Group f.64 the following year similarly traced the photographic precedent of Adams and Weston in

⁴¹ Translated from Birken, "Die Kalifornische Institution. Fernwestliche Bilder um 1906," 97-99.

⁴² Bochner, *An American Lens*, 44-45.

⁴³ Translated from and quoted in Birken, "Die Kalifornische Institution. Fernwestliche Bilder um 1906," 98-99, 102-105.

⁴⁴ Mann, "Oscar Maurer," 48.

a linear fashion back to the Photo-Secession affiliates – Maurer, Brigman, and Bruguière – and the newly appreciated “masters” Watkins and Muybridge.⁴⁵

While Maurer’s autobiographical sketch, written the year before the exhibition, drew a more refined picture of the photographic scene in explicitly mentioning the role of the California Camera Club, this aspect was altogether neglected by the show.⁴⁶ Without any meaningful stakes in this restrained photographic appreciation, the Club’s legacy steadily lost visibility. It was through the focus on a small circle of practitioners, with short-lived moments of affiliation with a New York establishment, that a history of San Franciscan photographer-artists could be forged for the Pictorialist period – which would then smoothly connect to the avant-garde stance held by the new generation of 1930s photographers. Rejecting the more complex aspect of Club history as well as the material heterogeneity attached to it, the curators – through Adams’s powerful lead – came to formulate a carefully distinctive narrative of local photography. In the light of the unstable position occupied by the medium in the cultural landscape, only a handful of practitioners were chosen to assert the importance of a local canon of photographic art. In this, the phenomenon of congenial Club or amateur practice could hardly persist, as it did not reflect the ideals of craftsmanship and solitary genius attached to artistic production. The relevance and necessity of this selection process notwithstanding, it led to the extraction of a very thin slice from the extremely eclectic turn-of-the-century corpus. The imposition of monographic narration on photographic work – running counter the very environment of San Francisco – then discarded the Club from the canon.

As Anne McCauley has argued, the “survey histories” which exhibitions like Newhall’s 1937 retrospective proposed, “rarely identify their exclusions or justify their inclusions.” The “master narratives” they shaped appeared yet necessary in the face of a reluctant fine-art environment. As the photographic profession had involved “very little mystique” throughout the nineteenth century, a sweep of panache rhetoric and historical coherence was added retroactively by curators – and actively by Stieglitz and Adams – so as to create an identifiable canon.⁴⁷ Although subject to criticism due to its Euro-American focus and its aesthetic understanding, Newhall’s history and its numerous re-iterations have turned into a “canon maker” of the period. Despite the simultaneous appearance of a “social history” of photography by Kansas historian Robert Taft, it was the New York perception of the photographic scene as an emerging art canon, which came to dominate its broader understanding. Within this framework, the focus on the medium’s inherent capacity – as suggested in the “independent” stance by Group f.64 – as well as the adoption of a strong discourse of autonomous creation were necessary, so as to demarcate photography as an artistic practice in its own right. Here,

⁴⁵ Heyman, “f/64 & Before,” brochure of the exhibition at the Oakland Art Museum.

⁴⁶ See Maurer, “As I Remember,” 7.

⁴⁷ McCauley, “Writing Photography’s History before Newhall,” 87, 91.

the sociohistorical component of the medium, as well as its multiple applications used by practitioners throughout the century, were necessarily relegated to the fringes.⁴⁸

If the medium was to be legitimized within institutional walls, it necessitated a formulation “as both a history of technical refinement and heroic biography.” Newhall considered this conceptualization instrumental, and sought to “[attach] an art-historical spine to the display of photographs” as well as to imprint art-historical questions onto the exposed material.⁴⁹ The medium’s appreciation as a field in its own right finds its onset in the same period, starting in the 1940s, when Adams helped found the photography program at the San Francisco Art Institute.⁵⁰ The increasing academic attention to photography as a fine-art form and the interdisciplinary study of its practices, stretching out into the twenty-first century, also date back to this period.⁵¹ Through the reinforced selection of material and the forging of continuities, a canon could be established. As much as the California Camera Club had made timid attempts to form its own lineage, by aligning with local pioneers and by tracing Watkins’s footsteps in the Yosemite, it lacked the tools, methodology, and institutional conditions to create a history in its own right.

Since the demarcation of a “genealogy” was essential to the creation of a “museum history of photography,”⁵² the second half of the twentieth century saw this fabrication of linearity and the increased rejection of more complex, network-related aspects of the medium. An emblematic example of this monographic narrative style can be found in the rediscovery of Adam Clark Vroman’s work in the 1960s by both Newhall and Adams. The former, who had portrayed the photographer as an explorer of the desert landscape of the Southwest and its native tribes, also detached Vroman from the broader camera club environment – notably the CCC which, according to him, “lack[ed] in taste, technique, and conviction.”⁵³ Adams, in turn, published a review of Newhall’s catalog in which he asserted the “great dignity and power” of Vroman’s prints and placed him within “the older artists and craftsmen,” achieving sophisticated prints under hostile conditions.⁵⁴ The working process of Vroman was emphasized here so as to attach a form of “mystique” to his practice. Had his connection to clubs like the LACC or the California tourist industry been disclosed, the statement would not have proven as powerful.⁵⁵ The rejection of camera clubs as network furnishers and platforms of visibility,

⁴⁸ For an overview of the Newhall-Taft debate and its historiographical repercussions, see Brunet, *La Photographie Histoire et Contre-histoire*, 209-264.

⁴⁹ Lee, “American Histories of Photography,” 4-6.

⁵⁰ Philipps, “In the Beginning: Photography at the New San Francisco Museum of Art,” 97.

⁵¹ Lee, “American Histories of Photography,” 8; see also Dominique de Font-Réaulx and Michel Poivert, “L’histoire de la photographie comme discipline ?” *Études Photographiques* 33 (2015): 2-3.

⁵² Lee, “American Histories of Photography,” 6.

⁵³ Newhall, introduction to *Adam Clark Vroman, 1856-1916: Photographer of the Southwest*, 20.

⁵⁴ Ansel Adams, “Photographer of the Southwest – Adam Clark Vroman,” *Image: The Bulletin of the George Eastman House of Photography* 10, no. 6 (1961): 22 (from Adam Clark Vroman, artist file, Museum of Modern Art, New York).

⁵⁵ Vroman lectured at the LACC in early 1903, see “Franciscan Missions and Ramona’s Home,” *Los Angeles Camera Club News* 3, no. 1 (1903): 11-12; his knowledge and photographic works were requested for reprints of Ramona’s

as well as the dismissal of their productions, was completed by Adams the following decade. The anecdote of his visit to the PPIE at which he was repelled by the CCC display to the point that he “just left” is a significant addition to this erasure. It had a two-fold repercussion: on the one hand, the alleged impression of the works as “dreadful” (provided by a thirteen-year-old Kodaker) implied that no further critical judgment was necessary to detect their obvious low quality. On the other hand, the retrospective identification of the show as exclusively CCC (even though the Club had, until then, never achieved a coherent fair display under its name) allowed for a sweeping dismissal of all collectively generated productions.⁵⁶

Through his extensive writings and close acquaintances with curators in both the East and the West, Adams came to decide on his own “genealogy” – one that was deeply rooted in the narrative context he had chosen for Vroman. Re-appreciating the “pioneer” photographers of the American West, among whom figured Carleton Watkins, William Henry Jackson, and Timothy O’Sullivan, Adams sought out a set of nineteenth-century practitioners whose working processes could be harmoniously inserted in his understanding of a photographic aesthetic. Just as Genthe’s prints were to undergo a stylistic re-labeling, the work of these earlier photographers would confirm the significance of the contemporary aesthetic. As Rachel Sailor has importantly argued, Adams’s selection of these anterior figures for the “Pageant of Photography” show at the Golden Gate International Exposition was to reassert a pioneering style. As the photographer-turned-curator remarked with regard to the practitioners of the early American West: “Above all, the work of these hardy and direct artists indicates the beauty and effectiveness of the straight photographic approach.” Placing himself into a genealogy of not only Northern Californian but “Western” photographers, Adams shaped his own legacy and at the same time forged an important aesthetic precedent to legitimize the avant-garde stance embraced by him and his peers.⁵⁷

His search for precursors and his insistence on the shaping of continuities date back to the very formation of Group f.64, when Adams showed the other members an album of the American Southwest, assembled by Timothy O’Sullivan in 1872. Praising the “amazingly clear and crisply sharp” quality of the prints, he invited his fellow members to “[contemplate] the immense potential of the medium,” explored half a century earlier. To further this linearity, Adams gave the album to Newhall for display in the 1937 retrospective.⁵⁸ As has been repeatedly made clear, the absorption of nineteenth-century photographers’ works into “the space of autonomous Art and its idealized, specialized History,” has generated a form of interpretative authority. Entering the institutional space

story, see Helen Hunt Jackson, *Ramona: A Story with an Introduction by A.C. Vroman. With Illustrations from Original Photographs by A.C. Vroman* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1915).

⁵⁶ Adams quoted in Ganz, “Exposing Photography at the Fair,” 247-248.

⁵⁷ Sailor, *Meaningful Places*, 157-159.

⁵⁸ Alinder, *Group f.64*, 84-85, 242.

and adopting to its discourse, the prints were stripped off more complex material shapes and contextual meanings, and instead, served to nourish a form of linear narration required by the canon.⁵⁹ The efforts undertaken by Adams and Newhall in the period of the 1930s and 40s would prove crucial to the appreciation of nineteenth-century photographs by both fine-art institutions and the art market in the 1970s. In becoming “[r]einvented and scarce,” the photographs were subject to formalist criteria, and thereby made “available for effortless re-inscription by curators and audiences.” With Watkins’s prints being sold to galleries for considerable sums by 1979, their value was reassured by the museums’ select photography collections.⁶⁰ A comparable process may be observed for Adam Clark Vroman, whose market value increased in the 1970s, when his platinum prints were shown at a New York Gallery.⁶¹ It was exactly in this period that Adams would become “the best-selling living photographer” and thus confirm his impact on the canonization of the medium in the New York scene. The search for historic precedent, practiced by Adams, to legitimize aesthetic coherence had strong repercussions on the understanding of the medium’s history.⁶² Notably in the West, where a melodious narrative “from Watkins to Weston” was formulated by the end of the century, the void in the history for the turn of the century was filled with depictions of individual practitioners. In this, Maurer and Genthe, joined by Vroman, represented a coherent set of figures, desirable both because of their ties to the Photo-Secession, as short-lived as they may have been, as well as their exploratory outdoor practice.

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As recently remarked, “[d]espite his strident aesthetic and interpretive aims, Adams identified with the Northern Californian region much in the same way as resident photographers had before him.”⁶³ Given his strong attachment to outdoor production and his praise of the local landscape, it is important at this point to illuminate the connection between Adams’s practice, the Club agenda, and the photographers’ understanding of belonging to the region. Even though his membership in the CCC cannot be explicitly traced, it has become clear that he operated within the same spheres and, essentially, engaged in an agenda much comparable to the early activities of the Club. While the Club’s photographic exploration of the natural environment has perhaps become obfuscated through its later adoption of an amusement-automobile-program, its persistent attachment to the landscape,

⁵⁹ Krauss, “Photography’s Discursive Spaces: Landscape/View,” 315.

⁶⁰ Willumson, “Making Meaning: Displaced Materiality in the Library and Art Museum,” 71-75; see also, Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the Dock*, xxv-xxvii.

⁶¹ The exhibition “Adam Clark Vroman: Platinum Prints of the Southwest,” was on display at Prakapas Gallery in New York in the summer of 1978. The gallery sent an invitation to John Szarkowski, then director of MoMA’s Department of Photography (from Adam Clark Vroman, artist file, Museum of Modern Art, New York).

⁶² Douglas Crimp, “The Museum’s Old / The Library’s New Subject,” in *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, 4-12; for a recent criticism of the New York-centered narrative shaped in this period and an alternative reading focused on the photographic community and institutions in Rochester, see McDonald, “Centralizing Rochester: A Critical Historiography of American Photography in the 1960s and 1970s.”

⁶³ Sailor, *Meaningful Places*, 159.

as well as its cooperation with organizations like the Sierra Club, must be reemphasized here. An aspect that figures prominently in these practices, and that has been neglected by a wide range of scholars, is the close intertwinement of photographic practice, discourses of preservation, and regional tourism. Despite Adams's well-known involvement with the Sierra Club and the (far less explored) use of his photographs for blatant commercialism, this dimension has never been fully illuminated in connection to the important precedents of promotional practice.⁶⁴ Even though photographers engaged in city and state boosterism from the mid nineteenth century, it was the intricate web of sponsors and artist collaborators – woven and broadly expanded by the CCC in the 1900s – that set the basis for later twentieth-century promotion endeavors.

If Adams's depictions of a Californian Eden were to rally support for the preservation of the Yosemite Valley – while at the same time spurring the desires of innumerable tourists – this two-fold approach to the local landscape as a venue worth preserving *and* exploring can be traced back to the engagements of the CCC in the early 1900s. As has been amply demonstrated, photographers like Lange were well acquainted with the Sierra Club's board, including Professor LeConte, or John Muir – whom Dassonville depicted in portraits. As part of their dense tissue of collaborators, friends, and business partners, CCC members frequented the Sierra Club, which started assembling photograph albums of its outings as early as 1902. Even though the more intimate connections between the Sierra Club and the CCC still require further exploration, the organizations clearly shared a common set of values with regard to the appreciation of the local environment and its promotion.

Since the CCC considered itself the foremost promotional organ for the state, it once went as far as issuing a collective resolution to be read at a Senate hearing in November 1913 on water supply in San Francisco. The question – a controversy after the municipal failures of the 1906 disaster – concerned the use of water resources from Yosemite's Hetch Hetchy Valley, that is, an area generally protected by the National Parks. Reported by Nevada Senator Pittman, the CCC's statement insisted on its membership origins “from the whole state of California” and its unanimously adopted “policy [...] to take an interest in everything that is for the benefit of the community.” Arguing in favor of “the Hetch Hetchy watershed as a permanent source of municipality-owned water supply” – a process which would transform the Valley's natural environment – the Club at the same time strongly insisted on its involvement in preservation. It declared:

No organization in California has as keen an appreciation of natural beauties as the California Camera Club. This organization has always been identified with the movement to preserve natural beauties, and its members, more numerous than any other group of people, have visited the Sierras.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Jonathan Spaulding confirmed this broad neglect of Adams's commercial work, yet without linking his promotional involvement to earlier organizations. See Jonathan Spaulding, “Yosemite and Ansel Adams: Art, Commerce, and Western Tourism,” *Pacific Historical Review* 65, no. 4 (1996): 615-639, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3640298>.

⁶⁵ U.S. Congress, Senate. “San Francisco Water Supply.” Congressional Record, November 25, 1913 (U.S. Government Publishing Office, gpo.gov), 6011.

Relying on its large number of participants, their belonging to the local community, as well as the longstanding cultivation of an outdoor agenda which implied the aesthetic, historical, and communal appreciation of the state, the Club took on the position of promoter and preservationist, despite its approval of intervention in the Valley.

As exhibitions on Californian art in recent decades have displayed, the participation of local artists in both the booster machinery of the American West *and* in the preservation of its landscape, over the entire first half of the twentieth century, demand for us to rethink the material corpus. In the case of Yosemite, “the arts and California’s booster industries functioned in tandem in fostering tourism and outdoor recreation in the state.”⁶⁶ While this statement holds true for the most active period of the CCC at the turn of the century, it can be extended to the post-World War II era when the Yosemite re-appeared as a “domesticated or tamed landscape,” and as such, an ideal “site for postwar recreation.” Within this corpus, we come to discover “Adams’s grand yet comfortingly picturesque images” which “numbered among the depictions of the California landscape most welcomed by regional and national business.”⁶⁷ This aspect of Adams’s photographic output – largely based on his cooperation with the Sierra Club and the Yosemite’s chief concessionaire, the Curry Company – is mentioned in passing by his biographer in the grand narrative of Group f.64,⁶⁸ yet requires further examination as it constitutes an essential component of photographic practice and communal self-understanding in California. Despite the photographer’s affiliation with the notions of elitism and avant-garde embodied by the Photo-Secession decades earlier, he – like his local photographic predecessors – remained very much engaged in the production of tourist imagery. While he would produce a range of high-quality books with Nancy Newhall in the 1960s, his photographs were also featured in the Sierra Club’s “Wilderness Calendar” or on greeting cards, in a period when he already ranked among the best-known contemporary artists.⁶⁹ When looking at the start of his career in the Yosemite, in the 1920s, the overlap of his engagement with leisure amusement becomes even more striking. Here, Adams became involved in forms of collective entertainment, similar to the ones appreciated by the Club at the same period. Organizing “a theatrical Christmas dinner” with members of the Bohemian Club at the prestigious Ahwahnee Hotel in the park, the Curry Company’s owner Donald Tressinder approached Adams to take part in the play. Later, Adams and his wife would take over the dinner’s annual organization, bringing in choirs and writing the lead parts – an activity they were to continue for five decades.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Bernstein, “Selling California, 1900-1920,” 73.

⁶⁷ Bernstein, “Contested Eden, 1920-1940,” in *Made in California: Art, Image & Identity*, 170.

⁶⁸ Alinder, *Group f.64*, 66.

⁶⁹ Kelsey, “Sierra Club Photography and the Exclusive Property of Vision,” 16-26.

⁷⁰ Spaulding, “Yosemite and Ansel Adams,” 620-621.

The role of the Yosemite in the perception of leisure by American publics intensified after World War II, and in this, the relationship of the photographer to the Valley's promotion reveals significant parallels to the Club activities undertaken several decades earlier. If, in 1944, some 120,000 visitors came to the Valley, this number was to multiply by five within two years, leading to almost 650,000 visitors in 1946. The mark of one million was reached in 1954. It was in this period that Adams took assignments by Kodak and produced some sixteen "Coloramas" – massive fluorescent banners with color images displayed at Grand Central Station, New York. Anticipating, like John Muir who cooperated with the Southern Pacific, that an increased number of tourists would heighten the general public's awareness of preservation, Adams inserted himself in a tradition of local promotion.⁷¹ Comparable to Tibbitts's photographs of Giant Sequoias used by Kodak to lure tourists into the Valley with a camera that "is to other cameras as the Redwoods of California are to ordinary trees" (see **fig. 5.30**), the monumental advertisement campaign in New York spurred the desires of Eastern publics to travel West. Adams manifested a similar form of attraction to the big trees and would use them as symbols of "permanence" in the postwar period.⁷² When, in the wake of World War I, the number of automobile tourists in the Valley multiplied, the Club had adopted a comparable strategy of promotion through renewed access. It seized the occasion to bolster the promotion of recreation and photographic practice via travel to the Yosemite. Interestingly, among Adams's publications of the 1940s figures a book co-authored with his wife, entitled *Illustrated Guide to Yosemite Valley*.⁷³ Enriched with black and white photographs and including colored maps, the *Guide* was issued by San Francisco's H.S. Crocker Company. With its conception as a couple's collective work appreciating the local environment, the format closely resembled earlier publications of writers and photographers involved in the CCC network. Be it Charles and Louise Keeler's guidebooks to San Francisco of the early 1900s, enriched with photographs by Club members, or Stellmann and his wife's hand-colored photographs of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, published by the same H.S. Crocker Company, the format of a co-authored picture-book by a locally renowned couple continued to prove just as appealing as around the turn of the century.

While Adams was dissatisfied with the management of the Curry Company and would harbor ambivalent feelings about his tourist commissions, his approach mirrored a contradiction that was at the heart of the Sierra Club. Like the aforementioned Stephen Mather who launched the automobile campaign, or National Parks advisory member Herbert Gleason who lectured at the Club, the dividing line between promotion of access and preservation of the environment was extremely thin. As a member on its board from 1933 onward, Adams traveled to Washington and became engaged in the

⁷¹ Ibid., 629-632.

⁷² Vermaas, *Sequoia: The Heralded Tree in American Art and Culture*, 180-194.

⁷³ Ansel and Virginia Adams, *Illustrated Guide to Yosemite Valley* (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker, 1940).

political debate on national parks. Despite his rallying for preservation, his photographs decorated advertisements of the Bank of America, Pacific Gas and Electric, and Polaroid in the 1950s. Through their connection with the recreational leisure industry, these companies had an impact on the park and, in turn, on Adams's thriving position as its photographer. Remarkably, at the very beginning of his involvement in the Yosemite's promotional affairs stood a commission to "[illustrate] winter activities."⁷⁴ It was the same kind of work that would be requested of Maurer on behalf of *Sunset* magazine two decades earlier. Even though the Sierra Club certainly, in the long run, proved to be a much more influential and efficient organization to encourage preservation, it confronted the same ambivalence between profitable access and reluctance to blatant commercialism, which members of the Club's network faced at times. While the latter would act for the benefit of the community, and thus allowed intervention in the environment, it continued to portray itself as a promoter of "natural beauty." Through its assumed stance as guide to the best picture-spots in the Valley as well as its affirmation as a protector of the local surroundings, the Club had essentially carried out the picturesque agenda on which Adams would build for decades afterward. By pointing out the most emblematic and historic features, the Club had nourished a connection between the local landscape and the national "historical imagination" – augmented by its numerous engagements in illustrated publications before and after the earthquake. This non-negligible, ideological dimension of the Californian landscape would be reinfused with political meaning by mid-century, when Adams's photographs of *This is the American Earth* and his Sierra Club imagery were to communicate a "sanitized and spectacularized conception of the natural world," reaffirming a conservative political agenda of American leadership.⁷⁵

By the time that the landscape photographer of the American West became firmly rooted in the institutional context, it was clear that this "heroic figure" was male and solitary. The canon of a formalist, male-dominated practice, institutionalized by John Szarkowski at MoMA in the 1970s, shaped a myth of the practice which erased the more complex historical and sociopolitical dimension of the medium. Framed "in terms of craft and aesthetics," the photographs and their makers entered a conversation dominated by "lyrical words." Rather than disclosing actual working processes, commercial expectations, the object's itineraries or its reproductions, the focus remained essentially on the surface.⁷⁶ Since the rejection of an eclectic group of turn-of-the-century practitioners from the photographic history of the region a few decades ago, it is important today to broaden the framework anew, so as to acknowledge not only individual practitioners, but to recognize the collective, its strong

⁷⁴ Spaulding, "Yosemite and Ansel Adams," 622-634.

⁷⁵ Bright, "Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men: An Inquiry into the Cultural Meanings of Landscape Photography," 130-131; Kelsey, "Sierra Club Photography and the Exclusive Property of Vision," 16; on the problematic relationship between tourism, preservation, and the romanticization of the landscape, see Hal Rothman, "Tourism as Colonial Economy: Power and Place in Western Tourism," in *Power and Place in the North American West*, 177-180.

⁷⁶ Bright, "Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men," 130-131; Wells, *Land Matters*, 132-136.

localized self-understanding, as well as its numerous engagements with the medium that exceed the image frame. Despite his disappearance from the canonized history, figures like Dassonville clearly opted for a similar masculine portrayal of the practice in the Sierra Nevada – a location that had also been declared a favorite spot for group portrayals of the California Camera Club (**fig. 10.5, fig. 10.6**). Again, the idealization and selectivity of the practice went hand in hand with its promotion as a recreational amusement.

At the same time, both on the part of historians and on the part of the photographers' ancestors, a desire has been expressed to recognize the precedent of this outdoor practice that had become deeply conceptualized by Adams and Weston. Palmquist, who worked with Dassonville's son on an exhibition and a monograph in the late 1990s, emphasized the transitional moment of the 1920s, when Adams became acquainted with the older photographer and used his paper. By the same token, less well-known figures like Charles Weidner would portray themselves as Yosemite photographers – on mule and tripod at hand – while later selling souvenir photographs. As his grandson Robert Weidner underlined in our correspondence, "Grandpa was up there long before Ansel Adams... and his photos were hand colored!"⁷⁷ (**fig. 10.7, fig. 10.8**). What these remarks manifest is the request of an increased recognition and, consequently, the need for a revised history of photography which takes into account these photographers – not only as individual practitioners, but as closely allied figures in a dense and intensely dynamic local setting.

As the discussion of the transitional period in the preceding chapter and in this epilogue have amply illustrated, close connections can be drawn between the Group f.64 circle and the California Camera Club. Be it via Brigman's, Genthe's, or Dassonville's studios, via the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, via the series of salons under the auspices of the CCC or its affiliated members, it becomes clear that the Club had cultivated the field which allowed new figures to enter the local photographic scene. Providing means and visibility, its headquarters opened doors and granted space to early aspiring figures like Dorothea Lange, Imogen Cunningham, or Edward Weston. The latter likewise cultivated a friendship with Louis J. Stellmann – whom he probably met as early as 1915. As Stellmann's biographer Richard Dillon wrote, the photographer was acquainted with both Genthe and Weston. He remained in close contact with the latter, whom he regularly invited to his home in Carmel in the 1930s and 40s (**fig. 10.9**). In interviews, Stellmann "used to brag, gently, of early days in Carmel with Edward Weston – 'I knew more about photography than he did, then...'"⁷⁸ Keenly aware of the contemporary process of canon-making which gradually set apart photographers like Stellmann, Dillon remarked the "iconographic climate" of San Francisco in the 1980s. Having

⁷⁷ Robert Weidner (grandson of Charles Weidner), e-mail message to author, February 22, 2018.

⁷⁸ Richard H. Dillon, *Images of Chinatown: Louis J. Stellman's Chinatown Photographs* (San Francisco: Book Club of California, 1976), 30.

understood that, by then, Genthe and Weston dominated the historical narrative, the author lamented Stellmann's absence despite his strong links to the network and his immense, historically and aesthetically valuable output.⁷⁹ Much like Ganz's recent evaluation of Willard Worden as a "nearly forgotten figure" lingering between Watkins and Adams, Stellmann certainly also belongs to this diverse group.⁸⁰

While both Worden and Stellmann have received institutional appreciation in recent years, through the California State Library and the Legion of Honor respectively, their corpora were treated and acknowledged in a conceptual manner similar to the preceding canonization. Rather than inserting the photographers into the broader picture of the local scene and drawing more complex links to other practitioners, these moments of institutional appreciation have reenacted the narrative model developed from the late 1930s onward. Like Maurer, Genthe, and Vroman before, their corpus was analyzed through a monographic grid that did not allow for the rest of the highly dynamic network to emerge. What the complexity and heterogeneity of this scene demands, however, is not a monographic or biographical approach, but a study that takes into account the extremely eclectic and diverse nature of photographic practice in itself. It is from this standpoint that the productions of the California Camera Club started in 1890, and yet, it is also through this diversification of practice that the Club dispersed after the 1930s.

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In order to round off the argument proposed in this epilogue, it appears necessary at this point to provide a brief overview of the available material on the Club's demise and its eventual disappearance. It is through the statements issued on the Club's anniversaries that we can trace its gradually shifting function as a local camera club after 1930. Continuing to host lectures, monthly exhibitions and outings, the Club also became involved in the teaching of photographic techniques and printing processes. On the occasion of its forty-third anniversary in 1933, for example, "[t]he good old club," as it would be oftentimes called by then, staged an exhibition "showing the proficiency of the High School Camera Clubs of San Francisco [...] [with] numerous prizes donated by local manufacturers' agencies and dealers."⁸¹ The results of these exhibitions and local compositions were at times reproduced in *Camera Craft*, yet through the increasingly sparse coverage of Club activities in the magazine, it is not possible to draw a coherent picture of a relevant membership section. Next to the association with camera clubs of local schools, whose works would be judged at times by longstanding members like Dassonville or Hoyt, the Club established its own "School of Photography" by the mid 1930s. Lasting for around a decade, the School was not a

⁷⁹ Richard H. Dillon, introduction to *Chinatown Photographer, Louis J. Stellman*, 13-14.

⁸⁰ Ganz, "Exposing Photography at the Fair," 241.

⁸¹ "The California Camera Club," *Camera Craft* 40, no. 5 (1933): 215.

physical entity but rather a spring- and fall-term program at the Club rooms that consisted of six courses and an outing. As an announcement in 1934 explained, the course was designed “for the amateur who wants to graduate from the Drug Store and wants experience in doing his own developing and printing.” To do so, the School invited locally renowned photographers, like San Franciscan camera store-owner Roland Calder.⁸² In the fall of 1935, the CCC School of Photography showed works by Ansel Adams⁸³ – an activity that Adams and Weston engaged in throughout the 1930s and 40s when lecturing at local clubs and hosting photography workshops at the Yosemite.⁸⁴ From this perspective, it is not surprising to discover further concrete involvements by Adams in the CCC, for example his being invited as guest speaker to the annual dinner in May 1935. Attended by “the presidents of all photographic clubs in this vicinity,” the event had become a local tradition and Adams’s input was considered “both interesting and entertaining.”⁸⁵

On the occasion of the Golden Gate International Exposition in 1939-1940, the CCC reassembled its membership for a collective display. Disregarding Adams’s “Pageant of Photography,” the Club featured two of its own exhibitions, in 1939 and 1940, in the California State Building with John Paul Edwards and William Mortensen on the jury.⁸⁶ As a precursor to the show, the display was exhibited at the de Young in April 1939, in the shape of the San Francisco International Salon of Pictorial Photography.⁸⁷ So as to reaffirm its role in the Pictorialist scene, the Club issued a statement on the occasion of the fair in which it declared as its goal “to elevate photography to an art and thus the emphasis is on Pictorialism. Its purpose is also to further photography as a hobby for the amateur and these two aims can function together very smoothly.”⁸⁸ The pre-Exposition display at the de Young appears to be the only institutionally supported event organized by the Club since the destruction of the Mark Hopkins Institute in 1906, where the first San Francisco salons had been held. In this, an alignment with the Pictorialist stance advocated by Blumann and Mortensen appeared necessary, as it attached a definite style to the Club. In its self-definition as a communally inclusive hobby organization, the Club sought to fulfill this role throughout the first half of the twentieth century. In this context, the accessibility of the Pictorialist style and its continued attraction constituted an ideal rallying factor.

Tying in the contemporary attempt at formulating a history of the medium, the Club recounted its historic role when celebrating its fiftieth anniversary in the spring of 1940. With a peak of

⁸² “The California Camera Club,” *Camera Craft* 41, no. 9 (1934): 454.

⁸³ “The California Camera Club School of Photography,” *American Photography* 30 (1936): 60 (copy in Palmquist Collection, Box 214).

⁸⁴ Alinder, *Group f.64*, 266.

⁸⁵ “The California Camera Club,” *Camera Craft* 42, no. 5 (1935): 358.

⁸⁶ Alinder, *Group f.64*, 262.

⁸⁷ “Club Notes,” *Camera Craft* 46, no. 3 (1939): 140. The catalog of this salon exhibition (available in only two libraries worldwide) could not be consulted.

⁸⁸ “The California Camera Club,” *American Photography* 33 (1939): 946 (copy in Palmquist Collection, Box 214).

membership reached in 1905, it mentioned among its most famous members Genthe, Dassonville, Blumann, and Edwards, as well as locally renowned figures like Michael H. de Young or Randolph Hearst.⁸⁹ The presumably short-lived membership of these two latter figures was documented only in local newspapers in the early 1890s and has not generated any photographic results. However, given the Club's self-understanding as a communal organization, the membership of eminent local investors legitimated its position in the city. Roughly around the same time, the set of PPIE lantern slides was donated to the San Francisco Public Library – the first photographic donation of collective material to a local collecting institution. By 1943, *American Photography* also published a short note on the CCC's history. Claiming its date of foundation to be 1883 (when the Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association was formed), the Club sought to situate itself among the oldest organizations of the country, after Philadelphia and Boston.⁹⁰

Since the CCC's activities are increasingly difficult to retrace after the disappearance of *Camera Craft* in 1942 and of *American Photography* in 1953, no definitive date of dissolving can be mentioned. The Club headquarters remained at 45 Polk Street at least until the early 1950s, as can be deduced from announcements in the *San Francisco Chronicle* or the Club's newsletter, the *View Finder*, that listed print competitions and portrait nights at this address (**fig. 10.10**).⁹¹ Associating with the recently founded Northern California Council of Camera Clubs, members started to go on outings which were scheduled by the San Francisco Recreation Department.⁹² While neither the Council, nor the Department could provide information on its relationship with the Club, it appears that by the early 1960s the CCC was housed at the camera facility of the Recreation and Park Department at 50 Scott Street – known today as the Harvey Milk Recreational Arts Center.⁹³ One last entry in a directory of 1976 indicated the CCC meeting at the San Francisco Homestead Savings Bank every fourth Tuesday of the month. By this time, however, announcements of print exhibitions or outings had long disappeared from local newspapers.⁹⁴

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If the demise of the California Camera Club is closely related to the events around the time of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, it needs to be underlined that its membership remained

⁸⁹ "The California Camera Club," *American Photography* 34 (1940): 461 (copy in Palmquist Collection, Box 214).

⁹⁰ "The California Camera Club," *American Photography* 37 (1943): 58 (copy in Palmquist Collection, Box 214).

⁹¹ See *View Finder* 22, no. 6 (1944): n.p.; "The California Camera Club," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 19, 1952, 43, announcing a color competition at the Club rooms.

⁹² "The California Camera Club." *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 18, 1949, 41.

⁹³ San Francisco Recreation and Park Department, e-mail message to author, April 4, 2017; Stephen Hinchey (president of Northern California Council of Camera Clubs), e-mail message to author, March 13, 2018. The papers of longstanding member Herman S. Hoyt (1868-1961) include a condolence card, dated 1961, "from all his friends at the California Camera Club, c/o S.F. Recreation Park Dept., Photography Center, 50 Scott St, S.F." (Herman S. Hoyt Papers (BANC MSS 2009/9), the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley); see also Dave Christensen, "About Us," Harvey Milk Photo Center, accessed April 7, 2018, <http://harveymilkphotocenter.org/facility-information/>.

⁹⁴ Palmquist Collection (Box 214). The two names associated with the Club at this location have not generated any further information.

essentially loyal to its initially defined role as a communal organization. Despite the fact that it generated less traceable corpora after 1915, the Club still functioned as a network-provider for the Bay Area community of photographers. Without diverging from its deliberately broad outline at its founding in 1890, the CCC seized the increasingly eclectic climate and accessibility of photography in the 1920s and redefined its practice within the realm of the local community. The appreciation of the local environment and the idea of photography as a recreational activity – two decisive elements of its practice from the outset – were renewed in these years. Eventually, the embrace of this form of locally accessible and collectively enjoyed practice led to its official affiliation with a municipal department. Preferring congenial leisure over elitism, inclusion over selectivity, the Club continued as a host of all kinds of photographic events, and yet increasingly distanced itself from an institutionalization of the medium. Lacking the tools, methodology, and favorable environment of institutional appreciation during its most productive time between the 1890s and the 1910s, the Club had evolved too far as a leisure organization to be included in the photographic collection-making in the Bay Area of the 1930s and 40s. Given the necessary selection and the crystallizing discourses of formalism, it was not possible for Club members to insert their corpora, even retrospectively, into the canon of the fine arts. Eventually, it seems that it was not so much the losses in the earthquake and fire that determined the Club's neglect in the canon, but the distinctive processes that were at the heart of the medium's institutionalization, which eventually rejected its legacy.

It is essential to retain that the parallel discursive strategies of Ansel Adams and Alfred Stieglitz have profoundly shaped not only the residue of camera club history in particular, but also the narrative of Californian photography in general. Embracing “the autonomy of the aesthetic, the primacy of the individual artist, and the noncontingency of cultural production,”⁹⁵ they came to dominate a highly influential discourse that had significant repercussions on collecting practices in the Bay Area and on the perception of its regional history of photography. In this process, the alignment of Adams with Stieglitz and Newhall resulted in an easily intelligible, “nationalized” history of Californian photography that forged artificial parallels serving to bolster national continuities. Through Adams's extensive writings on his own practice, on his peers of Group f.64, and on the medium's historical role in the American West, the notion of a “nineteenth-century tradition was almost single-handedly revived by [him.]” It implied “a written rhetoric that linked him to the contemporary avant-garde of photography” and channeled the works of earlier photographers through the lens of “the Eastern fine art tradition.”⁹⁶

It is through the close connection between Stieglitz's practices and Adams's adoption of these that we need to understand the processes of selection made within the California Camera Club

⁹⁵ Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the Dock*, xxiv-xxv.

⁹⁶ Sailor, *Meaningful Places*, 135.

membership. Discarding the organization as a whole due to its highly eclectic and, by the mid-twentieth century, municipal character, Adams came to pick a set of individually worthy practitioners like Genthe or Vroman, whose corpora fit – or could be made to fit – the expectations of his aesthetic discourse. In order to gain recognition from the influential New York canon, Bay Area institutions like the Oakland Museum of Art would follow this tradition of monographic appreciation. Rather than tapping the riches and diversity of its local collections, including the estate of Oscar Maurer, the museum decided to align the photographer with the Secessionist avant-garde. The strong visibility of these turn-of-the-century photographers – and the conspicuous absence of the Club – in survey histories of Californian art and photography indeed confirms McCauley's suggestion that such exhibitions and their catalogs rarely provide explanations for omissions. The repeated narrative of Californian Secession-affiliates, illustrated in Chapter five of this thesis, dates back to exactly these processes of narrative and material selection in the decades after the Panama-Pacific International Exposition.

As the medium has gained striking institutional appreciation over the course of the past decades, it appears useful now to turn to less monographic histories, which allow for such complex collectives of photographers to emerge. Through the riches of their corpora – resisting earthquake and fire *and* narrative selection – we can explore the diversity of photographic practice in a region that is commonly associated with male loners. In this, it appears that the shift away from labels such as “fine art” or “Modernist” imposes itself and will allow for material from other collecting institutions to emerge. In this, the transitional moment of the PPIE and its alleged move from Pictorialism to Modernism can be revised and enriched with hitherto unexplored material that illuminates not only the sociocultural uses of photography, but also its institutional narrowing.

Conclusion

From the chosen chronological period and the variety of examined corpora, we can conclude that the California Camera Club demonstrates how the collective practice of photography redefined the role of the medium and its uses in an emerging urban culture, as well as in the state's landscape and history. It shows how, rather than simply coming-of-age and disappearing, the California Camera Club played a key role in the maturation of photography in an isolated region by creating networks with city officials, reaching out to institutions and artists, and furnishing a welcoming platform of exchange for half a century. It was their dynamic understanding of the medium, forged throughout an entire generation, that substantially strengthened the presence, understanding, and conditions of photographic practice in San Francisco in particular, and in Northern California at large. In addition, through their conscious approach to local history and their efforts to circulate an idiosyncratic image of Californian culture to the nation, they developed a self-understanding at local level that, indeed, worked "*only through photography.*"

If the goal of this thesis was to overcome the mention-in-passing or the footnoted presence of a complex photographer organization, it has been achieved insofar as the lingering void of the turn-of-the-century years has been filled with a hitherto completely neglected corpus of primary sources. This material both profoundly enriches and revises common understandings of camera club activity and of photography in the American West. The conceptualization of a collective practice in a Northern Californian region charged with national imagination and expectation has helped shed new light on an overlooked geography in a sometimes just as oversimplified chronology. From the division into four parts, we have seen how practice and production oscillated between local and national uses. It has been traced how photography assisted in the articulation of a communal narrative that could be told to the nation in the 1890s, and how exactly this story was remobilized for the locally circumscribed process of reconstruction after the disaster of 1906. The specificities of this San Franciscan chronology have proven useful in that we can retain novel aspects from each period that furnish unexplored material, and thereby densify our knowledge of both American camera clubs and of the role of the medium in the communal imagination of the American West.

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The first part sought to connect medium and place by mapping out the cultural, societal, and economic ramifications of photography in California, that would define the practice of a new range of practitioners by the late 1880s. Most notably, we have seen that the San Francisco-based railroad companies as sponsors of local culture and supporters of an infrastructure connected the state's landscape were indispensable to later developments. The coinciding establishment of the Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association in 1883, and of the Southern Pacific as a separate enterprise

in 1884, attest to this connection. Reflected more concretely in the friendship between PCAPA president Archibald J. Treat and Southern Pacific official photographer Howard C. Tibbitts, the overlapping interests of photography, territorial appropriation, and promotion crystallized in these years. The participation of both photographers in the foundation of the California Camera Club further shows that the already clouded designation of “amateurs” among American camera clubs occupied an even more unstable place in late nineteenth-century San Francisco. Its meaning was unclear in the presence of influential patrons like Leland Stanford, who relied on the skills of “amateurs” like Treat to envision their grand projects, such as the building of a university. In a decision highly alert to this ambiguity, the dividing line between amateur and professional was rejected, and a more dynamic approach toward photography was embraced by the Club. It found its earliest and most versatile expression in the works of Oscar V. Lange. An almost completely forgotten figure, Lange was, however, a successful professional whose knowledge and craftsmanship were demanded by PCAPA and CCC alike. Lange’s mastery of technical matters, his relation to regional boosters, and his sensibility toward local history materialized in the photographic inventory of the University of California at Berkeley. As such, his output represents a veritable touchstone of the CCC’s ambitions. As a project with multiple uses – local entertainment, national fair display, and archival documentation – it draws our attention not only to the strategic importance of professional membership, but also to the Club’s increasingly complex understanding of the medium’s utility.

Lange’s photographs of the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art, included in the UCB project, gained new meaning when published in *Camera Craft* in 1900 to announce the San Francisco photographic salon. It was through the showcasing of cultural refinement, markedly achieved through railroad capital, and the parallel adoption of a “California pioneer” rhetoric, that the Club reached maturity in the first decade of the twentieth century. Instead of regarding the salon merely as a first legitimizing moment for the medium amid the fine arts, we grasped its function as an instrument of cultural legitimation of the state *at large* when examining the displays and their production context. The salon works, which stemmed partly from promotional works and partly from outings, were to define a style characteristic of the CCC, that is, a practice intimately connected to the surroundings. While the salon was designed for outreach to clubs across the country, it remained just as strongly a circumscribed event for Californians, in which connections between San Francisco and Los Angeles – rather than San Francisco and New York – were forged. The receptiveness to the salon pictures and to the event itself, spurred by coverage in the local press, has enriched our understanding of photography’s appreciation amid Californian audiences. The culturally legitimizing function of the salon became more vividly expressed in the CCC’s creation of a canon of “representative Western” pictures. Here, strategic uses of Native American history and of Chinese culture were to turn the state, and specifically San Francisco, into an historically dense, cosmopolitan society. Its role in the national

narrative of ‘civilization,’ and its geostrategic location on the Pacific, were underlined by the aestheticized use of minority cultures. Through this selective reliance on California’s ethnic diversity, the past and future role of the state in the country’s imperial aspirations was validated. Similarly, this form of “representative” depiction could mirror the local photographers’ intimate connection to the territory and its history, and reflect their aesthetic sensibilities. As a result, the first years of the twentieth century must be seen as moment of intense awareness of the medium’s utility to California as a state – and, in turn, an awareness of the state’s usefulness to the definition of a mature photographic practice and art.

What intensified this process was the realization that photography could take a variety of material forms which would support this localized narrative. The Club’s “historical desire and historical imagination” took shape in the representative canon, and in other projects, such as a systematic urban survey that had to be preserved for future generations.¹ These material conceptions and expectations of photography, although futile in the long term, were renewed in the wake of the earthquake and fire of April 1906. It has become clear that any analysis of the photographic output of the catastrophe requires an intimate understanding of the preceding decades of Club practice. Despite – or exactly because of – the destruction of the headquarters and the innumerable losses at individual level, the aftermath generated a significant corpus that consistently integrated the Californian narrative sketched out earlier. For the Club’s practice, this meant a reidentification with San Francisco’s pioneers who had defied harsh living conditions in an unfamiliar environment. In other words, the territorial approach to photography focused on the immediate urban surroundings, rather than the state’s landscape, and thus turned the trauma into a specifically San Franciscan experience. In the Club’s material output, the experience became manifest on a variety of supports, be it the relaunch of *Camera Craft* with disaster testimonies, the contribution to “instant” histories like Charles Keeler’s, the assembling of albums, and the production of reconstruction views that revived ties to strategic figures like Charles Turrill. While financial assistance for photographers came from across the country, the Club’s work remained a locally circumscribed engagement. Its absence from the national scene in this period is counterweighed by the members’ dense integration in the post-1906 booster machinery. Here, the longstanding cooperation with the railroad and *Sunset* magazine was extended to the political realm through the production of appealing works for civic leader James Phelan. Within these circles, the disaster narrative was reshaped as an official communal history in which San Francisco’s pioneering “spirit” and its Phoenix-rising-from-the-ashes seal provided an optimistic framework. The overtly positive tone of this narrative, and photography’s contribution to it, was critically reexamined through photographic albums compiled by individual

¹ Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 79-80.

citizens. As a personalized screen for narrating traumatic losses, the albums told less celebratory stories – of disaster politics and of photography’s sensationalist coverage – yet, at the same time, came to integrate the communal narrative of hope. Through this two-fold examination of Club production and of individual uses, photography’s ubiquity in the post-disaster space has taken on more complex meanings. The restrained focus on one material support provided a comparative framework that has shown the prevalence of the “grander San Francisco” discourse and the extent to which it had become intertwined in the local uses of photography at large.

Through the Club’s powerful reaffirmation of its role in communal imagination after the disaster, the run-up to the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in 1915 reinvigorated the practice with enthusiasm for the city, state, and nation. A localized form of patriotism, inextricably related to San Francisco’s role for the nation’s future in the twentieth century, thus took shape. At the fair, the Club staged both its historical and aesthetic awareness, and showcased its well-cultivated relations to fair officials. As framing events of this chronology, the Chicago, Midwinter, and Panama-Pacific fairs constitute key moments of discursive affirmation for an “American empire,” which easily translated in the photographic works of Club members. Yet, by 1915, through the rapid evolution of technology and societal structures, photography had also evolved into a pastime connected to automobile travel – a leisure activity particularly apt to the renewal of regional tourism during World War I, and advertised at the PPIE. The opportunities of landscape appreciation promised by this form of leisure practice appealed to the Club after 1915 and must be seen as the beginning of a new era – and as closely related to the demise of its first generation. As photography became a secondary activity to excursions, the label of “California” once again figured prominently in the program. We have seen that, after the PPIE, the Club essentially upheld its goal of “doing justice” to the Californian scenery through an inclusive and congenial practice. Yet, in the light of the establishment of new Pictorialist societies and their desire for institutional inclusion, the CCC’s organizational setup could not live up to contemporary needs. This new formation as well as the staging of Pictorialist salons detached from the CCC, are two developments which point to the Club’s gradual disappearance as a *creative* structure. While the priority of regional appreciation through collective practice had proved an important cultural legitimator at the turn of the century, it lost its vigor and attraction to newly emerging “Pictorialists” in the late 1910s. From this fragmentation, we understood that by the time of museum formation in San Francisco in the 1930s, the CCC’s membership was not eligible to photographic collections. As a result, we may suggest that it was its local anchorage and connectivity, rather than its inclusive model or later creations, that turned the Club into a supportive structure for emerging photographers, as manifested in the encounters which would take place at its headquarters in the following decades.

As the ambition of this thesis was to understand how the Club created a locally and nationally meaningful representation of California, and how the state and the city in return shaped the practice, the necessity of a “history of photographic uses” can be confirmed. To grasp the Club’s evolution from the city’s first inclusive society, to its ambition to project the state *and* the practice of photography in California onto the national scene, and eventually, its expressions of a localized form of patriotism after the disaster and in the run-up to a major international fair, we needed to look at its mobilization of a variety of material supports and the places in which they circulated. By thinking the Club’s history *through* its complex output of objects, we acquired not only a manifold but also an extremely intimate understanding of the various ideas and expectations attached to the photographic medium in the local context. The three hypotheses evoked in the introduction and referenced throughout this thesis – the notion of “Westering” as a photographic act, the impact of regional promotion on the photographic creation of a coherent narrative, and the importance of writing to accompany images – further gained in importance and historical depth when connected to the specific *uses* made by the photographers.

In this regard, the term “use” must be considered in the broadest possible sense, that is, how did the medium become useful to local cultural, history, and economy? How were these uses expressed, that is, which material and verbal supports served to underline their utility? A widely referenced and yet still intriguing concept that can be introduced in answer to these questions is Van Wyck Brooks’s notion of a “useable past,” that was formulated in the same period. For the creation of such a useable past, generally, history would be employed as “an inexhaustible storehouse of apt attitudes and adaptable ideas.”² The Club’s understanding of the medium echoes exactly this idea of a “storehouse.” To the members, the camera could be used in much the same manner as history by Brooks. That is, if the camera was a storehouse, in it were contained all the possible tools for capturing, translating, and rendering tangible the circulating beliefs and ambitions of the time. As such, then, photography unfolded as a rich repository of tools for local appreciation, narration, and national dissemination. In this sense, it became a “useable medium” that reflected the historical and future projects of the community. It is this specific awareness of photography’s possibilities, cultivated among Club members, that makes it such a rich corpus to study and through which several aspects of photographic history and the history of the American West can be rethought.

By shifting back and forth between the local and the national context, this analysis has shown how the “Westering” discourses that existed since the mid nineteenth century were reinforced by the 1900s and became internalized by photographers and interwoven with the practice. The presence of this Californian vocabulary underwent a renegotiation within the Club, as its members developed

² Van Wyck Brooks, “On Creating a Usable Past,” *The Dial* 64 (1918): 339.

their own language-of-power which served to infuse the practice with historical weight and aesthetic precedent. The discourse translated into the perception of the practice as a “pioneer” endeavor, and thereby allowed members to forge continuities – both in the history of the city and the history of the medium. Similarly, the tentacles of these words spread into the creation of objects and infused all kinds of Club productions with local weight and national relevance. The combined analysis of activity and creation, of congenial exchange and collective production, indeed complexifies our understanding of “Westering” as an *act*. Here, the years around the turn of the century have to be singled out as a key moment, since it was in this period that photography became envisioned as a practice accessible to society, and that its products were mobilized for a broader historical understanding and aesthetic appreciation of the local surroundings. In the San Franciscan context, it is the work of the California Camera Club and its inclusive organizational setup which profoundly heightened this awareness.

For the products and the discourse of Western distinctiveness to become efficient, the photographers needed material and infrastructural support. The close cooperation with the Southern Pacific company, and the Club membership of its official photographer Tibbitts, led to beneficial traveling conditions for photographers on train lines and at the same time fed the railroad’s booster literature with locally and collectively produced images. What Jennifer Watts has termed a “call-and-response conversation between booster and amateur” with regard to the Los Angeles photographic scene in the early 1900s holds true to an extent also for Northern California.³ While the use of the term “amateur,” as we have seen, would need revision in the light of the active participation of clubs in company’s interests, we can still observe a mutually nourishing relationship between clubs and companies. This relationship was reinforced by the awareness of photography’s utility, as expressed in the desire of the Southern Pacific passenger department to set up an “immense circulating library,” in which were displayed photographs that would “weave in the brains of men visions and fantasies untold wherein California shall appear a signboard, each of them commanding attention for California.”⁴ This project echoed the Club’s declaration, made at the same period, that a legitimate appreciation of the state could become efficient only via the photographic medium. However, in this ambition, the members moved beyond mere boosterism, since they used the travel on trains and the ensuing accessibility to unique landscape vistas as hallmarks of their localized practice and its artistic value. Since the portrayal of excursions and the staging of a daunting practice in a distinctive part of the country proved essential to the Club’s “representative” canon displayed at salons, this dimension of the practice needs to be detached from the active booster industry. And yet, as soon as this portrayal

³ Watts, “Picture Taking in Paradise,” 247.

⁴ “Telling the World about California: How the Southern Pacific is doing it,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 1, 1905, 43.

changed publication platform or material support and was integrated into the halftone print and promotional vocabulary of *Sunset* magazine, it was just as smoothly reinserted in the industry. It is in this careful balancing of the two, and the conscious choices made by members regarding publication platforms and material supports, that we can detect their strategic uses of both.

Since the deliberate stance on California's isolation from the nation served both boosters and Club, the use of this isolation by photographer-members needed further exploration. Again, here, it has become clear that the Club strategically tapped the vocabulary of Californian uniqueness to infuse its practice with historical weight and aesthetic sensibility. Beyond words and prints, members forged close relationships to local figures like Charles B. Turrill, who was involved in the state promotion committee and at international fairs, but also closely acquainted with photographer Carleton Watkins or mayor James D. Phelan. It is in this dense web of local connections that the embeddedness of the Club and the status of its members has come to the fore. Through the analysis of discourse and productions in tandem, we have seen how the CCC's use of Phelan's notion of California as an empire or San Francisco as "the Paris of the West" gradually politicized the works, as for example around the Midwinter Fair or in the wake of the disaster. This privileged position allowed members to develop an authoritative version of communal history and contribute to a visual consensus on the state, its history and future. The selective reliance on the region's minority populations and the aesthetic mobilization of their cultures further bolstered these power relations. Here, history and landscape were seized and re-appropriated. As newspapers praised the Club's membership as consisting of "business men, merchants, lawyers, physicians – indeed, almost everybody who represents anything in the city,"⁵ it is a logical consequence that this privileged urban culture would be reflected in the canon.

To understand the Club's mobilization of the "isolation" paradigm for local distinctiveness therefore implied an examination of the photographers' social background and their political discourse, which could be detected oftentimes under thick layers of laudatory vocabulary. From this intricate sociopolitical role of the Club, its position within and impact on urban culture could be more clearly defined. Here, the notion of photographic societies as "intermediaries between production and reception" constitutes an important addition, as it suggests that camera clubs, by their close relationship to local publics, forged new forms of understandings of the medium.⁶ In the Club's case, the responsiveness of the press and the publics to the staging of lectures with local subject matter underlines this point. We have then observed how, through their intimate intertwinement with San Franciscan publics, the Club fostered the local internalization of the Californian discourse on distinctiveness. As much more than a detached avant-garde performance striving for "autonomy" of

⁵ "The Camera in California," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 24, 1893, 9.

⁶ Translated from Joschke, *Les Yeux de la Nation*, 20.

the medium, the corpus of the CCC has validated Joschke's idea of camera clubs as locally entwined structures that functioned through dense organizational forms and shaped complex outputs.⁷ This increased attention to the interweave of promotion, professionalism, and politics has, over the course of the analysis, profoundly enriched our understanding of American camera clubs. It is by drawing on these localized features that a collective definition of the practice emerged, reinforced by the profoundly felt isolation from other societies and cultural institutions. It has shown how the striving for recognition of the medium was, in the Californian case, supplemented, enriched, and perhaps at times even replaced by a search for recognition of local culture at large.

Through these multiple confirmations of and additions to the abovementioned hypotheses, not only the conceptual, but also the methodological framework of this thesis could be approved. By challenging the analytical framework of "Pictorialism" and focusing on the "material culture" of photographic societies instead,⁸ the broad range of expectations to the medium in this period and geography could be exemplified. As the CCC became aware of its role and articulated its ambition for recognition of practice and region through a variety of material supports, these objects and formats needed to be tied together. It is in their very complexity that is spelled out the connection between California's impact on photography and the self-identification as Californian practitioners. The rethinking of analytical categories and methodological categories has proven a necessity in the face of the persistent framings through the grid of the Photo-Secession, its aesthetic standard, and its membership. By taking into consideration the breadth of sources related to the CCC – that is, magazines, reports, books, lectures and lantern slides, prints, manuscripts, and newspaper coverage – a much more detailed picture of collective photography practice around 1900 could be drawn. In studying contextual materials, derived from historical collecting institutions and public or university libraries, this thesis has added new voices to the pervasive discourse. Through a reexamination of the original production context, a new perspective on Californian photography around the turn of the century has been proposed – one in which the quest for recognition as an art is merely one piece of the large, multi-colored mosaic which the medium formed already at the time. By connecting the various material sources, the history of "California Pictorialism" was thus extended to a history of Californian *photography* in which artistic or cultural forms did not emerge out of a void, but out of the specific local conditions of community imagination and recognition.

By closely examining the historical readings and institutional appreciations of Californian photography, this study equally provided a potential answer to the question which imposed itself in the face of the material bulk: Why have these sources been neglected? The answer to this question is twofold. On the one hand, it appears that the material caesura of the earthquake and fire still

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 145.

constitutes a major obstacle to historical research, as it imposes a fragmented conception of the period. However, as the variety of unearthed sources and their marked presence in local archives and in the Palmquist collection have proven, the oblivion of the CCC cannot be justified simply by the earthquake and fire. Even though the event was a watershed in many different ways, especially for photographic practice, a detailed examination of the developments prior to this rupture is possible – and has similarly generated a rich understanding of the event itself. On the other hand, the answer to the question of oblivion also lies in the dynamics of collecting and the patterns of selecting. The “emplacement” of photographs in the period, their material support, and the institutional framings of sources in later decades, can be defined as key factors which reinforce neglect. As the Club adopted what Roger Hull termed a strategy of “total emplacement,” so as to circulate the imagery of California and of their own practice, they came to “fus[e] with the culture bank of American images,” which eventually dismissed them from museum collections.⁹ As demonstrated in the epilogue, the CCC lacked the tools of materially formulating, preserving, and institutionalizing its products, discourses, and its own history. In the long run, through the very materiality adopted by the members, the works would represent a challenge to the archive’s capacity. Especially because of the corpora’s incoherent form, they became dispersed over a vast array of institutions, stored under myriad labels. This material heterogeneity, mixed with the great number of practitioners, has made comprehensive research challenging. And yet, it is exactly this heterogeneity, this incongruity with existing categories, and this resistance to classification, from which the Club sources draw their historical riches. Therefore, much to the same extent that the CCC redefined its photo-practice by adapting to and developing a keen awareness of its specific local condition, the methodological approach of this thesis required versatility and adaptability.

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From the confirmation of these hypotheses and methodologies, we may conclude that a range of new concepts, practitioners, and collections have come to the surface, which enrich the understanding of Californian photography around 1900 in many ways. And yet, while a lot has been shown thanks to these newly unearthed sources, much more remains to uncover. The analysis of novel corpora carries as many greatly stimulating discoveries as it harbors ambiguities, questions, and shortcomings. The greatest challenge is related to the absence of a unified corpus or collection. Despite the attempt, throughout this thesis, to remedy, rectify, or otherwise counter this absence, a broad range of activities and productions remain simply unknown. The very conceptualization of the here assembled “CCC corpus” is based on its fragmented nature, and can be criticized as such. Even though historical analysis is necessarily selective, the ambition of this project was to take into account

⁹ Hull, “Emplacement, Displacement, and the Fate of Photographs,” 187.

the entirety of available sources to draw as stratified a picture of Club practice as possible. The drawbacks related to this ambition are numerous, of course, due to the great number of entirely vanished projects, of which the researcher only learns through *Camera Craft*. The creation of a camera club survey of San Francisco, for instance, in 1901 and 1910 respectively, appears an extremely rich terrain, not least since it would constitute the first of its kind in the United States – and count among the first systematic re-photography projects. Here, the reliance on *Camera Craft* coverage is both blessing and curse, as the editors provided information on the survey itself, yet omitted details on storage, let alone the visual documentation of its outcome. Similarly, the “language-of-power” in the magazine does not always represent a reliable source. As research in collections on-site has made me intensely aware of these shortcomings, the following section gives an overview of critical points that require improvement in the future, but could not be implemented in the framework of this thesis.

A first critical point to be discussed is the question of provenance. Even though a variety of sources on the Club can be found, we only rarely understand where this material came from and by whom it was deposited. Despite the declared goal of reconstructing the initial production context and tracing the objects’ itineraries over time, in most cases it was not possible to track the arrival in collecting institutions. Additional information on provenance would represent a valuable addition to the argument of “historical desire” and the ambition of preservation that was expressed amid membership, and yet eventually ended up as empty promise. While coherent archives of camera clubs are rare throughout the U.S., which may constitute one of the reasons why this terrain is still widely uncharted, their existence would allow us to grasp more concretely their functions and engagements. A recent donation of the Los Angeles Camera Club archives to the Huntington Library, dated ca. 1915-1940, furnishes a glimpse of what such a comprehensive collection may include. Its numerous magazines, catalogs, membership lists, and financial transactions show not only the complexities, but also the amount of bureaucracy related to the organization of a camera club – an overview that is much more complete than what could be excavated for the California Camera Club in this thesis.¹⁰

Even though the major figures of the Club outlined here, notably Oscar Maurer and O.V. Lange, have left a rich archival residue, it is not clear by whom their prints and manuscripts were donated. None of these two photographers had children – a circumstance which at times facilitates research, as in the case of William Dasonville, whose son collaborated with Peter Palmquist, and collectors Paul Hertzmann and Susan Herzig in the publication of a monograph.¹¹ Personal

¹⁰ See Los Angeles Camera Club Archives, ca. 1915-1940 (photCL 579), the Huntington Library, San Marino. The material is stored in four large boxes and had been preserved by the daughter-in-law of the Club’s last secretary.

¹¹ See Hertzmann and Herzig, eds., *William E. Dasonville: California Photographer, 1879-1957* (1999). Palmquist’s essay on Dasonville is the only complete biographical portrayal that exists of a Club member and that draws specific attention to the CCC.

conversations with the grandchildren of members Thomas P. Andrews and Charles Weidner were rare instances when further information could be gathered, which in both cases, however, did not directly concern the Club. On the whole, the question of provenance and exhaustivity in camera club sources also remains a matter of chance encounters and findings, like the donation of the LACC archives, more than half a century after its disbanding. In this regard, the CCC's existence up to the 1970s gives reason for hope that an archive may surface at some point.

Due to these archival conditions, the list of contributors provided in this thesis cannot aspire to completion, and necessarily remains fragmented. Even though the influential position of the members mentioned in this thesis has been strongly confirmed by their presence in *Camera Craft*, salon catalogs, and newspaper articles, there is a range of other figures for whom no material could be secured. This absence concerns notably the Club presidents, whose announcements and grand projects often dominated the Club's literature, for example George W. Reed, the founder of the Club, James W. Erwin who created the "Pacific League" and the survey projects, or George Knight White who held Club meetings at his home after the disaster.¹² It is not clear whether the output of the Club presidents was as prolific, or whether they operated as administrating figures of a collective cause. Furthermore, the material heterogeneity of the Club's production and its undocumented authorship, for example in the case of lantern slide collections (to which Erwin as nationwide lecturer must have been a contributor) prevent us from making a definitive statement on the Club's first generation and its most important contributors.

A third aspect that puts into perspective the absence of Club material and the argument made in this thesis is the critical lack of alternative voices. Given the scarcity of membership lists and identifiable portraits, the actual impact of female contributors and the representation of ethnic minorities, other than European, cannot be measured. It can be assumed that the majority of Club contributors were well-to-do, white male citizens, which especially in the San Franciscan case, did not exclude a recent immigrant background. The marked European presence in the city was also tangible in the Club, notably through its membership of first- or second-generation German immigrants, like Lange, Maurer, Genthe, Weidner, or Stellmann. In a city where, by 1900, 75% percent of its population still had "at least one foreign-born parent," it was not surprising to encounter a business and political elite of German, Italian, or Irish ancestry.¹³ However, apart from Chinese-American member Mrs. Tape in the early 1890s, no direct relationships to Asian or African-American photographers could be detected, even beyond 1915.

From the context mapped out in this thesis, then, the harmonious communal narrative and the localized patriotism elaborated within the Club did not face any specific obstacles, questioning, or

¹² See directory of photographers in bibliography for a complete overview of sources.

¹³ Ethington, *The Public City*, 49-50.

criticism. It is due to the very lack of visual material on the realities of life in San Francisco – and its intensely racialized community – that the focus on community *imagination* has been reinforced. It seems that Susanne Leikam’s note of caution to researchers on San Francisco’s post-earthquake narrative through photographs also holds true for the broader chronology between 1890 and 1915. Her stance on the city’s long history of “invisibility” would demand us “to be highly alert to the pictures’ silences and omissions.”¹⁴ In the case of the CCC, this alert position must be extended to the omissions in the corpus as such. Furthermore, even though the Club was connected to the local bohemia surrounding Charles Keeler, no specific relations to the city’s other well-known authors like Jack London, Frank Norris, or Gertrude Atherton could be detected. In the framework of this thesis, an extension to the literary realm and to the longstanding paradigm of “myth versus reality” appeared impractical as it constitutes too expansive a topic. Yet, in the long term, a more profound examination of the contrasts between literature and booster discourse, especially with regard to the CCC’s membership and output, would represent a valuable addition to the research terrain. The general search for divergent voices may also lead to an investigation of the marked absence, in San Francisco, of a critical photographer’s eye as it would exist in New York by the 1900s.¹⁵

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From this list of critical shortcomings, several possibilities for expanding the research may arise. These concern both the history of the Club and the larger photographic corpora in Californian collecting institutions. With regard to the CCC, an especially intriguing terrain to inquire are the relationships between the California Camera Club, the Sierra Club, and the early Ansel Adams. As the Sierra Club initiated a regular outing schedule with cameras at hand around the same time as the CCC in the 1900s, the early history of these outings and the connections to photographers of the Club in the Yosemite would be highly enriching. As the Sierra Club pictorial collection held at the Bancroft Library includes a vast amount of material, authored and dated, it could represent a valuable point of departure.¹⁶ The conflicted relationship between tourism and conservation, that was at the heart of the Sierra Club and at times became tangible within the CCC, could gain in historical depth. This exploration would provide an important base to reconsider the early work of Ansel Adams in the Yosemite, where he soon joined the Sierra Club and became acquainted with the CCC. Adams’s later denial of a relationship to or appreciation of the Club is conspicuous in this regard, and would gain in complexity if we were to analyze the connections between the two organizations, their ambitions and potential conflicts. In the broadest sense, such an inquiry may also shed light on the role of environmental preservation and ecology in camera club practice.

¹⁴ Leikam, *Framing Spaces in Motion*, 305.

¹⁵ See Francisco, “Picturing Difference: Documentary Practices in San Francisco’s Chinatown.”

¹⁶ The collection holds some 45,000 items, including many albums which document group outings (see the Sierra Club pictorial collections, ca. 1861-1984, the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley).

To further the investigation into a Californian club practice, the research may be broadened to the state as a whole. This would mean taking into account the relationships between San Francisco, Sacramento, Los Angeles, and the numerous other venues in which clubs were formed. To this end, both a broadened geography and a broadened chronology – drawing on the late LACC archives – could enrich our conception of collective practice as a localized patriotic endeavor. It would be important to measure the perpetuation of the pioneer discourse, the reference to other Californian myths, and how these were upheld or served as rallying motifs amid other clubs. What is at stake here is the question of local working conditions and their impact on the practice. To what extent would other Californian photographic societies internalize the larger narrative of the state and seek to spread its fruit as an idiosyncratic local endeavor? Also, which material supports did they use to support this narrative? In the largest sense, such a study would mobilize the riches of photography collections across the state.

From the research undertaken in this thesis, it can be assumed that the sources that are still to be tapped in university and municipal libraries, in historical societies, and in private collections would complexify the history of photography and its specific localized uses in the American West. By their sheer presence and variety, they demand us to rethink the history of the medium as a shared activity, in which objects were exchanged and discourses cultivated – nurtured by a communal imagination that, indeed, functioned “*only through photography.*”

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Paul M. Hertzmann, Inc.
Robert Tat Gallery
Scott Nichols Gallery

San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park and Museum

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California State Archives, Sacramento

California State Railroad Museum, Sacramento

California Views, Photo Archives by Pat Hathaway, Monterey

Historical Society of Southern California

San Francisco:	Native Sons of the Golden West
	Northern California Council of Camera Club
	Wells Fargo Archive

Stanford University

San Jose State University

Yosemite National Park Archives

Other U.S. Institutions

Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas

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California State Library	Ephemera collection California Camera Club.
Los Angeles Public Library	California Camera Club Collection of lantern slides, ca. 250 items, undated.
The Beinecke Library	Palmquist Collection of Male Photographers The Alfred Stieglitz / George O'Keeffe Archive.
The Huntington Library	Photograph album documenting California Camera Club outings 1917-1924 (photCL 438).
Yosemite Museum, National Park Service	California Camera Club photograph and ephemera collection.

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Other institutions

The Beinecke Library

Palmquist Collection of Male Photographers

UCLA Library Special Collections,
Charles E. Young Research Library,
University of California, Los Angeles

Pacific Photo Club records (Collection Nb. 784)

Directory: Camera club members

California Camera Club / Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association / Los Angeles Camera Club

The following list includes the majority of photographers discussed in this thesis. The entries provide an overview of each photographer's dates, membership affiliation, written contributions, reproductions, and salon participation (based on the list reproduced below). Each entry also furnishes an overview of archival collections that include the photographer's work and secondary literature.

Please note that due to the lack of material in most cases, the list cannot be exhaustive. In the case of written contributions to journals, only the publications cited in this thesis are included. Especially *Camera Craft* may include many more contributions by a photographer, which yet cannot all be listed here. In this case, the decade(s) of magazine contributions is indicated.

List of exhibitions and abbreviations

Exhibition	Abbreviation
San Francisco	
First San Francisco Photographic Salon under the auspices of the California Camera Club and the San Francisco Art Association. Mark Hopkins Institute of Art, January 1901.	1 st SF
Second San Francisco Photographic Salon under the auspices of the California Camera Club and the San Francisco Art Association. Mark Hopkins Institute of Art, January, 1902.	2 nd SF
Third San Francisco Photographic Salon under the auspices of the California Camera Club and San Francisco Art Association. Mark Hopkins Institute of Art, October 1903.	3 rd SF
Fifth International Photographic Salon under the auspices of the California Camera Club. Palace Hotel, November to December 1916.	5 th SF
Exhibition in the Pictorial Section of the Palace of Liberal Arts. Panama-Pacific International Exposition, February to December 1915.	PPIE
Third Annual International Exhibition of Pictorial Photography held by the Pictorial Photographic Society of San Francisco. California School of Fine Arts, October to December 1924.	3 rd SF Pictorial Society
Fourth Annual International Exhibition of Pictorial Photography held by the Pictorial Photographic Society of San Francisco. California Palace of the Legion of Honor, October 1926.	4 th SF Pictorial Society
Fifth Annual International Exhibition of Pictorial Photography held by the Pictorial Photographic Society of San Francisco. California Palace of the Legion of Honor, September to October 1928.	5 th SF Pictorial Society
Los Angeles	
First Los Angeles Photographic Salon. Los Angeles Camera Club, May 1902.	1 st LA

Chicago	
First Chicago Photographic Salon. Chicago Society of Amateur Photographers and Art Institute of Chicago, April 1900.	1 st Chicago
Second Chicago Photographic Salon. Chicago Society of Amateur Photographers and Art Institute of Chicago, October 1901.	2 nd Chicago
Third Chicago Photographic Salon. The Art Institute of Chicago, December 1902 to January 1903.	3 rd Chicago
Philadelphia	
Fourth Philadelphia Photographic Salon. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, November December 14, 1901.	4 th Philadelphia
United States, other	
International Exhibition of Pictorial Photography. The Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, Albright Art Gallery, November to December 1910.	Buffalo
The First American Photographic Salon, Salon Club of America. 1904-1905.	1 st American Salon
The Second American Photographic Salon, Salon Club of America. 1905-1906.	2 nd American Salon
The Third American Photographic Salon, Salon Club of America. 1906-1907.	3 rd American Salon
The Fourth American Photographic Salon, Salon Club of America. 1907-1908.	4 th American Salon
The Fifth American Photographic Salon, Salon Club of America. 1908-1909.	5 th American Salon
The Sixth American Photographic Salon, Salon Club of America. 1909-1910.	6 th American Salon
The Seventh American Photographic Salon, Salon Club of America. 1910-1911.	7 th American Salon
International	
Internationale Ausstellung von Amateur-Photographien, Hamburg, 1893.	Hamburg
Internationale Photographische Ausstellung, Dresden, 1909.	Dresden

Directory: Camera club members**Ackerman, Carl E. (no dates available)**

CCC member, active 1900s; co-editor of and writings in *Camera Craft* early 1900s

Salons: 1st SF, 2nd SF

Publications cited:

“In the Days of Forty-nine, with a short Sketch of Charles Nahl.” *Camera Craft* 2, no. 2 (1900): 106-113.

Andrews, Thomas Patrick (1865-1936)

CCC founding member; Club secretary, active mostly 1890s

Collections: Achenbach Foundation; Beinecke Library.

Armer, Laura Adams (1874-1963)

CCC member 1900s; reproductions in *Camera Craft* 1900s

Salons: 3rd SF, 2nd Chicago, 1st American Salon, 3rd American Salon, 7th American Salon, Buffalo, PPIE

Her later work has been covered by scholars; her photographs are included in several collections; mentioned here are only the consulted collections.

Manuscripts and Publications:

Laura Adams Armer Papers (MSS 4/20). San Francisco Public Library.

Armer, Laura Adams. *Waterless Mountain. Illustrated by Sidney Armer and Laura Adams Armer*. New York and Toronto: Longmans, Green and co., 1931.

Collections: California Historical Society; San Francisco Public Library; California State Library; Beinecke Library.

Secondary Sources:

Palmquist, Peter E. “Waterless Mountain.” In *Perpetual Mirage: Photographic Narratives of the Desert West*, edited by May Castleberry. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1996.

Backus, Morgan (no dates available)

CCC membership unclear; editor of *Pacific Coast Photographer*, writings in *Camera Craft* 1900s

Blumann, Sigismund (1872-1956)

CCC membership unclear; editor of *Camera Craft* 1924-1933, numerous contributions between 1910s and 1930s; reproductions in *Camera Craft*

Publications cited:

“Hanging Salon Prints.” *Camera Craft* 29, no. 8 (1922): 379-381.

“Our Japanese Brother Artists.” *Camera Craft* 32, no. 3 (1925): 109.

“The f.64 Group Exhibition.” *Camera Craft* 40, no. 5 (1933): 199-200.

Collections: Minneapolis Institute of Art.

Secondary Sources:

Peterson, Christian A. “Sigismund Blumann: California Editor and Photographer.” *History of Photography* 26, no. 1 (2002): 53-79.

Boysen, Julius T. (1868-1939)

CCC membership unclear; reproductions in *Camera Craft* 1900s

Salons: 1st SF

Collections: The Bancroft Library; Getty Museum; Beinecke Library.

Brigman, Anne (1869-1950)

CCC membership unclear; writings and reproductions in *Camera Craft* 1900s-1910s

Salons: 2nd SF, 3rd SF, 1st LA, 3rd Chicago, Dresden, Buffalo, PPIE, 3rd SF Pictorial Society, 4th SF Pictorial Society

Publications cited:

“The Prints at Idora.” *Camera Craft* 15, no. 12 (1908): 463-466.

Her work has been widely covered by scholars; her photographs are included in many collections; mentioned here are only the consulted collections and monographs.

Collections: The Bancroft Library; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Oakland Museum; Getty Museum; George Eastman House; Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Beinecke Library.

Secondary Sources:

Brown, Leslie Kathleen. “Staging the Mystical: The Photographs of Anne Brigman and the Mystical Philosophy of Edward Carpenter.” Unpublished Master thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1998.

Ehrens, Susan. *A Poetic Vision: The Photographs of Anne Brigman*. Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1995.

Heyman, Therese Thau. "Anne Brigman: Pictorial Photographer, Pagan, Member of the Photo-Secession." Brochure of the exhibition at the Oakland Museum, September 17 to November 17, 1974.

Clute, Fayette J. (1865-1921)

CCC member 1900s; *Camera Craft* editor 1903-1924 with numerous contributions; reproductions in *Sunset* 1900s

Salons: 1st SF, 1st American Salon, 3rd American Salon

Publications cited:

Our Boys in Blue: A Souvenir. From photos by W.B. Tyler, Chas. Weidner, F.J. Clute, R.J. Waters. San Francisco: The Pacific Illustrating Bureau, 1898.

"With Earthquake and Fire." *Camera Craft* 12, no. 4 (1906): 149-154.

The ABC of Photography, by an amateur. Chicago: Burke & James, 1909.

Cohen, Edgar A. (1859-1939)

CCC member 1900s; writings and reproductions in *Camera Craft* 1900s

Salons: 2nd SF, 3rd SF, 1st LA, 3rd Chicago

Publications cited:

"With a Camera in San Francisco." *Camera Craft* 12, no. 5 (1906): 183-194.

Collections: The Bancroft Library; Beinecke Library; New York Public Library.

Coombs, A.L. (no dates)

CCC member 1900s-1910s; CCC president 1903; correspondence with Stieglitz for 3rd SF salon

Salons: 1st SF, 2nd SF, 3rd SF, 1st LA

Cunningham, Imogen (1883-1976)

CCC membership unclear

Salons: PPIE, 5th SF, 5th SF Pictorial Society

Her work has been widely covered; her photographs are included in many collections; mentioned here are only the consulted manuscripts.

Manuscripts:

Imogen Cunningham. Portraits, Ideas, and Design. An Interview conducted by Edna Tartaul Daniel, 1961 (BANC MSS C-D 4036). Regional Cultural History Project, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1961.

D'Arcy Power, Dr. Henry (no dates available)

CCC member 1900s-1910s; longstanding *Camera Craft* contributor on technicalities and on foreign photographic journals; reproductions in *Camera Craft* and *Sunset* 1900s

Salons: 1st SF, 2nd SF, 3rd SF, 2nd Chicago

Publications cited:

“Earthquake and Fire: From a Photographer’s Viewpoint.” *Camera Craft* 12, no. 4 (1906): 155-160.

“Photography at the Panama-Pacific Exposition: A Protest.” *Camera Craft* 20, no. 4 (1913): 183-184.

D'Estrella, Theophilus Hope (1851-1929)

CCC member 1890s-1920s

Salons: 1st SF, 3rd SF

Collections: The Bancroft Library; Beinecke Library; California School for the Deaf.

Secondary Sources:

Albronda, Mildred. *The Magic Lantern Man: Theophilus Hope D'Estrella*. Fremont: California School for the Deaf, 1985.

Dassonville, William E. (1879-1957)

CCC member 1900s-1930s; Club secretary 1900s; numerous reproductions and writings in *Camera Craft* 1900s-1930s; reproductions in *Sunset* (1908) and *Elder* (1911, 1913).

Salons: 1st SF, 2nd SF, 3rd SF, 5th SF, 1st LA, 1st American Salon, 2nd American Salon, PPIE, 3rd SF Pictorial Society, 4th SF Pictorial Society, 5th SF Pictorial Society

Collections: Dassonville is represented in most major American museum collections; the collections consulted for this thesis include the Bancroft Library; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Paul Hertzmann, Inc.; Getty Museum; George Eastman House; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; New York Public Library; Beinecke Library.

Secondary Sources:

Hertzmann, Paul, and Susan Herzig, eds. *William E. Dassonville: California Photographer, 1879-1957*. Nevada City: Carl Mautz Pub., 1999.

Davie, Helen L. (no dates available)

LACC member; corresponding secretary early 1900s; writings and reproductions in *Camera Craft* and *Los Angeles Camera Club News* early 1900s

Salons: 1st LA, 2nd SF

Publications cited:

“New Home of the Los Angeles Club.” *Camera Craft* 1, no. 5 (1900): 238-239.

“Los Angeles Camera Club.” *Los Angeles Camera Club News* 2, no. 2 (1902).

“The Los Angeles Salon.” *Camera Craft* 4, no. 6 (1902): 248-249.

“The Los Angeles exhibition, its history and success, and those responsible for it.” *Camera Craft* 5, no. 2 (1902): 43-44.

“Women in Photography.” *Camera Craft* 5, no. 4 (1902): 130-138.

Edwards, John Paul (1884-1968)

CCC member 1910s-1920s; writings and reproductions in *Camera Craft*

Salons: 5th SF; 3rd SF Pictorial Society, 5th SF Pictorial Society.

Publications cited:

“The California Salon.” *Camera Craft* 24, no. 1 (1917): 3-15.

Collections: Getty Museum.

Eisen, Dr. Gustav (no dates available)

CCC member 1900s, CCC treasurer and librarian early 1900s

Salons: 1st SF, 2nd SF, 3rd SF, 2nd American Salon, 3rd American Salon, 4th American Salon, 5th American Salon, 6th American Saon, Dresden

Elder, Paul (1872-1948)

San Francisco publisher with close ties to CCC; included Club photographers in gallery catalogs and publications, notably Dassonville, Genthe, Lange, Maurer, McCulloch, Sewell, Stellmann, and Tibbitts.

Publications cited:

An Arts and Crafts Book Shop in Greater San Francisco. San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1906.

California the Beautiful. Camera Studies by California Artists; with Selections in Prose and Verse from Western Writers. San Francisco: Elder and Company, 1911.

The Old Spanish Missions of California. An Historical and Descriptive Sketch by Paul Elder. Illustrated chiefly from Photographs by Western Artists. San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company Publishers, 1913.

The Architecture and Landscape Gardening of the Exposition: A Pictorial Survey of the Most Beautiful of the Architectural Compositions of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1915.

Elder as publisher:

Keeler, Charles. *San Francisco Through Earthquake and Fire.* San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company Publishers, 1906.

Stellmann, Louis J. *Vanished Ruin Era: San Francisco's Classic Artistry of Ruin Depicted in Picture and Song.* San Francisco: Paul Elder and Son, 1910.

Manuscripts:

The David Paul Elder Papers, 1909-1947 (BANC MSS 71/120 c, Vol. 1, Vol. 3). The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Paul Elder & Co. Book Sale Catalogs, 1905-1916. New York Public Library.

Collections: The Bancroft Library; California Historical Society; University of California, Santa Barbara; New York Public Library.

Secondary Sources:

Gorden, Ruth I. "Paul Elder: Bookseller-Publisher (1897-1917). A Bay Area Reflection." PhD diss., University of California, 1977.

Mostardi, David. *A Checklist of the Publications of Paul Elder.* Olalla, Washington: The Arts & Crafts Press, 2001.

Erwin, James W. (no dates available)

CCC president early 1900s, member 1900s-1920s; lecturer on American West; writings in *Camera Craft*

Publications cited:

"A Pacific League of Camera Clubs." *Camera Craft* 1, no. 1 (1900): 14.

"A Photographic Army to Impress San Francisco on a Thousand Plates." *Camera Craft* 3, no. 6 (1901): 237-238.

Collections: Beinecke Library.

Evans, Chester Willard (1878-1934)

CCC president 1913; CCC member 1900s-1910s

Salons: 3rd SF

Collections: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park and Museum; Beinecke Library.

Forbes, Mrs. Armitage S.C. (born ca. 1867 - ?)

LACC member and board of directors; writings in *Los Angeles Camera Club News*

Salons: 1st LA, 3rd SF

Publications cited:

Catalogue of the First Los Angeles Photographic Salon, at the Los Angeles Camera Club, May 1 to 10, 1902. Los Angeles: Issued by A.S.C. Forbes, 1902.

California Missions and Landmarks and How to Get There. Los Angeles: Official Guide, 1903.

Genthe, Arnold (1869-1942)

CCC member 1890s-1910s; *Camera Craft* reproductions and writings; reproductions in Elder (1911)

Salons: 1st SF, 2nd SF, 3rd SF, 1st LA, 2nd Chicago, 4th Philadelphia, 1st American Salon, Buffalo, 5th SF Pictorial Society

Publications cited:

“The Children of Chinatown.” *Camera Craft* 2, no. 2 (1900): 99-104.

“A Critical Review of the Salon Pictures with a Few Words upon the Tendency of the Photographers.” *Camera Craft* 2, no. 4 (1901): 307-320.

“Rebellion in Photography.” *Overland Monthly* 43 (1901): 93-96.

“The Third San Francisco Salon.” *Camera Craft* 7, no. 6 (1903): 207-218.

Arnold Genthe and Will Irwin. *Old Chinatown: A Book of Pictures*. New York: Moffat, Yard & Company, 1906. (numerous re-editions)

As I Remember. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1936.

Manuscripts:

Scrapbook of clippings relating to photographer Arnold Genthe, 1902-1916 (BANC MSS 75/84 c). The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Collections: Genthe is represented in most major American museum collections; the collections consulted for this thesis include the Bancroft Library; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Oakland Museum; Getty Museum; George Eastman House; Library of Congress; New York Public Library.

Secondary Sources:

Hong Kingston, Maxine. "San Francisco's Chinatown: A View from the Other Side of Arnold Genthe's Camera." *American Heritage* 30 (1978).

<http://www.americanheritage.com/content/san-francisco's-chinatown>.

Hong, Grace Kyungwon. "Nation and Empire in Arnold Genthe's Photographs of San Francisco's Chinese Quarter, 1895 to 1906." *Journal of the West* 43 (2004): 8-14.

Quitslund, Toby G. "Arnold Genthe: A Pictorial Photographer in San Francisco, 1895-1911." PhD diss., The George Washington University, 1988.

Tchen, John Kuo Wei. *Genthe's Photographs of San Francisco's Old Chinatown*. New York: Dover Publications, 1984.

Hanscom, Adelaide (1876-1932)

CCC membership unclear; reproductions in *Camera Craft*

Salons: 3rd SF

Collections: The Bancroft Library; California Historical Society; George Eastman House; Beinecke Library; University of Washington Libraries.

Secondary Sources:

Shipounoff, Dimitri, and Gail Marie Indvik. *Adelaide Hanscom Leeson: Pictorialist Photographer 1876-1932*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1981.

Hosmer, H.B. (no dates available)

CCC president in 1892, vice-president in 1902

Salons: 1st SF

Hoyt, Herman S. (1868-1961)

CCC member 1900s until death in 1961; reproductions in *Camera Craft*; co-editor of *First California Camera Club Annual*

Salons: 3rd SF, 1st American Salon

Manuscripts:

Herman S. Hoyt Papers, 1902-1961 (BANC MSS 2009/9). The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Collections: The Bancroft Library; California Historical Society.

Inkersley, Arthur (no dates available)

CCC member 1900s; *Camera Craft* reproductions and writings 1900s

Publications cited:

“An Amateur's Experience of Earthquake and Fire.” *Camera Craft* 12, no. 5 (1906): 195-200.

“What San Francisco has to Start with.” *Overland Monthly* 47 (1906): 483.

“Olive Culture in California.” *The Sacred Heart Review*, February 25, 1905, 8.

Jellinek, Dr. E.O. (no dates available)

CCC vice-president 1915, CCC member 1910s-1920s

Collections: San Francisco Public Library.

Kemp, Edward H. (1868-1964)

CCC president 1910s, member 1900s-1920s; writings in *Camera Craft*

Salons: 1st SF, 2nd SF, 3rd SF, 5th SF, 1st LA, 1st American Salon

Publications cited:

“Twenty-five Years in Photography.” *Camera Craft* 21, no. 3 (1914): 125-127.

Collections: The Bancroft Library; Beinecke Library; Library of Congress: Archives of American Art; Palace of the Governors Photo Archive, New Mexico History Museum.

Kemp, Josephine A. (no dates available)

CCC member 1900s-1920s; wife of Edward H. Kemp and partner in lectures and business; writings in *Camera Craft* 1900s, and *First California Camera Club Annual* (1912)

Publications cited:

“Photographing in the Hopi Land.” *Camera Craft* 11, no. 6 (1905): 247-255.

Collections: see Edward H. Kemp.

Knight White, George (no dates available)

PCAPA secretary; CCC president in 1906; CCC membership 1890s-1900s

Salons: 1st SF, 2nd SF, 3rd SF, 2nd Chicago

Publications cited:

“The Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association.” *Anthony's Photographic Bulletin* 21 (1890): 601.

Lange, Oscar V. (1853-1913)

PCAPA honorary member; CCC member from 1890s until death in 1913; reproductions and writings in *Pacific Coast Photographer* and *Camera Craft*; co-editor of *Camera Craft* early 1900s; reproductions in Elder (1911)

Salons: 1st SF, 2nd SF, 3rd SF, 1st LA

Publications cited:

Beautiful Berkeley. San Francisco: O.V. Lange, Photo. and Publisher, ca. 1887-1890.

“Composition.” *Pacific Coast Photographer* 1, no. 4 (1892): 65.

“In Professional Fields.” *Camera Craft* 3, no. 1 (1901): 33.

“A Portrait Photographer for More than Half a Century in San Francisco.” *Camera Craft* 5, no. 3 (1902): 101-107.

“Professor Joe.” *Camera Craft* 3, no. 4 (1901): 138-140.

Manuscripts:

Oscar V. Lange Papers, 1887-1913 (BANC MSS 78/133 c). The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

O.V. Lange. “Through the University of California with a Camera.” 1899 (f 308gv 1899 L274). The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Collections: The Bancroft Library; Paul Hertzmann, Inc.; California Historical Society; Stanford University; Berkeley Public Library; California State Library; California State Railroad Museum; George Eastman House; Beinecke Library.

LeBreton, Albert J. (no dates available)

CCC president 1907, member 1900s-1910s

Salons: 1st SF, 3rd SF, 1st LA, 1st American Salon

Publications cited:

“The First American Photographic Salon.” *Camera Craft* 10, no. 5 (1905): 279-281.

“The Camera Club’s Yosemite Outing.” *Camera Craft* 14, no. 7 (1907): 301-309.

Lowden, W.H. (no dates available)

PCAPA member

Salons: 1st SF

Collections: The Bancroft Library.

Marceau, Theodore C. (1859-1922)

CCC member early 1890s; notably made portrait of CCC board of directors in 1890s

Salons: 1st LA

Collections: The Bancroft Library; Achenbach Foundation; California State Library; Getty Museum; New York Public Library.

Maude, Frederic Hamer (1858-1959)

LACC member; reproductions in *Camera Craft* 1900s

Salons: 1st LA, 1st SF

Collections: The Bancroft Library; California State Library; Seaver Center for Western History Research; Autry Museum; the Huntington Library; Library of Congress; New York Public Library; Beinecke Library.

Secondary Sources:

Stevens, Errol Wayne. "Frederic Hamer Maude: A Photographer and His Collection." *Southern California Quarterly* 82, no. 1 (2000): 43-60, <https://doi.org/10.2307/41171990>.

Maurer, Oscar (1870-1965)

CCC member 1890s-1910s; writings and reproductions in *Camera Craft* 1900s; reproductions in *Sunset*; reproductions in Elder (1911)

Salons: 1st SF, 2nd SF, 3rd SF, 1st LA, 1st Chicago, 2nd Chicago, 3rd Chicago, 4th Philadelphia, 1st American Salon, 2nd American Salon, 3rd American Salon, 5th SF Pictorial Society

Publications cited:

"A Plea for Recognition." *Camera Craft* 1, no. 2 (1900): 60.

"The Grand Prize Exhibit: A Criticism of the Work of Arnold Genthe." *Camera Craft* 2, no. 4 (1901): 298-299.

"Around Mt. Shasta in Winter." *Sunset* 6 (1901): 142-144.

Manuscripts:

Oscar Maurer. "As I Remember." 1963 (BANC MSS 2012/1). The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Collections: The Bancroft Library; Oakland Museum; Getty Museum; Museum of Modern Art; Beinecke Library.

Secondary Sources:

Mann, Margery. "Oscar Maurer." *Artforum* 3, no. 7 (1965): 48.

Thompson, Daniella. "Oscar Maurer Studio." Berkeley Landmarks. Accessed October 15, 2016. http://berkeleyheritage.com/berkeley_landmarks/maurer_studio.html.

McCulloch, Frances Reid (no dates available)

CCC member 1900s-1910s; reproductions in *Camera Craft*, notably Yosemite outing 1907; reproductions in *Elder* (1911)

Salons: 5th SF

McFarland, A.G. (no dates available)

CCC board of directors 1890s, membership 1900s

Salons: 1st SF, 2nd SF, Hamburg

Collections: The Bancroft Library, Beinecke Library.

Monsen, Frederick Inman (1865-1929)

CCC member 1900s; co-editor of *Camera Craft* 1900s

Publications cited:

"Photographing under Difficulties." *Camera Craft* 1, no. 1 (1900): 9-13.

With a Kodak in the Land of the Navajo. Rochester: Eastman Kodak Company, 1909.

Collections: The Bancroft Library; the Huntington Library; Library of Congress; National Gallery of Art; Washington, D.C.; George Eastman House; Beinecke Library.

Secondary Sources:

VanderMeulen, Thomas. *Frederick I. Monsen*. Tempe: School of Art, Arizona State University, 1985.

Monteverde, F.E. (no dates available)

CCC member 1900s; reproductions in *Camera Craft* 1900s; writings in *Sunset* 1900s

Salons: 1st SF, 2nd SF, 3rd SF, 2nd Chicago, 3rd Chicago, 4th Philadelphia, 1st American Salon

Neymann, Dr. Percy (1859-1923)

CCC president 1915; CCC member 1910s; reproductions in *Camera Craft* 1910s

Salons: 5th SF; PPIE

Collections: San Francisco Public Library.

Pitchford, Emily (1878-1956)

CCC membership unclear; shared studio with Adams Armer in San Francisco

Salons: 3rd American Salon, 5th American Salon, Dresden, exhibits with Brigman at CCC

Collections: Beinecke Library.

Oliver, William Letts (1844-1918)

PCAPA member

Collections: The Bancroft Library.

Secondary Sources:

Jara, Alvaro. *Chile en 1860. William L. Oliver, un precursor de la fotografia*. Santiago de Chile: Editorial Universitaria, 1973.

Reed, George W. (1857-1916)

CCC founder, member 1890s; writings in *Pacific Coast Photographer*

Publications cited:

“To the Members of the California Camera Club.” *Pacific Coast Photographer* 1, no. 12 (1893): 225.

Collections: The Bancroft Library; Dennis Reed collection.

Scott, Walter A. (1865-1957)

CCC president 1909, member 1900s-1910s

Salons: 1st SF, 2nd SF, 3rd LA, 1st LA, 2nd Chicago, 3rd Chicago, 5th American Salon, Dresden

Collections: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park and Museum.

Sewell, Edward N. (no dates available)

CCC member 1900s-1910s; reproductions in Elder (1911, 1913)

Salons: 3rd SF, 5th SF, 1st American Salon, 7th American Salon, PPIE

Collections: The Bancroft Library; California State Library.

Silberstein, Mervyn D. (1885-1957)

CCC member 1910s

Collections: The Bancroft Library; California Historical Society; Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society; Los Angeles Public Library.

Stellmann, Louis J. (1877-1961)

CCC member 1910s, Club secretary 1915; writings in numerous photographic journals; reproductions in Elder (1911)

Salons: 5th SF

Publications cited:

“Through the Ruins with a Premoette.” *Camera Craft* 14, no. 1 (1907): 3-7.

“California Camera Club.” *Photo-Era* 18 (1912): 171-174.

Vanished Ruin Era: San Francisco's Classic Artistry of Ruin Depicted in Picture and Song. San Francisco: Paul Elder and Son, 1910.

That was a Dream worth building: The Spirit of San Francisco's Great Fair Portrayed in Picture and Words. Reproductions from the Author's exclusive Camera Studies as colored by Edith Kinney Stellmann (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Company Publishers, 1916.

Manuscripts:

Louis J. Stellman Papers. California History Room, California State Library, Sacramento.

Collections: California State Library; California Historical Society.

Secondary Sources:

Dillon, Richard H. *Images of Chinatown: Louis J. Stellman's Chinatown Photographs.* San Francisco: Book Club of California, 1976.

—. Introduction to *Chinatown Photographer, Louis J. Stellman: A Catalog of his Photograph Collection*, edited by Gary E. Strong. Sacramento: California State Library Foundation, 1989.

Street, W.J. (no dates available)

CCC member 1890s-1900s, notably on outing committees; writings in *Pacific Coast Photographer* and *Camera Craft*; reproductions in *Camera Craft* and *Sunset* 1900s

Salons: 1st SF, 2nd SF, 3rd SF, 1st LA, 2nd Chicago, 4th Philadelphia

Publications cited:

“Outings.” *Pacific Coast Photographer* 1, no. 3 (1892): 45-46.

Collections: The Bancroft Library, Beinecke Library.

Taber, Isaiah W. (1830-1912)

no CCC member

Manuscripts and Publications: Taber's publications are numerous; the list below includes only the consulted works.

Isaiah W. Taber, Biographical Narratives of forty-eight California Pioneers dictated to I.W. Taber, ca. 1886-1888 (BANC MSS C-D 5062, Vol. 1-3). The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Isaiah W. Taber to Eudora Garouette, dated July 25, 1906. Included in Taber, pioneer file from California State Library.

California Scenery & Industries. San Francisco: (I.W. Taber) 1884.

The Monarch Souvenir of Sunset City and sunset scenes; being views of California midwinter fair and famous scenes in the Golden State. A series of pictures taken by I. W. Taber. San Francisco: H.S. Crocker, 1894.

Collections: Taber is represented in numerous collections; the collections consulted for this thesis include the Bancroft Library; San Francisco Public Library; California State Library.

Secondary Sources:

Bonnett, Linda and Wayne, eds. *Taber: A Photographic Legacy*. Sausalito: Windgate Press, 2004.

Tasheira, George (no dates available)

PCAPA co-founder, PCAPA president 1880s

Collections: Los Angeles Public Library.

Tibbitts, Howard Clinton (1863-1937)

CCC vice-president 1892, member 1890s-1900s; reproductions and writings in *Camera Craft* 1900s; numerous reproductions in *Sunset*; reproductions in *Elder* (1911, 1913)

Salons: 1st SF

Publications cited:

“San Francisco, California: Site of the Proposed Panama-Pacific International Exposition, 1915, Celebrating the Completion of the Panama Canal.” San Francisco: Panama-Pacific International Exposition Co., ca. 1910-1911.

Collections: The Bancroft Library; California Historical Society; San Jose State University; the Huntington Library; Stephen White collection; Yosemite Park Archives; Autry Museum; Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico; New York Public Library; Beinecke Library.

Secondary Sources:

Fireman, Janet R. *Across the Sierras in Winter. Photographs by Howard Clinton Tibbitts*. San Francisco: California Historical Society, 2001.

Treat, Archibald J. (1864-1949)

PCAPA president; CCC member 1890s-1900s; writings in *Pacific Coast Photographer* and *Camera Craft*

Salons: 1st SF

Publications cited:

“The Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association.” *Anthony’s Photographic Bulletin* 20 (1889): 408.

“Impressionism in Photography.” *American Amateur Photographer* 3 (1891): 1-7.

“Some Facts Regarding the Pacific Association.” *Monterey Wave*, November 16, 1891.

“Winter Work with the Camera.” *Pacific Coast Photographer* 1, no. 1 (1892): 4-5.

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CCC membership unclear; writings in *Camera Craft*

Salons: 1st SF salon

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Tyler, W.B. (no dates)

PCAPA member

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Valentine, Carlton O. (no dates available)

LACC president; writings in *Camera Craft* 1900s, active with firm Putnam & Valentine, 1890s-1910s

Salons: 1st LA

Collections: The Bancroft Library; California State Library; Huntington Library; Seaver Center for Western History Research; Southern California Historical Society; New York Public Library; Beinecke Library.

Vroman, Adam Clark (1856-1916)

no CCC member; lecturer at LACC; reproductions in *Elder* (1913)

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Waters, Raper James (1856-unknown)

CCC membership unclear; reproductions in *Camera Craft* 1900s

Salons: 1st SF

Publications cited:

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Collections: The Bancroft Library; San Francisco Public Library; Getty Museum.

Weidner, Charles (1866-1940)

CCC member 1900s; reproductions in *Camera Craft* 1900s

Publications:

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Weston, Edward (1886-1958)

CCC membership unclear; writings and reproductions in *Camera Craft*, 1920s-1930s

His work has been widely covered; his photographs are included in many collections; mentioned here are only the related activities.

Salons: PPIE; 5th SF Pictorial Society

Wulzen, Dietrich H. (1862-1946)

CCC member 1890s-1910s

Salons: 1st SF salon

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- 2) History of California and the American West
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Annex: Résumé en français

Cette thèse reconstruit l'histoire d'un club de photographes de San Francisco, le California Camera Club, entre 1890 et 1915, en analysant ses productions visuelles et textuelles comme des objets matériels ayant servi à la construction identitaire d'une nouvelle communauté dans l'Ouest américain. Elle propose de nouvelles approches historiques et méthodologiques afin d'examiner comment les objets photographiques, et les discours qui les accompagnent, ont défini une pratique collective étroitement liée à l'environnement régional. En prenant les photographes du club comme acteurs de premier plan de la construction d'une nouvelle société dans un territoire éloigné du reste de la nation, cette thèse montre comment la photographie a été un outil collectif pour définir une culture et une histoire communes. Inversement, l'analyse du corpus visuel et textuel retrace l'impact du paysage californien et de l'histoire de San Francisco sur la pratique photographique, aboutissant à une représentation du photographe qui produit des travaux « caractéristiques ». En reconstituant un corpus jusqu'alors jamais traité, cette thèse prend cet ensemble de travaux comme point de départ pour réviser une historiographie restreinte, pour envisager de nouveaux outils et pour faire émerger de nouveaux acteurs et réseaux liés à l'histoire du médium.

Méthodes & positionnement historiographique

Cette thèse se base sur plusieurs concepts et recherches propres à l'histoire de la photographie et de l'Ouest américain. Elle se sert des concepts récemment utilisés dans ces champs, tels que « la communauté imaginée » et son rapport avec une pratique « localisée » de la photographie qui s'insère dans un récit national¹. Il s'agit ici d'une analyse du médium comme activité partagée qui envisage ses produits comme destinés à la circulation. Grâce à cette dissémination d'images caractéristiques, un consensus local se forge qui, à son tour, montrera la pertinence de la communauté et de sa région au niveau national. La notion d'imaginaire s'applique d'autant plus à l'Ouest américain qui, dès son entrée dans l'union nationale, représente une surface de projection pour forger un récit du passé et un futur cohérent. Dans cette configuration, la Californie occupera une place centrale.

Si l'Ouest américain et la photographie se développent et grandissent ensemble², l'espace et le médium se voient toutefois dénués d'histoire cohérente. À l'encontre de ce

¹ cf. les travaux d'Elizabeth Edwards, *The Camera as Historian. Amateur Photographers and Historical Imagination, 1885-1918*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2012, p. 124, 217 ; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, 2ème éd., Londres, Verso, 1996.

² Martha A. Sandweiss, *Print the Legend. Photography and the American West*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2002, p. 2.

« vide » supposé, cette thèse avance l'argument qu'à travers les pratiques collectives du California Camera Club, un récit de la région est articulé qui prend son essor avec sa représentation photographique. De même, les multiples usages du médium mènent à une nouvelle compréhension, historique et localisée, du rôle de la photographie dans l'Ouest américain. En définissant le territoire comme signe distinctif, les membres du club visent alors la reconnaissance combinée de l'État, de sa culture *et* de leur pratique photographique. Territoire chargé de mythes fondateurs et surface de projection de futurs glorieux dans le Pacifique, la Californie se définit surtout par sa distance géographique. En étudiant les travaux des photographes, nous utilisons donc cet éloignement comme catégorie analytique. Cela nous permet de comprendre comment l'expérience de l'isolation ainsi que les attentes nationales se sont traduites dans le corpus photographique. C'est ainsi que nous saisissons la tension constante entre recherche de reconnaissance nationale et représentation unique du territoire local dans les images et les écrits d'un club qui prend l'État comme label participatif.

Étant donné la profonde nouveauté du corpus traité dans cette thèse, nous proposons une nouvelle lecture des sources primaires qui vise à la fois à critiquer et à repenser l'histoire et la conceptualisation de la photographie américaine pour cette période. Cette approche est animée par deux aspects spécifiques du corpus. Le premier est lié au cercle du California Camera Club. Alors que les membres sont largement issus des classes supérieures « blanches » de San Francisco et ses alentours, unifiant avocats, courtiers, médecins et scientifiques, ils diffèrent considérablement dans leurs usages du médium. Le club consiste en un vaste réseau qui ne démarque pas de réelle distinction entre usages commerciaux, artistiques, ou populaires. Ainsi, sous le thème collectif de la Californie se réunissent autour de 1900 plus de 400 photographes professionnels, amateurs à vocation artistique, ainsi que débutants. La deuxième dimension du corpus reflète précisément cette inclusion volontaire. Alors que le club n'a pas généré une « archive » cohérente, dès lors que l'on consulte les collections dans la région, on y trouve une richesse remarquable qui incombe directement aux membres du club et qui fait écho à leur imbrication avec la culture locale. À cause de ce décalage entre l'abondance des sources primaires et leur quasi-absence dans la littérature secondaire, nous nous penchons non seulement sur la production mais tout autant sur les processus de canonisation qui ont mené à cette divergence. Se situer face à ce matériel implique donc une réflexion sur le contexte de production, les pratiques et leurs résultats, la circulation, et l'institutionnalisation du médium. Autrement dit, nous optons pour « une histoire des usages photographiques³ ».

³ Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the Dock. Essays on Photographic Histories, Institutions, and Practices*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. xxiv.

Par sa chronologie et son ancrage géographique, cette recherche se positionne face à deux branches de l'histoire de la photographie. Dans ce champ relativement récent, des conceptualisations et des lacunes se cristallisent d'ores et déjà. Il importe de se pencher davantage sur l'historiographie afin d'identifier les oublis que cette thèse vise à remédier. Si le club produit un corpus diversifié dans une région qui, à l'époque encore, est très éloignée d'une scène culturelle nationale se déployant essentiellement sur la côte Est, cette isolation se reflète tout autant dans son traitement historique et institutionnel. Il s'agit alors d'un isolement au niveau chronologique, géographique et « sociologique » qui concerne autant l'histoire du médium dans l'Ouest américain que la période au tournant du siècle souvent identifiée sous le mouvement du pictorialisme. Contrairement aux sociétés photographiques au modèle élitiste comme la Photo-Secession, le California Camera Club se distingue par son inclusivité et son ambition partagée, qui ne met pas en avant une figure de proue. Passer outre l'idée du « photographe-génie » est donc essentiel afin d'éviter le récit de « masters » menant de « Watkins à Weston » en passant par Stieglitz⁴. Or c'est précisément ce récit qui a été appliqué autant à l'espace géographique que représente l'Ouest américain, qu'à la période autour de 1900⁵.

Si le vaste territoire que représentent les nouveaux États américains durant la deuxième moitié du dix-neuvième siècle a vu l'arrivée des photographes-explorateurs et de grands projets d'enquête géologique, perpétués sur les murs de musées aujourd'hui⁶, ils ont témoigné aussi de la formation de nouvelles communautés où les studios de daguerréotypie s'installent en même temps que le pionniers⁷. Grâce aux études de Martha Sandweiss et de Rachel Sailor, ces deux phénomènes ont trouvé de nouvelles approches théoriques. Elles permettent de repenser la photographie comme une production qui vise à la circulation, accompagnée de mots, et comme

⁴ cf. Thomas Weston Fels, (dir.), *Watkins to Weston. 101 Years of California Photography, 1849-1950*, Santa Barbara / Niwot, Santa Barbara Museum of Art / Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1992. Pour une critique du récit de « masters », cf. Allan Sekula, « On the Invention of Photographic Meaning », *Artforum* 13 (1975): p. 43 ; Anne McCauley, « Writing Photography's History before Newhall », *History of Photography* 21, no. 2 (1997): p. 87 ; Michel Poivert, « Le Pictorialisme en France, 1892-1914 », thèse de doctorat, Université Paris 1, Paris, 1992, pp. 21-22.

⁵ cf. les travaux de Weston J. Naef, *The Collection of Alfred Stieglitz. Fifty Pioneers of Modern Photography*, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art / the Viking Press, 1978 ; *Photographers of Genius at the Getty*, Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, 2004.

⁶ Weston J. Naef, *Era of Exploration. The Rise of Landscape Photography in the American West, 1860-1885*, New York, Albright-Knox Art Gallery / The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1975 ; pour une critique, cf. Rosalind Krauss, « Photography's Discursive Spaces: Landscape/View », *Art Journal* 42, no 4 (1982): pp. 311-319, <https://doi.org/10.2307/776691>.

⁷ Peter E. Palmquist, « The Pioneers: Landscape and Studio », dans *Capturing Light. Masterpieces of California Photography, 1850 to the Present*, Drew Heath Johnson (dir.), Oakland / New York, Oakland Museum of California / W.W. Norton & Company, 2001, pp. 3-20.

un instrument d'identification communautaire⁸. Essentiels pour pénétrer la masse photographique dans les archives locales, ces deux concepts n'ont pourtant pas été utilisés pour le tournant du siècle quand de nombreuses petites sociétés photographiques, et la plus grande entre elles, le California Camera Club, se forment. En poussant les limites de cette chronologie, nous pouvons nous baser sur ces deux conceptualisations qui rajoutent densité et signification historique à un corpus très divers.

De même, les recherches sur les clubs photographiques autour des années 1900, qui, dans le cas états-unien, restent entièrement axées sur le cercle d'Alfred Stieglitz et ses affiliés, ont trouvé de nouvelles conceptualisations récemment en Europe. Si les acteurs californiens restent dans le cadre du pictorialisme américain, le club ne peut émerger uniquement comme un ensemble opérant en soutien des idéaux esthétiques de la Photo-Secession. Inversement, sa production éclectique et ses nombreux engagements dans la construction visuelle de la communauté à travers les expositions, les journaux et les excursions échappent à ce cadre⁹. Comme cette approche s'est avérée inadaptée pour le corpus présenté dans cette thèse, nous nous basons surtout sur les travaux récents d'Elizabeth Edwards et de Christian Joschke¹⁰. Ici, les années 1885 à 1918 se transforment en une période définie tant par de nouvelles pratiques collectives de la photographie, que par une identité nationale affirmée qui cherche à légitimer son histoire et sa culture par ses particularismes locaux. L'insistance de ces chercheurs sur les rapports entre la pratique de la photographie et son rôle dans la négociation des identités locale et nationale, ainsi que l'attention portée à la matérialité, enrichit considérablement la discussion des sources primaires recueillies dans les archives californiennes. Sans essayer d'imposer les complexités d'un phénomène européen sur le contexte américain, nous nous servons de ces observations comme cadre théorique.

En s'appuyant sur ces conceptualisations récentes à l'égard de l'Ouest américain et les sociétés photographiques, la méthodologie de cette thèse est aussi guidée par la richesse des archives locales. Avec l'objectif de faire une « histoire sociale » du médium, les objets photographiques issus d'institutions municipales et universitaires viennent compléter

⁸ Sandweiss, *Print the Legend* ; Rachel McLean Sailor, *Meaningful Places. Landscape Photographers in the Nineteenth-century American West*, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 2014.

⁹ Michael G. Wilson, « Northern California: The Heart of the Storm », dans *Pictorialism in California. Photographs 1900-1940*, Michael G. Wilson et Dennis Reed (dir.), Malibu / San Marino, The J. Paul Getty Museum / the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Collections, 1994, pp. 1-22 ; Stacey McCarroll et Kim Sichel (dir.), *California Dreamin'. Camera Clubs and the Pictorial Photography Tradition*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 2004.

¹⁰ Edwards, *The Camera as Historian* ; Christian Joschke, *Les Yeux de la Nation. Photographie Amateur et Société dans l'Allemagne de Guillaume II (1888-1914)*, Dijon, Les Presses du Réel, 2013.

l'approche concentrée sur les usages¹¹. Un enrichissement non négligeable pour cette enquête est la collection de Peter Palmquist qui réunit toutes sortes de sources primaires liées à l'histoire de la photographie en Californie en particulier, et dans l'Ouest américain en général. Photographe professionnel et historien amateur, Palmquist et son profond désir de recueillir la masse des productions photographiques montrent l'empreinte du médium sur les sociétés locales. C'est à travers cette collection que nous saisissons l'ampleur et la diversité des pratiques en Californie au dix-neuvième siècle¹². En combinant l'inventaire de Palmquist avec des trouvailles dans d'autres lieux, cette thèse esquisse un nouvel ensemble d'acteurs inconnus ou mal étudiés jusqu'à présent, sans pour autant retomber dans le mode narratif des « masters ».

Afin de comprendre le positionnement et l'impact de ces photographes sur la scène locale, leurs productions photographiques sont mises en rapport avec la masse considérable de sources manuscrites et publiées, notamment le journal *Camera Craft* (1900-1942), mais aussi les notes de conférences et les correspondances. L'étude des écrits des membres montre la nécessité d'une définition commune de la pratique qui s'articule à l'aide d'un vocabulaire fréquemment utilisé pour décrire la beauté et le potentiel de la Californie. Ce qu'Anderson appelle un « langage du pouvoir¹³ » se déploie non seulement au sein la population de San Francisco mais tout autant parmi les membres du Club afin de créer une base d'identification commune – dans ce cas, il s'agit d'un positionnement conscient d'une culture californienne, unique dans son genre et assumée face à la nation. Grâce à l'analyse combinée d'images et de textes, nous comprenons comment la photographie et les représentations de l'espace géographique s'inspirent et se nourrissent mutuellement, et permettent ainsi aux praticiens de développer une identité forte, informée par le local¹⁴.

En mettant en jeu la diversification des usages avec le développement spécifique de San Francisco et de la Californie, nous éclaircissons une géographie et une chronologie sous-étudiées dans l'histoire du médium, tout en y ajoutant une dimension sociohistorique. Dans ce cadre, la première génération du California Camera Club – de sa fondation en 1890 jusqu'à l'exposition universelle Panama-Pacific en 1915, en passant par le tremblement de terre de 1906 – est au cœur de l'analyse. L'enquête est étendue, au début et à la fin, par une discussion des

¹¹ cf. Sailor, *Meaningful Places*, pp. 165-166, Sailor fait référence à l'historien de la photographie « sociale », Robert Taft, cf. Robert Taft, *Photography and the American Scene. A Social History, 1839-1889*, New York, Dover, 1938.

¹² cf. The Peter E. Palmquist Collection of Male Photographers in the American West (Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library), contenant plus que 600 boîtes qui réunissent un ensemble de 9000 photographes.

¹³ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 37-38, 44-45 (traduit).

¹⁴ cf. Joan M. Schwartz et James R. Ryan (dir.), *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination*, Londres / New York, I.B. Tauris, 2003, 6-9.

années 1850 à 1880, et des années 1920 à 1930. Cela nous permet de saisir l'insertion du club dans un dense réseau photographique qui, en 1890, a déjà ses complexités ; de même, la prolongation jusqu'aux années 1930 retrace la création des premiers musées locaux qui intègrent consciemment la photographie dans leurs collections. Grâce à cette perspective élargie, le California Camera Club devient un nouvel acteur qui remplit le supposé vide des années entre « Watkins et Weston » et démontre sa portée locale.

Résumés des quatre parties

La première partie, « Emergence (1850-1900) » consiste en trois chapitres qui retracent les débuts de la pratique photographique à San Francisco entre 1850 et 1880, la formation de la première organisation de photographes amateurs *stricto sensu* et la première décennie du California Camera Club. Le premier chapitre s'intéresse au chevauchement entre le développement de l'Ouest américain et la photographie. En reconstruisant les premières activités photographiques à San Francisco et leurs liens avec l'élite politique et des acteurs économiques, nous saisissons la prise de conscience liée à la valeur du médium dès le départ. Avec la fondation des magazines locaux, comme le *Overland Monthly*, et les institutions culturelles, comme la San Francisco Art Association (SFAA), nous voyons comment un discours sur les spécificités de la Californie prend son essor. Conscients de leur position isolée, les auteurs et les artistes commencent à se servir de ce vocabulaire afin de légitimer la valeur historique de leurs institutions ainsi que la singularité esthétique de leurs travaux. Étroitement lié au paysage et au climat de la région, ce discours s'inspire largement du Yosemite comme endroit fantasmé et territoire « vierge ». L'accès à ce paysage devient la touche caractéristique de cette production artistique locale, un processus qui est facilité et alimenté par la mise en place d'un réseau ferroviaire.

Le premier chapitre accorde alors une place centrale à cette nouvelle entreprise, notamment le Central Pacific Railroad, qui achève le chemin de fer transcontinental en 1869. Entreprise d'origine californienne, basée à San Francisco à partir des années 1870, la compagnie et ses hommes d'affaires connus le nom des « Big Four » (Stanford, Hopkins, Huntington et Crocker) exercent un impact considérable sur le développement économique et culturel de la ville. Fidèles à une tradition particulièrement américaine de « philanthropie », les entrepreneurs, notamment Leland Stanford, transforment l'image de San Francisco en un lieu de culture sophistiquée en sponsorisant la SFAA et en bâtissant des villas somptueuses au sommet de la ville. Ils se servent de la photographie pour démontrer leurs constructions monumentales et leur respectabilité, en commandant les vues panoramiques prises depuis leurs

demeures ou des albums qui exposent leurs riches collections d'art. C'est dans ce réseau économique et culturel, axé autour de la ville et du Yosemite, qu'est créée la matrice de la pratique photographique locale. Si cette évolution de l'Ouest américain semble pour la plupart connue dans l'histoire du médium, il est important de l'illustrer plus en détail car elle forme la pierre de touche pour la génération suivante de photographes. Le chapitre se termine par une analyse des premières associations de photographes professionnels qui s'unifient non seulement pour réglementer un marché devenu extrêmement compétitif, mais aussi, à leur tour, pour donner une image respectable à l'exercice du médium. Ainsi, la Photographic Art Society of the Pacific, listée dans l'annuaire de la ville dans la catégorie des organisations culturelles, reconnaît et cherche à promouvoir la valeur sociétale de la photographie pour les communautés californiennes.

Si cette association éphémère ne réussit guère à établir des liens avec la scène nationale, la nouvelle décennie voit la formation de la Pacific Coast Amateur Photographic Association (PCAPA) en 1883. Le deuxième chapitre reconstruit l'histoire de cette association complètement oubliée, qui pourtant intègre toutes les conditions spécifiques au contexte local et vise à les partager avec un réseau florissant de sociétés photographiques dans tout le pays. Issus des classes supérieures, tels que des courtiers et des scientifiques (les femmes étant exclues), les photographes de la PCAPA définissent la pratique comme un loisir. Pour l'organisation des premières expositions photographiques entre 1886 et 1891, ils collaborent avec la SFAA qui leur accorde un cadre prestigieux. En cultivant des amitiés avec les peintres locaux comme Virgil Williams et William Keith, les membres cherchent à s'associer aux cercles culturels, ce qui transforme la pratique du médium en une activité artistique, prétendument indépendante de la commercialisation. Cette négociation d'une place légitime au sein de la communauté artistique sera prolongée par la publication des rapports d'activités dans les journaux établis de la côte est, comme *Anthony's Photographic Bulletin*.

Même si la PCAPA manque de plateforme d'échanges écrits locaux durant toute son existence, ses activités ne passent pas inaperçues au sein la communauté de San Francisco. Ainsi, des annonces pour des expositions et des soirées de lanterne magique, accompagnées de conférences et suivies d'amusements, sont publiées dans la presse locale qui y voit une source de fierté. Le deuxième chapitre analyse ainsi la production et la réception d'une des premières contributions en matière de conférence à la lanterne magique de la PCAPA, qui circulera dans l'*American Lantern Slide Interchange* en 1890 sous le titre « Glimpses of California ». Exposée devant le public de la ville et ensuite envoyée aux sociétés photographiques de New York, Washington, et bien d'autres lieux, la conférence montre une centaine d'images qui seront

appréciées comme des travaux « caractéristiques » de la région. Le tapuscrit qui accompagne les images insiste sur l'histoire et la prospérité de la région, et aussi sur les innovations. Nous observons ici l'émergence de thèmes paradigmatiques, comme la référence aux pionniers de San Francisco : un vaste groupe sans identification précise qui réunit autant les mineurs de la ruée vers l'or de 1849 que les entrepreneurs des compagnies de chemin de fer. Ainsi, l'industrie locale se démarquerait par ses projets audacieux, menés dans les terres inconnues au reste de la nation et apportant une richesse considérable à la région. De même, le thème du paysage est enrichi de références constantes à l'abondance de la nature et la fertilité du sol. Le prétendu « vide » de la région et sa nouveauté en tant qu'État américain sont alors contrebalancés par un choix soigneux d'éléments pertinents. Afin de démontrer le futur rôle de la région, la PCAPA se réfère à l'innovation en matière scientifique et la collaboration entre les membres et les astronomes de l'université de Berkeley. C'est ici que se dessine pour la première fois le portrait collectif d'une région dotée d'une histoire et d'un paysage hors du commun et constituant un emplacement stratégique pour la nation. Par cette représentation, la pratique photographique renforce l'émergence d'une identification partagée.

Le personnage qui laisse une empreinte considérable sur la PCAPA est Archibald J. Treat. Ses discours devant les membres en tant que président de l'association renforcent l'objectif de la pratique amateur : il s'agit d'apprécier la région en utilisant le médium comme instrument esthétique. Si ces ambitions se rapprochent d'autres sociétés d'amateurs de la même époque, elles diffèrent toutefois dans leur réalisation. Dans l'environnement de San Francisco, une pratique strictement non-commerciale s'avère problématique. Treat fait face à cette position instable en réalisant des vues panoramiques pour Stanford quand ce dernier planifie son université à Palo Alto. Son amitié avec Howard C. Tibbitts, photographe officiel de la Southern Pacific Transportation Company (entreprise séparée sous la direction de Huntington et plus tard Stanford), complexifie également son rapport à la photographie amateur. Le deuxième chapitre tente alors de réviser le label d'amateur qui ne s'applique que difficilement dans le contexte californien où les représentations d'une culture sophistiquée et d'une esthétique locale sont si liées à la prospérité de l'État et sa promotion. En 1890, justement à cause de ces rapports ambigus entre art et commerce, la PCAPA exclut un membre réputé, George W. Reed. Après avoir vendu des reproductions gravées d'une vue du détroit du Golden Gate, Reed est écarté de la PCAPA et fonde sa propre association, le California Camera Club (CCC) en mars 1890. Le club attira un nombre significatif de praticiens par ces principes libéraux, acceptant amateurs engagés et débutants (homme et femmes) et, surtout, les

professionnels. Face à cette nouvelle société inclusive, la PCAPA disparaît en novembre 1891 et la majorité de ses membres, dont Treat, rejoignent le CCC.

Le troisième chapitre traite de la première décennie du club en se concentrant sur le lancement de sa propre revue, le développement d'un programme local, et l'ambition des membres de contribuer à deux expositions universelles, à Chicago en 1893 et à San Francisco l'année suivante. Grâce à son réseau régional, au soutien des photographes professionnels et à la couverture des activités dans la presse locale, le CCC devient rapidement populaire. Entre 1892 et 1894, ses membres publient leur première revue mensuelle, le *Pacific Coast Photographer*. Dans ses premiers numéros se trouvent de véritables déclarations de « mission » pour les lecteurs de la région. Le but qui leur est proposé est de susciter une appréciation légitime de l'environnement local et, ce faisant, montrer qu'ils portent bien le nom de « Californian photographers ». Avec cette approche profondément régionale, très peu centrée sur des personnalités individuelles, l'État de Californie se trouve au cœur de la pratique, ce qui implique surtout l'organisation d'excursions en plein air et un programme varié de soirées de lanterne magique à San Francisco. Ici l'ambition de réunir un maximum de photographes rejoint le modèle peu élitiste du CCC. Grâce à son paysage et son histoire encore méconnus, la valeur esthétique de la Californie sera ainsi validée, et par là même, le médium photographique. À travers son utilisation par de nombreuses personnes, sa capacité de circulation et son existence sur divers supports matériels, la photographie devient le médium-clé pour apprécier et promouvoir le nouveau territoire et ses communautés.

Pour ces photographes qui se voient à l'avant-garde de l'appréciation d'une culture californienne, un moyen de disséminer leurs travaux sur la scène nationale se présente durant la préparation de l'exposition universelle de Chicago, précédée par une répétition générale à San Francisco. Pour cela, le club entre en contact avec Charles B. Turrill, commissaire des expositions et employé du département de promotion de la Southern Pacific. En tant que collectionneur d'histoire locale, Turrill saisit la valeur du médium et demande au club une collection d'images caractéristiques. C'est ici que se montre l'obstacle de la distance géographique, car il a été impossible de retrouver ces images ou la moindre trace d'une contribution du CCC à Chicago. Une occasion de remédier à cette absence sera la Midwinter Fair de San Francisco, organisée l'année suivante en tant que première exposition à l'Ouest du Mississippi. Ancré dans les discours de l'historien Frederick J. Turner sur la « frontier in American History », l'Ouest sera associé ici à l'émergence d'un « empire américain ». Conscients de cette valeur idéologique, les organisateurs, notamment James D. Phelan (qui sera maire de la ville à partir de 1897), tentent de démarquer San Francisco comme « the Paris of

the West » pourvue d'un emplacement stratégique pour le futur des États-Unis au vingtième siècle.

Ce portrait d'une culture sophistiquée dans un environnement attractif sert de motif pour le photographe professionnel et membre Oscar V. Lange, qui montre un inventaire visuel de l'université de Berkeley à l'exposition. En réunissant les vues des différents départements, leurs équipements et contributions, ainsi que le campus face à l'océan Pacifique, Lange démontre l'étendue de la civilisation américaine jusqu'à l'autre bout du continent. La position isolée de la région devient un élément-clé dans ce contexte, car la distance au reste de la nation renforce les attentes futures, d'ores et déjà projetées sur l'environnement local. En se servant de cette isolation, Lange réussit à dépeindre l'image d'une culture intellectuelle et d'un emplacement stratégique, se débarrassant alors de la réputation de *cultural backwater*, toujours associée à la région. Dans ce projet, qui sera transformé en soirée de lanterne magique pour l'American Interchange et en albums photographiques préservés dans les archives de l'université, s'articule une histoire des usages du médium. C'est grâce à ces différents supports matériels et aux messages élogieux qu'ils diffusent que l'affirmation d'une identité locale et sa pertinence nationale sont négociées.

À travers ces différents usages adaptés au contexte, que ce soit amusement ou préservation, la première décennie du CCC témoigne d'une prise de conscience de la valeur du médium. Ici, la photographie se montre utile pour l'intériorisation d'un « langage du pouvoir » et pour la circulation d'un vocabulaire visuel qui reconnaît et légitime l'importance de l'État de Californie. Avec l'arrivée du California Camera Club à la fin du dix-neuvième siècle, nous comprenons dans quelle mesure les relations entre photographes et entrepreneurs, entre institutions et locaux, intègrent déjà les discours sur la singularité du paysage californien et la culture urbaine. En tant que ville qui, moins de cinquante ans auparavant constituait un avant-poste, San Francisco sera au centre de l'activité photographique en fournissant une plateforme d'exposition prestigieuse et une publication solide au club à partir de 1900.

La deuxième partie, « Maturation (1900-1906) », prolonge la notion de la prise de conscience en examinant le lancement de la revue *Camera Craft*, l'étendue du réseau vers Los Angeles, l'organisation des salons et le rôle des minorités dans la création d'un corpus caractéristique. En se basant sur les écrits, le programme du CCC et les contextes initiaux des productions, cette deuxième partie révisé le label restrictif du « pictorialisme ». Ainsi, le quatrième chapitre étend le propos d'un vocabulaire partagé en s'intéressant à la revue *Camera Craft* comme plateforme d'échange entre photographes de différentes régions californiennes. Grâce aux nombreux articles publiés par les membres du CCC et les membres du Los Angeles

Camera Club (LACC) tout juste créé, nous saisissons l'importance d'un journal pour définir le but collectif de la pratique californienne. C'est ici que se montre l'impact des « city boosters » (constitués d'investisseurs et chambres de commerce) sur la conception du médium car à travers leur vocabulaire élogieux et leur sponsoring des excursions, la mission pour les photographes prend forme. Alors que le LACC dépend en grande partie des financements des chambres de commerce, le CCC se sert d'une manière stratégique de « boosters ». Dans ces usages, nous observons alors la maturité progressive du club.

Le quatrième chapitre illustre ce processus en analysant comment l'attraction du paysage, de la ville et son mythe de la ruée vers l'or servent d'instrument pour l'articulation d'une histoire locale à travers le médium, mais aussi de leur propre histoire du médium. En adoptant la méthodologie rigoureuse des « photographic surveys » menés en Grande Bretagne, le club tente alors de créer un inventaire visuel de la ville, ses lieux historiques et ses institutions qui en font une ville portuaire indispensable. Si ce projet étend le propos d'Oscar V. Lange pour l'université de Berkeley, sa réalisation consiste en une excursion d'une journée qui réunit les membres pour un but collectif. Bien que cet inventaire soit censé remédier à la peur de perdre les traces d'une jeune culture *in the making*, il succombera à la catastrophe de 1906 quand les bureaux du club sont entièrement détruits. L'ambition et le désir de préservation locale à travers la photographie, si liés à ce projet, ne peuvent être reconstruits aujourd'hui que par les écrits publiés dans *Camera Craft* – ce qui fait du magazine une source primordiale. De même, c'est dans les pages du journal qu'une histoire du médium propre à la région sera formulée. Fortement inspirée par le récit des « pionniers », cette histoire définit des figures comme Carleton Watkins et William Shew comme innovateurs d'une pratique locale. L'appréciation du « wonderland » de Yosemite par Watkins ainsi que les portraits de grandes figures locales par Shew ou Taber deviennent les pierres de touche pour l'histoire du médium envisagée collectivement par le club et notamment ses membres Oscar V. Lange et Frederick Monsen. En réappréciant le travail dans les conditions hostiles de la frontière et en plein air, les membres transforment l'expérience intime du paysage en caractéristique principale. En retraçant les routes des pionniers, leurs travaux produits durant des excursions se rapprocheraient de ces projets originaux.

C'est à travers cette histoire des pionniers que nous analysons l'organisation des salons photographiques de San Francisco entre 1901 et 1903 dans le cinquième chapitre. Ici le salon est considéré comme un événement local qui vise la reconnaissance d'une culture régionale et la légitimation du médium. Le lieu de prédilection pour ces expositions, le Mark Hopkins Institute, incarne cette double ambition. Demeure d'un pionnier du chemin de fer

transcontinental construit dans un style néogothique, emplacement principal de la prise des premières vues panoramiques de la ville, et attaché à l'université de Berkeley, l'Institut offre une vitrine monumentale à l'exposition. Comme ses prédécesseurs de la PCAPA, les membres du CCC collaborent avec les peintres afin de donner du poids à leur rôle sur la scène culturelle. Au lieu d'une autonomisation du médium, tant désirée sur la côte est, ce qui se joue à San Francisco est le désir de faire reconnaître un *style* californien, exprimé à travers une pratique propre à la région qui intègre le Yosemite, les déplacements par les chemins de fer et l'exploration de l'histoire de l'État du nord au sud. Alors que le club tente de démontrer l'indépendance de ce style, sa création dans l'isolation, et son exposition dans une institution pionnière, ses membres désirent tout autant la reconnaissance de ces éléments par la nation.

De la même façon, le chapitre observe comment les photographes de Los Angeles organisent un salon en 1902, dans lequel ils définissent le thème collectif du sud de l'État, son climat méditerranéen et son passé hispano-mexicain. En collaborant avec les membres du CCC, le LACC fait de son salon un évènement local qui sert aussi de promotion. Son catalogue, incluant de nombreuses publicités pour la Southern Pacific Company et le Santa Fe Railroad, incite les visiteurs à explorer la région, appareil photo à portée de main. Alors que la presse locale annonce le salon comme une manifestation artistique d'une ampleur nationale, l'exposition de Los Angeles, comme celles de San Francisco, demeure un évènement limité à la population locale. Malgré l'absence d'un public plus large, les salons dans le nord et le sud représentent des occasions exceptionnelles pour enseigner visuellement les spécificités de la région. C'est ici que s'articule l'instrumentalité du médium pour l'affirmation d'une identité, partagée par des communautés isolées du reste du pays.

Si l'impact des sponsors locaux est à peine voilé dans le cas du salon de Los Angeles, il devient également tangible à San Francisco. Dans le cadre du CCC, *Camera Craft* et les membres professionnels travaillent la main dans la main pour promouvoir une pratique en plein air, généralement sous forme d'excursions sur les lignes de la Southern Pacific avec des tarifs préférentiels. La traversée du territoire grâce à une infrastructure des pionniers locaux, avec la banderole « California Camera Club » attachée aux wagons spécialement réservés pour les membres, et avec le Yosemite comme terminus, représente un élément-clé pour la définition de la pratique. Les travaux réalisés dans ces circonstances témoigneraient non seulement de la « tradition » d'une appréciation du paysage par la photographie mais aussi de sa valeur artistique. C'est exactement cette pratique qui est explicitée dans le catalogue du premier salon de San Francisco et qui est censée rendre les images pertinentes pour toute la population locale en lui en promettant l'accès. Comme toute sorte de production artistique en Californie est

difficilement séparable de la dimension promotionnelle à cette époque, il faudrait y voir un moyen pour affirmer l'identité d'une jeune communauté entrant dans un période de floraison avec peu de soutien institutionnel. Ce qu'Archibald Treat de la PCAPA souhaitait éviter sera alors mis en évidence par son ami Howard Tibbitts : en tant que photographe officiel de la Southern Pacific, Tibbitts publie des portfolios élaborés du Yosemite dans *Camera Craft*, invitant tous les membres à rejoindre les excursions. L'image d'une pratique créative et collective en plein air s'avère alors tout aussi attirante pour les lecteurs du journal mensuel de la Southern Pacific, *Sunset*, auquel Tibbitts contribue régulièrement. Les membres du CCC participent à cette revue qui conçoit l'Ouest américain comme un futur empire, avec un paysage abondant, une richesse économique, et une population sensible à l'inspiration artistique – tous les éléments qui attirent le CCC.

Cette navigation orchestrée entre promotion et reconnaissance culturelle est au cœur du salon, ce qui fait de l'évènement bien plus qu'une exposition visant à l'acceptation du médium dans le canon des beaux-arts. Cette conception se manifeste d'une manière significative dans le travail d'Oscar Maurer qui sert de point de départ et de fin du cinquième chapitre. Souvent cité comme l'un des rares associés de la côte Ouest à la Photo-Secession, le photographe et membre du CCC sera le premier à proposer un salon grâce à son succès au salon de Chicago avec une photo prise au Mexique. Produite durant une commission de la Southern Pacific, elle sera d'abord publiée dans *Sunset* en 1899, avant d'apparaître en 1900 dans *Camera Notes*, dont Alfred Stieglitz est alors rédacteur en chef. Maurer et d'autres collègues du club comme William Dasonville et Arnold Genthe tentent alors de s'approcher du cercle new-yorkais, ce qui aboutit à une exposition hors-compétition de la Photo-Secession, prêtée au troisième salon de San Francisco en 1903. Alors que Stieglitz n'y sera pas présent, les photographes Maurer, Dasonville et Genthe admirent les œuvres et souhaitent s'affilier à ce style rigoureux, tout en critiquant les travaux de leurs collègues locaux. Cette comparaison est rejetée par les éditeurs de *Camera Craft* qui voient dans la Photo-Secession un modèle élitiste, porteur d'une approche peu comparable avec le style californien. Même si les communications entre New York et San Francisco demeurent exceptionnelles, ce sont ces rares moments d'échange qui sont retenus par la littérature secondaire. Ainsi, Maurer, Genthe, ou bien encore Anne Brigman (dont l'affiliation au CCC est ambiguë) restent visibles en tant qu'associés à Stieglitz, en même temps que Lange et Tibbitts disparaissent de la scène.

Le cinquième chapitre révèle et révisé ainsi les lectures souvent trop étroites qui ont été faites du salon de photographie aux États-Unis dont le succès et la pertinence sont jugés par le degré d'affiliation au cercle new-yorkais. En présentant la préparation et la réception du salon

comme un évènement avec un fort ancrage local, un nouvel ensemble d'acteurs émerge qui renonce aux catégories restreintes de la photographie comme un art. Ce sont des personnages comme Lange ou Tibbitts qui nous fournissent une compréhension de la photographie bien plus complexe qu'une simple quête de reconnaissance du médium parmi les beaux-arts. Ce qui se démarque alors à travers cette nouvelle compréhension du salon sont les lacunes d'une historiographie trop concentrée sur la côte est et la notion d'une pratique non-commerciale prétendument défendue par la majorité des clubs. A travers cette grille historiographique, contrebalancée par une mobilisation de sources jusqu'à présent négligées, nous comprenons les dynamiques qui ont mené en partie à l'oubli du California Camera Club. Inversement, nous saisissons le rôle complexe du médium autour de 1900 et la pertinence de sa pratique collective pour une communauté en quête de reconnaissance nationale.

Afin de prolonger la notion de maturité dans le style et l'usage du médium par le club, le sixième chapitre se penche sur le rôle des minorités californiennes dans le corpus. Dans le cadre du salon, les membres visent à intégrer des collections d'images « caractéristiques de l'Ouest », qui incluent non seulement les vues du Yosemite ou de la baie, mais aussi les « Indian pictures » et les images du Chinatown de San Francisco. Pour comprendre dans quelle mesure les représentations stratégiques de ces minorités servent d'outils dans la légitimation du médium et d'une culture mature, nous nous intéressons aux éléments esthétiques choisis par les membres et les discours qui les rejoignent. En suivant les excursions dans les territoires amérindiens de la Californie et du Sud-ouest américain, nous comprenons comment l'histoire ancienne de ces peuples, leurs traditions et leur culture artisanale sont réappropriées et insérées dans le portrait des membres comme photographes sophistiqués. Sans reconnaître l'histoire conflictuelle des Amérindiens ni leur accorder une forme d'*agency* propre, les membres les transforment en objets esthétiques dont la tradition vient orner l'historicité et la singularité de la Californie. Dans ce cadre, les ruines des missions (lieux de conversion et de travail forcés, bâtis par les missionnaires franciscains entre 1769 et 1823) s'avèrent un territoire idéal pour donner de l'épaisseur historique à l'État, illustrer la supériorité de la nation américaine et, en même temps, décorer les travaux avec des éléments esthétiques rappelant les ruines de la Méditerranée.

Les rapports à la promotion sont également mis en évidence dans ce chapitre en reconstruisant le sponsoring de ces excursions par les compagnies de chemin de fer. Ainsi, les « California mission albums » assemblés par le membre Dasonville pour la Southern Pacific, incluant des tirages de platine et des légendes poétiques, deviennent des objets esthétiquement plaisants qui témoignent et de la maîtrise artistique du médium et des longues relations cultivées

entre photographes locaux et entrepreneurs. De même, la publication de portfolios illustrés de ces excursions dans *Camera Craft* ou dans *Sunset* montrent comment les membres réussissent à contrôler les différents canaux de dissémination et les discours qui les accompagnent. Ici, les articles du journal photographique accordent une place centrale aux membres comme connaisseurs et artistes légitimes de la Californie. Bien plus que les travaux très connus d'Edward Curtis, les projets du CCC en rapport avec l'histoire amérindienne révèlent la part du collectif dans la création de ces représentations, et de même, illustrent l'utilité stratégique de cette minorité pour l'autodéfinition en tant que photographes locaux.

Cette versatilité se manifeste également dans les représentations de la population chinoise de San Francisco. Écartée de la société « blanche », les Chinois incarnent « l'Autre oriental » dont la culture est autant rejetée pour son étrangeté, qu'appréciée pour son « exotisme ». Comme dans le cas des Amérindiens, l'infériorité de la population chinoise n'est questionnée à aucun moment. Au contraire, les photographes capitalisent sur cette position défavorisée afin d'imposer leurs propres valeurs sur le quartier chinois. Ainsi, les coutumes et les traditions religieuses deviennent des éléments décoratifs d'une culture cosmopolite de San Francisco, affirmant qu'elle est tournée vers le Pacifique. De la même façon, la consommation d'opium ou les jeux dans les cavernes souterraines montrent la prétendue impossibilité d'assimilation de cette population, ce qui n'empêche pas pour autant une transformation en spectacle touristique. Dans ce cadre, les photographes prennent un rôle privilégié en démontrant l'exotisme de la culture chinoise et en surveillant le « underground » du quartier grâce à la photographie avec flash. Au lieu de mettre en lumière les injustices ou proposer des réformes civiques en faveur de la minorité asiatique, les membres souhaitent donner de l'authenticité à leur travaux en tant que photographes de rue et par là même, forger un consensus collectif sur les caractéristiques d'une ville cosmopolite.

À travers ces multiples supports matériels et la circulation du médium, dans les réseaux photographiques comme dans les cercles promotionnels, les premières années du vingtième siècle constituent un processus de maturation. Plus qu'un éveil esthétique, il s'agit d'une sensibilisation à l'égard de la valeur de la photographie au sein du club et dans la société. Nous comprenons alors le rôle des praticiens locaux dans une communauté qui cherche à créer un passé partagé. Ainsi, la conceptualisation à travers la grille de lecture du pictorialisme s'avère inadaptée car elle ne nous permet pas de saisir toutes les activités et le vaste corpus produit par les membres au début des années 1900. Au lieu d'y voir une insuffisance, nous ouvrons les archives locales et y retrouvons toute l'ampleur de la pratique et son insertion dans la communauté. Dans cette articulation locale du CCC, l'identification des pionniers et des

travaux audacieux, en intime rapport avec l'environnement, deviennent la pierre de touche pour caractériser le corpus des membres. C'est en se basant sur ce vocabulaire visuel et ce discours historicisant que le club parvient à canaliser l'expérience du tremblement de terre et des feux qui mettent une fin précoce à leur production florissante en avril 1906.

La troisième partie, « Rupture (1906-1908) », se concentre sur les activités du club dans le contexte de cette catastrophe qui survient le 18 avril 1906 avec un tremblement de terre d'une magnitude de 7.9, suivi de trois jours d'incendies, laissant plus de la moitié de la population de San Francisco sans abri. Le club, dont les bureaux se trouvent au cœur de la destruction, souffre des pertes massives, et certains membres voient leurs collections entières réduites en cendres. En deux chapitres, cette partie reconstruit l'expérience des photographes durant le contrecoup immédiat, c'est-à-dire les mois d'été 1906, jusqu'à la fin officielle de la période de secours en été 1908. Alors que l'iconographie de cet évènement est très connue, grâce au projet de numérisation par les institutions locales à l'occasion du centenaire en 2006, résultant en une masse d'images souvent anonymes¹⁵, l'expérience des certaines figures-clés, telles que les membres du club, n'a jamais été reconstituée.

Le septième chapitre traite de la catastrophe selon la perspective du club, à travers une enquête qui retrace les pertes matérielles et le soutien aux membres provenant des quatre coins du pays, pour ensuite comprendre comment le renouvellement d'une expérience isolée du reste de la nation se transforme en une réaffirmation de la singularité de la communauté de San Francisco. S'y déploie une historicisation de la ville après le tremblement de terre, qui sert à la formulation d'un mythe du « vieux San Francisco », disparu après sa brève période d'existence de cinquante ans. L'iconographie de la destruction avec les ruines et les citoyens dans la rue s'y prête comme un écran de projection idéale. Ainsi, le *tabula rasa* de la ville, l'effacement de ces traces historiques et de ces espaces conflictuels comme Chinatown, sa population faisant face à des conditions de vie hostiles, représentent des ingrédients primordiaux pour une reconstruction visuelle de la ville, dans laquelle le club joue un rôle-clé. En publiant les témoignages des membres dans les premiers numéros d'après-catastrophe de *Camera Craft* en juin et juillet 1906, accompagnés de portfolios souvent somptueux, les photographes se penchent d'abord sur une mobilisation stratégique de l'expérience et des ruines. En pointant leurs appareils souvent improvisés sur la scène de désolation, ils rétablissent la pratique pionnière tant désirée auparavant. Avec ce discours, orienté tant vers une mythification du passé que vers une projection glorieuse de l'avenir, les photographes relancent la fabrication d'une

¹⁵ cf. « Guide to the 1906 Earthquake and Fire Collection », Online Archive of California, <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/hb8779p2cx/>. La collection est constituée de documents provenant de sept institutions californiennes, qui forment un ensemble de 14000 images et 7000 pages de texte.

fable commune. Dans cette représentation, l'air d'ancienneté des ruines est transformé en un support matériel pour reconstruire cette fable. Malgré ces pertes, un présent et un avenir, avec un passé cohérent, sont donc envisageables.

À travers ce discours d'ancienneté et d'optimisme, des photographes comme Maurer et Lange s'insèrent à nouveau dans les réseaux promotionnels. Alors que les élites politique et économique, qui avaient largement échoué durant la catastrophe, souhaitent se débarrasser entièrement des ruines, les photographes se les réapproprient pour construire l'image d'une Californie méditerranéenne dont le climat et l'architecture rappelleraient Pompéi et Athènes. Une fois le processus de reconstruction lancé, les photographes participent à la publication d'histoires populaires de l'évènement, comme le *San Francisco Through Earthquake and Fire* du poète de Berkeley, Charles Keeler. Intégrant l'expérience de la destruction comme un spectacle et un discours optimiste, le livre dessine le portrait d'une communauté résistante et indépendante, illustrée à travers des études de ruines et des images de camps de réfugiés par Maurer et Lange. Par son engagement dans plusieurs projets, et par ses liens avec le booster et collectionneur Charles Turrill, le CCC reprend sa place dans la circulation promotionnelle. Pour boucler son propre processus de rétablissement et pour remplir le vide laissé par la destruction, les membres reprennent un agenda intensif d'excursions, à commencer par le Yosemite à l'été 1907. À peine un an après la catastrophe, cette excursion démontre la place privilégiée occupée par les photographes et leur ambition de réalimenter leur réputation de pionniers. Le retour au Yosemite représente alors un retour à la source d'inspiration (appelé le « wonderland of creation ») et reconstitue les chemins des pionniers qui progressaient de la ville frontière au paysage monumental.

À cause du caractère fortement fabriqué de ce récit, le huitième chapitre s'oriente vers d'autres sources photographiques créées en 1906, afin d'examiner l'étendue du discours progressiste et son intégration dans l'usage du médium. Dans une optique comparative, le chapitre se concentre sur un seul support matériel, l'album photographique, et son usage par les citoyens locaux et les photographes du club. Par sa capacité narrative, l'album constitue une page blanche, équivalant à une *tabula rasa* de la ville, sur laquelle peuvent être réunies d'une manière spontanée et créative les différentes expériences du désastre. Sa dimension matérielle, épaisse et cohérente, donne une forme d'autorité et d'authenticité au récit qui se déploie en feuilletant ces pages. Expérience tactile, supplémentée par commentaires et anecdotes transmis à l'oral, l'album demeure une source primaire fragmentée dont la conservation ne peut préserver que l'ordre narratif. En se basant sur de nombreuses recherches menées sur la

matérialité de la photographie, ce chapitre considère l'album comme un outil-clé pour une communauté traversant une période post-catastrophique marquée par des pertes irréparables.

Le consensus forgé par les membres du club et leurs relations promotionnelles est testé à travers trois albums, conservés dans les institutions telles que la California Historical Society et la San Francisco Public Library. Malgré le caractère incomplet de ces sources et l'absence d'informations sur leurs auteurs dans la plupart des cas, nous observons comment la photographie et le discours optimiste s'entremêlent au sein de la population locale. Leurs albums racontent des expériences individuelles moins spectaculaires et pourtant bien plus traumatisantes que les récits promotionnels ne le permettraient. Pour ces individus, l'usage de l'appareil est un moyen d'orientation dans la ville détruite, qui permet de reconstruire un lien avec ce qui n'existe plus. Complétées par des légendes souvent sentimentales, les images témoignent d'un fort attachement à la ville. Par leur insertion dans un format cohérent, elles permettent alors la réappropriation d'une expérience monumentale. Dans ce contexte, même les vues commerciales servent de réorientation, par exemple par l'ajout de flèches qui désignent un endroit précis. Dotés de commentaires personnels, tristes, optimistes, ou parfois politisés, les albums individuels créent une image plus complexe de la catastrophe. En même temps, leur format narratif articule dans l'ensemble une perspective positive vers l'avenir, tout en reflétant la notion d'une expérience unique à la communauté.

Le désir de se placer dans un récit plus large et d'y contribuer d'une manière significative, déclenché par l'assemblage d'un album, est un élément qui sera également utilisé par les photographes du club. Les membres Charles Weidner et Edward Sewell, le premier étant photographe professionnel, le second amateur, forgent ainsi des récits qui font autorité. Ici, le format officiel du support ajoute à cette authenticité, notamment quand les membres l'enrichissent par une présentation unifiée et standardisée. Cette impression d'autorité est renforcée par le lieu de conservation, la Bancroft Library de Berkeley, où les albums se trouvent dans les archives personnelles du maire James D. Phelan. Leader civique et champion de grands projets d'embellissement urbain, rejetés après la catastrophe, Phelan a dû apprécier les albums précisément pour leur narration cohérente. L'album de Sewell, intitulé *The New San Francisco*, est exemplaire à cet égard, car le photographe documente la ville en 1909 et tire le titre d'un discours donné par Phelan après la Midwinter Fair. Ici, la maîtrise du tirage et de ses tonalités, ainsi que les perspectives choisies pour démontrer l'architecture élégante de la métropole du Pacifique reconstruite, reflètent d'une manière esthétique et cohérente les ambitions de l'ex-maire. Par là même, l'effort de reconstruction et le soutien immédiat pour la communauté sont représentés dans l'album de Weidner qui invite le spectateur à un tour des différents camps de

réfugiés, incluant des drapeaux américains flottant sous le ciel ensoleillé et des soldats surveillant le terrain. Étant donné l'implication de Phelan dans les comités de secours civique et d'investissement, les albums s'avèrent être de puissants instruments visuels qui contrebalancent les scandales concernant le manque d'hygiène et la ségrégation dans les camps. En rebâtissant l'histoire de la catastrophe d'une manière historiquement pertinente et esthétiquement plaisante, les albums viennent consolider le récit d'un nouvel ordre et la revitalisation de la « Paris of the West ».

En allant au-delà du sponsoring promotionnel et de la collaboration avec les investisseurs et les chambres de commerce, les photographes participent à une reconstruction politique de la ville qui correspond parfaitement à leur définition de la pratique californienne. Par des aspects-clés comme l'historicisation de la brève existence de la ville et la glorification de son futur pour le pays entier, le récit fabriqué de San Francisco vient s'insérer dans un schéma national. Le potentiel de la communauté imaginée est renforcée ici par la matérialité du médium et les discours cultivés au sein du club, comme au sein de la population, depuis plusieurs décennies. Cette étude de la reconstruction visuelle par le club et par la société de San Francisco réaffirme à nouveau la nécessité d'une approche analytique concentrée sur l'histoire des usages avec une attention aiguë portée aux formats choisis. Grâce à cette grille de lecture, nous pouvons tracer le rôle performatif du club et son usage versatile du médium, même après des pertes considérables.

La quatrième et dernière partie, « Demise (1909-1939) », s'interroge sur la place occupée par le club à long terme, dans une ville reconstruite qui célèbre une exposition internationale et ouvre ses premiers musées d'art. En se concentrant d'une part sur l'exposition universelle Panama-Pacific en 1915 et d'autre part sur la formation de nouvelles sociétés photographiques et des musées, la dernière partie montre comment les membres du club et leur discours de « pionniers » se voient de moins en moins adaptés au contexte culturel et artistique du vingtième siècle. Le neuvième chapitre examine les préparations, la mise en scène et la suite de l'exposition Panama-Pacific en reconstruisant les productions du CCC. Après le décès des membres influents comme Oscar V. Lange et la disparition progressive d'Oscar Maurer, Archibald Treat et Howard Tibbitts des cercles photographiques, l'exposition universelle de 1915 est prise comme date de fin d'une affirmation collective de la première génération du CCC. Durant les années 1913 à 1915, le club, sous la direction de son nouveau président Edward Kemp, se penche sur la promotion de l'exposition en se basant sur les discours habituels d'un empire américain, ancré à San Francisco. Kemp, photographe professionnel, marchand de lanternes magiques et de films, lance un programme de soirées conférences sur la construction

du Canal de Panama à laquelle il a assisté. Dans ce cadre, il tisse un lien entre la réalisation de ce projet monumental, l'importance géostratégique accordée à San Francisco par la suite et la reconstruction de cette ville après le désastre. Afin d'attirer un maximum de spectateurs à cette célébration visuelle, Kemp et sa femme organisent sous l'égide du club une série de conférences, suivies d'amusements et de danses. Ici nous voyons le début d'un nouveau programme qui tend à se définir de plus en plus par ses activités de loisir, qui font appel à la population locale et l'instruisent en même temps sur l'appréciation de la région.

Durant l'exposition, une nouvelle génération de membres, incluant notamment l'écrivain Louis Stellmann, prolonge l'ambition de reconnaissance en contribuant aux publications illustrées et en rassemblant des collections de lanterne magique. Sur le terrain de l'exposition elle-même, comme si souvent auparavant, le club n'est pas représenté d'une manière cohérente. Après le refus peu étonnant de Stieglitz de participer à l'exposition photographique dans le département des arts libéraux, les figures bien connues de Brigman, Dasonville et Tibbitts prennent l'affichage en main. Sans résultats surprenants, cette exposition inclue un large choix de motifs pictorialistes, parmi eux les contributions de jeunes photographes tels que Edward Weston et Imogen Cunningham. Ce style se prolongera dans l'organisation d'un dernier salon photographique sous la direction du CCC l'année suivante, quelques mois après la fermeture de l'exposition Panama-Pacific.

Le chapitre se poursuit par une analyse détaillée de l'après-1915, qui témoigne non seulement de l'apparition de nouveaux acteurs et d'une affiliation encore plus large, mais aussi de la formation de nouvelles sociétés strictement « pictorialistes » autour de 1920. Ce que l'on observe ici est la fragmentation d'une scène photographique locale jusqu'alors unifiée dans le nœud du California Camera Club. Par son approche inclusive et ses affinités avec la promotion du territoire, le club se transforme à partir de la fin des années 1910 en un vaste organisme de loisir qui met l'appréciation de la région au cœur de sa pratique. Dans le cadre de cette pratique, l'usage de l'appareil photographique devient plus un accessoire bienvenu qu'une nécessité absolue. Des albums assemblés par un membre entre 1917 et 1924 documentent ces excursions dans les alentours de la ville et au Yosemite, où la photographie devient plus un moyen utile pour créer des souvenirs. Se rapprochant du style du magazine *Sunset*, qui demeure par ailleurs tout autant demandeur d'images produites par le club, les membres ne se distinguent plus par leurs travaux esthétiques ou historicisants. Comme la pratique se concentre davantage sur les loisirs et les nouveaux moyens de locomotion comme la voiture, la couverture des activités du club disparaît progressivement de *Camera Craft* et trouve une nouvelle plateforme dans la publication de sa propre newsletter et dans la presse locale.

Inversement, *Camera Craft* se lance dans la documentation de nouvelles sociétés pictorialistes, formées à Los Angeles à partir des années 1910 et à San Francisco la décennie suivante. Accompagnés de nouveaux clubs de photographes japonais sur toute la côte Ouest, ces pictorialistes montent des salons qui intègrent le désir de reconnaissance artistique exprimé autour de 1900. Ici, la Pictorial Photographic Society de San Francisco accueille des membres du CCC comme Dassonville et John Paul Edwards et lance une série d'expositions durant les années 1920. Alors que leur ambition de s'insérer dans les collections du nouveau San Francisco Museum of Art sera un échec, cette nouvelle plateforme forge des liens plus directs entre les photographes établis du réseau du CCC et les nouveaux acteurs comme Weston, Cunningham et Adams. Durant les salons, ces photographes exposent les travaux précurseurs de leur nouvelle formation, le Groupe f.64, au début des années 1930.

Le chapitre fournit alors une réévaluation de la place occupée par le CCC dans une chronologie plus large, ce qui forme la base de l'épilogue. Nous voyons dans cette dernière partie que malgré l'affirmation collective de leur rôle dans la promotion californienne, même au-delà de 1915, la disparition progressive de la première génération du CCC met une fin aux discours de pionniers et de recherche de reconnaissance du médium et de l'État. Les nouvelles sociétés photographiques souhaitent forger un style esthétique, tout en poursuivant l'insertion dans les nouveaux musées de la ville. Dans ce cadre, le CCC demeure une plateforme de rencontre et continue à représenter un réseau incontournable. Pourtant, ses membres ne produisent plus de corpus significatif. Cet espace d'échange et de familiarisation que fournit le club forme la base des praticiens qui atteindront une renommée internationale à partir des années 1930.

L'épilogue éclaire donc comment les membres du nouveau Group f.64 se détachent progressivement du réseau des clubs en adoptant la rigueur et le vocabulaire stratégique de la côte est. Une figure-clé, qui est impliquée dans le CCC au début de sa carrière avant de le rejeter violemment, est Ansel Adams. Alors qu'il produit des photographies pictorialistes durant l'exposition Panama-Pacific et travaille par la suite avec Dassonville, Adams s'écarte explicitement de ce cercle en adoptant le vocabulaire et la rigueur de Stieglitz après l'avoir rencontré à New York au début des années 1930. Durant cette période, Adams s'engage dans le nouveau San Francisco Museum of Art où il conseille fortement au conservateur de rejeter toute présence collectiviste dans la collection. Pour lui et bien d'autres, l'unification stylistique que représente le Group f.64 ou la « straight photography » plus largement est nécessaire pour la création des collections photographiques. Entrant en contact avec Beaumont Newhall du Museum of Modern Art à New York, Adams forge un récit linéaire de la photographie de

l'Ouest, commençant avec Watkins et se terminant par lui-même et ses pairs. Une brève analyse des engagements promotionnels d'Adams au Yosemite, qu'il désignera comme le terrain de jeu d'une pratique masculine dans un vaste paysage, ajoute une dimension encore plus complexe à ce récit linéaire. Une fois de plus, grâce à la présence du CCC, elle montre que les bases de la pratique locale ont été établies et renforcées largement par les membres et leurs réseaux, et non pas par de grandes figures solitaires.

Cet épilogue démontre enfin comment le club tombe progressivement dans l'oubli par sa double stratégie de reconnaissance photographique et régionale en adaptant de nombreux supports matériels. Manquant de moyens efficaces pour créer un corpus uni et ayant perdu de nombreuses sources en avril 1906, les membres influents du tournant du siècle disparaissent, alors que la structure même – le CCC – poursuit son agenda jusqu'au début des années 1970 au sein de la municipalité de San Francisco. Ici nous comprenons comment, grâce à une histoire des usages et un focus étendu sur la matérialité, des acteurs jusqu'alors oubliés réapparaissent et mettent en question le récit traditionnel des maîtres de la photographie californienne.

Conclusion, critiques & perspectives futures

L'analyse du corpus présenté dans cette thèse vient confirmer la lecture de la pratique photographique collective en Californie, notamment à San Francisco autour de 1900, comme un outil d'identification. En démarquant l'isolation du reste du pays comme une expérience partagée, les photographes du California Camera Club saisissent les spécificités de cette existence à l'Ouest et en font une base de leur identité. Ici, nous voyons comment le chevauchement entre le nouveau territoire et le nouveau médium qui se développent ensemble prend un tournant collectif autour de 1900. Grâce à l'accessibilité du médium et l'inclusion volontaire du club, la ville, la région et l'État deviennent un écran imaginaire sur lequel la photographie esquisse un passé et un futur uniques unique à la communauté mais tout autant pertinents pour le pays. La conceptualisation collective, renforcée par l'isolement d'autres villes et d'autres cercles photographiques, soutient la pratique avec un sentiment d'appartenance qui est davantage cultivé par le travail en plein air, en liaison intime avec le paysage et son histoire.

Ce qui se joue durant la première génération du CCC peut être défini alors comme un projet de reconnaissance régionale qui se base et se nourrit d'une compréhension polyvalente de la photographie. En forgeant des liens étroits entre image, discours et support matériel, les membres négocient une nouvelle représentation du paysage californien qui reflète par là même leur définition en tant que photographes. Grâce à une analyse dynamique qui prend en compte la photographie, ses textes et ses formes, nous comprenons comment l'approche souple du

médium a permis au club de contribuer à un récit et une culture de la région qui intègrent l'idée de sa singularité. En partageant ces ambitions de reconnaissance avec un vaste réseau de photographes californiens, de jeunes institutions culturelles, d'hommes d'affaires et politiciens, le club fait entrer le médium dans la représentation de la Californie. Par là même, la géographie, l'histoire complexe et la société diversifiée de la région s'introduisent et se renforcent par la suite dans les productions photographiques et ainsi consolident la place des photographes au sein de la communauté.

En ouvrant les catégories analytiques vers les usages concrets et l'utilité spécifique du médium à la Californie, de nouvelles sources et nouveaux acteurs émergent. Ces figures et leur vaste production nous permettent de repenser le rôle de la photographie aux États-Unis autour de 1900. Elles révisent l'idée d'une production non-commerciale pictorialiste, inspirée par la côte Est, et elles remplissent le vide supposé des années entre Watkins et Weston. Si la recherche sur la photographie à San Francisco semble un défi à cause de la destruction imposée par le tremblement de terre et les incendies, le volume considérable des sources dénichées dans cette thèse contredit cette supposition. De la même manière, si l'histoire du médium dans l'Ouest et dans l'ensemble des États-Unis au tournant du siècle suit le récit d'une reconnaissance unique du médium, cette conceptualisation s'avère trop étroite pour rendre justice aux travaux profondément localisés au sein du CCC et dans tout l'État. Les activités et les travaux du club nous demandent de repenser le collectif en photographie et nous impose un regard au-delà de l'institution muséale, et vers les collections régionales. Grâce à l'histoire des usages et des réseaux de circulation, l'imbrication des photographes et de leurs productions à différents niveaux de la société locale deviennent apparents et nous mènent vers une conceptualisation du médium en dehors des catégories figées.

Dans la mesure où ce nouveau corpus nous permet de développer de nouvelles approches et de repenser nos outils archivistiques, ce travail entraîne également un certain nombre de défis, de lacunes et de questions. La richesse de nouvelles sources primaires jusqu'alors jamais traitées représente une vraie opportunité pour le chercheur et le conservateur, mais en même temps, cette profonde nouveauté devrait nous mener à questionner et à chercher plus loin. Ce qui doit être souligné ici est la non-exhaustivité du corpus et l'absence d'un nombre considérable de sources. Cette thèse se base sur les documents accessibles dans les archives et les collections privées et son approche est critiquable comme telle. Ce qui est réuni dans ce projet comme « corpus » du California Camera Club n'inclut très peu d'informations sur les listes de membres ou les travaux administratifs. De même, cette thèse se base sur un certain nombre d'objets photographiques annoncés dans la revue et qui cependant n'ont laissé

aucune trace matérielle. Ces absences se multiplient à plusieurs niveaux et concernent également la provenance des sources trouvées et utilisées dans cette thèse, certaines figures-clés mentionnées, comme les présidents du club, ainsi que des récits alternatifs qui contrebalanceraient ou critiqueraient le territoire et la communauté imaginés par le club.

Toutefois, même en l'absence de ces sources, une approche a été développée qui reconnaît et accepte les lacunes et tente de reconstruire une histoire qui, dans toute sa complexité, ne pourra pas aspirer à l'exhaustivité. En se basant sur la richesse du matériel disponible et de nouveaux concepts envisagés récemment par la recherche, cette thèse représente alors un point de départ important pour questionner les récits envisagés par le champ récent qu'est l'histoire de la photographie. En voyant dans la complexité du corpus *et* dans ses lacunes une chance pour l'ouverture des travaux archivistiques, elle propose de nouveaux outils pour réviser un récit trop étroit. Enfin, en se basant sur les écrits autant que sur les objets photographiques, cette thèse multiplie les perspectives pour approcher un corpus de club photographique et, ce faisant, nous révèle le rapport intime entre l'imagination d'une nouvelle communauté et l'usage du médium par ses citoyens.

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Diplôme de troisième cycle de l'École du Louvre

École doctorale Langue, Littérature et Image - ED 131
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Illustrations

**“Out here it is different” – The California Camera Club and
community imagination through collective photographic practices.
Toward a critical historiography, 1890-1915.**

Carolin Görden

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Chapter 1

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Fig. 1.2 Andrew Russell, *East and West Shaking Hands at Laying Last Rail*, photographic print, 1869. Western Americana Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

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Fig. 2.1 [unknown], *Archibald J. Treat in Studio of William Keith*, photographic print, ca. 1896. Archibald J. Treat Pictorial Collection (BANC PIC 1977.055--PIC), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 2.2 William Letts Oliver, *La cordillera, Chili [sic], 18,350 feet above the level of the sea*, photographic print, 1863. Oliver Family Photograph Collection (BANC PIC 1905.17176 :73--B), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 2.5 W.H. Lowden, *Clouds over Oakland*, negative on glass, n.d. Oliver Family Photograph Collection (BANC PIC 1960.010 ser. 2 :0655--NEG), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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NB: In the third row near the right of the display, Oliver's Chile views can be discerned.

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Fig. 2.9 George Tasheira, *Some of 'em. Field Day P.C.A.P.A.*, glass plate, n.d. No. 111 in Lantern Slide Collection of the California Camera Club, Los Angeles Public Library.

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Fig. 2.10 William Letts Oliver, *Felling a Big Tree, California [Glimpses no. 82]*, photographic print, n.d. Oliver Family Photograph Collection (BANC PIC 1960.010 ser. 2 :0062), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 2.11 W.H. Lowden, *Bullteam hauling logs, Navarro, Mendocino County, California* [*Glimpses no. 83*], photographic print, n.d. Oliver Family Photograph Collection (BANC PIC 1960.010 ser. 2 :0060), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 2.16 Archibald J. Treat, *Grounds of the Leland Stanford, Jr. University, Palo Alto, Cal.*, eight albumen prints mounted as one panorama 20 x 126.5 cm, 1886. Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University.

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Fig. 2.18 George W. Reed, [*Del Monte*], photographic print, ca. 1888. Miscellaneous Views From the San Francisco Bay and Monterey Areas, California Photographed by George Reed (BANC PIC 1979.051--AX), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 2.19 George W. Reed, *A Corner in my Darkroom*, photographic print, ca. 1888. Miscellaneous Views From the San Francisco Bay and Monterey Areas, California Photographed by George Reed (BANC PIC 1979.051--AX), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 2.20 Letter by George Knight White to secretary of Society of California Pioneers, November 30, 1891. Society of California Pioneers, San Francisco.

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Fig. 2.21 [unknown], [*panorama of San Francisco*], daguerreotype, ca. 1850. Society of California Pioneers, San Francisco.

Chapter 3

The California Camera Club: the onset of a collective territorial approach, 1890-1900

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Fig. 3.1 [*Brochure 22nd Illustrated Lecture of the California Camera Club*], 1892. Gift of Mrs. Muriel Wolverton, in memory of T.P. Andrews (L99.101.28-37), Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, Legion of Honor Museum, San Francisco.

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Fig. 3.2 Ransome & Smith, *Academy of Sciences, San Francisco*, photographic print, ca. 1893-1897. California History Section Picture Catalog (2008-0664), California State Library, Sacramento.

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Fig. 3.3 [unknown], *Ground Plan of the California Camera Club*, ca. 1894. In *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 19, 1894, p. 10. Retrieved from California Digital Newspaper Project, San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig 3.4 Theodore C. Marceau, *Board of Directors, California Camera Club*, albumen cabinet card, n.d. Gift of Mrs. Muriel Wolverton, in memory of T.P. Andrews (199.125.10), Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, Legion of Honor Museum, San Francisco.

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Fig 3.5 [unknown], *Taking a Picture by the Williams System (Rooms of the California Camera Club)*, ca. 1893. In *Pacific Coast Photographer* 1, no. 12 (1893): 216. California Historical Society, San Francisco.

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Fig 3.6 [unknown], [*cover Pacific Coast Photographer* 2, no. 9 (1893)], 1893. Archibald J. Treat Papers (MS1877, folder 11), California Historical Society, San Francisco.

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Fig 3.7 [unknown], [*Logo of the Club news section*], 1893. In *Pacific Coast Photographer* 2, no 7 (1893): 384. California Historical Society, San Francisco.

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Fig 3.8 O.V. Lange, *Metropolitan Temple, corner Fifth and Jessie Streets*, photographic print, ca. 1881-1882. California History Section Picture Catalog (#2011-2820), California State Library, Sacramento.

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Fig 3.9 [unknown], *The Yosemite Valley*. By the California Camera Club, glass plate, n.d. No. 144 in Lantern Slide Collection of the California Camera Club, Los Angeles Public Library.

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Fig 3.10 E.G. Zeile, *A part of the Club Annex*, glass plate, n.d. No. 127 in Lantern Slide Collection of the California Camera Club, Los Angeles Public Library.

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Fig 3.11 [unknown], [*California Camera Club, Mirror Lake, Yosemite*], glass plate, n.d. No. 11 in Lantern Slide Collection of the California Camera Club, Los Angeles Public Library.

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Fig 3.12 R.G. Mudge, *Yosemite*, n.d. In *Pacific Coast Photographer* 1, no. 9 (1892): 160. California Historical Society, San Francisco.

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Fig 3.13 [unknown], *In Art Gallery, Looking East. California Building*, 1893. In *Final Report of the California World's Fair Commission* (Sacramento: State Office, A.J. Johnston, Supt. State Printing, 1894), p. 53. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from Library of Congress.

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Fig 3.14 [unknown], *California State Building*, ca. 1893. World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 Collection, The Field Museum Library, Chicago.

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Fig 3.15 [unknown], *Mechanical Arts Building*, ca. 1893. Frontispiece *Pacific Coast Photographer* 2, no. 10 (1893). California Historical Society, San Francisco.

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Fig 3.16 Isaiah W. Taber, *Interior of Fine Arts Building, C.M.I.E., 1894*, photographic print, 1894. In *Souvenir of the California Midwinter International Exposition* (BANC PIC 1976.029:17B--ffALB), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig 3.17 Isaiah W. Taber, *Mineral Exhibit, Mechanical Arts Bldg., C.M.I.E., 1894*, photographic print, 1894. In *Souvenir of the California Midwinter International Exposition* (BANC PIC 1976.029:30--ffALB), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig 3.18 H.T. Henning, *[Taber Photographic Building]*, glass plate, 1894. San Francisco Lantern Slide Collection (SFP 49, Box 3), San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 3.19 H.T. Henning, *Columbus, Midwinter Fair*, glass plate, 1894. San Francisco Lantern Slide Collection (SFP 49, Box 3), San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 3.20 H.T. Henning, *Entrance to 49er Camp, Midwinter Fair*, glass plate, 1894. San Francisco Lantern Slide Collection (SFP 49, Box 3), San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 3.21 H.T. Henning, *Chinese at Midwinter Fair*, glass plate, 1894. San Francisco Lantern Slide Collection (SFP 49, Box 3), San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 3.22 Isaiah W. Taber, *University of California Exhibit, C.M.I.E., 1894*, photographic print, 1894. In *Souvenir of the California Midwinter International Exposition* (BANC PIC 1976.029:49--ffALB), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 3.23 William E. Dasonville, *Portrait of O.V. Lange*, n.d. Reproduced in *Camera Craft* 5, no. 6 (1902): 220. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig 3.24 O.V. Lange, [*Group portrait of Central Pacific Railroad Sacramento Shops employees: painters*], photographic print, 1882. California State Railroad Museum Library.

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Fig 3.25 O.V. Lange, [*The City Front of San Francisco*], ca. 1898. In *Wasp. Christmas Souvenir Edition* 40, no. 26 (1898), n.p., California State Library, Sacramento.

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Fig 3.26 O.V. Lange, [*Hotel and Railroad Office District*], ca. 1898. In *Wasp. Christmas Souvenir Edition* 40, no. 26 (1898), n.p., California State Library, Sacramento.

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Fig 3.27 O.V. Lange, [*A remarkable photographic feat*], ca. 1898. In *Wasp. Christmas Souvenir Edition* 40, no. 26 (1898), n.p., California State Library, Sacramento.

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Fig. 3.28a O.V. Lange, *U.C. Reception Room*, salted paper print, 1894. Photographs of the University of California, (ff 308gv. 1894, Vol. 1), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig 3.28b [*Detail of O.V. Lange, U.C. Reception Room*].

NB: The frames on the far right show Lange's photographs of the university library and art gallery, cf. fig. 3.29 and fig. 3.31. All the images from Lange's UCB project reproduced here are taken from the salted paper print album. The collection of lantern slides accompanying the typescript includes the same images, yet these could not be reproduced here.

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Fig 3.29 O.V. Lange, *Library Alcoves*, salted paper print, 1894. Photographs of the University of California, (ff 308gv. 1894, Vol. 1), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig 3.30 O.V. Lange, *Library Alcoves*, salted paper print, 1894. Photographs of the University of California, (ff 308gv. 1894, Vol. 1), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig 3.31 O.V. Lange, *Art Gallery South End*, salted paper print, 1894. Photographs of the University of California, (ff 308gv. 1894, Vol. 1), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig 3.32 O.V. Lange, *Mark Hopkins Institute of Art, Gallery, looking from staircase*, salted paper print, 1894. Photographs of the University of California, (ff 308gv. 1894, Vol. 1), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig 3.33 O.V. Lange, *Mark Hopkins Institute of Art, Gallery, looking toward organ*, salted paper print, 1894. Photographs of the University of California, (ff 308gv. 1894, Vol. 1), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Chapter 4

Distance as distinctiveness: an “imagined community” of photographers from Northern to Southern California

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Fig. 4.1 [*first Camera Craft newspaper advertisement*], 1900. In *San Francisco Call*, May 11, 1900, p. 7. Retrieved from California Digital Newspaper Collection.

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Fig 4.2 C.C. Pierce, *Los Angeles Camera Club, Great Incline R.R., Mt Lowe, So. Cal.*, glass plate, n.d. No. 219 in Historical Society of Southern California Collection of Lantern Slides (Box 7, photCL400, volume 27), Huntington Library, San Marino.

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Fig. 4.3 [unknown], *Los Angeles Camera Club, Mt. Lowe R.R., So. Cal.*, glass plate, n.d. No. 222 in Historical Society of Southern California Collection of Lantern Slides (Box 7, photCL400, volume 27), Huntington Library, San Marino.

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Fig. 4.4 [unknown], [*L.A. Camera Club at Point Fermin*], photographic print, n.d. Los Angeles Public Library Photograph Collection (#LAPL00047678), Los Angeles Public Library.

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Fig. 4.5 [extract] Helen L. Davie, “New Home of the Los Angeles Club,” 1900. In *Camera Craft* 1, no. 5 (1900): 238-239. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 4.6 [unknown], *Floor plan, camera club*, glass plate, n.d. No. 203 in Historical Society of Southern California Collection of Lantern Slides (Box 7, photCL400, volume 27), Huntington Library, San Marino.

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Fig. 4.7 [unknown], *Emblem – camera club*, glass plate, n.d. No. 205 in Historical Society of Southern California Collection of Lantern Slides (Box 7, photCL400, volume 27), Huntington Library, San Marino.

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Fig. 4.8 C.C. Valentine, *Downward career of the camera club*, glass plate, n.d. No. 208 in Historical Society of Southern California Collection of Lantern Slides (Box 7, photCL400, volume 27), Huntington Library, San Marino.

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Fig. 4.9 [unknown], [*cover*] *Los Angeles Camera Club News 2, no. 2 (1900)*], 1900. Pacific Photo Club records (Collection Number 784). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

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Fig 4.10 Roy D. Graves, [*William Shew panorama of the waterfront. Goat Island in distance*], n.d., photographic print. Roy D. Graves Pictorial Collection (Series 1: San Francisco Views. Subseries 1: San Francisco, pre 1906. Volume 2: Pioneer San Francisco no. 93), BANC PIC 1905.17500--ALB, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 4.11 [extract] Frederick I. Monsen, “Photographing under Difficulties,” 1900. In *Camera Craft* 1, no. 1 (1900): 10-11. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 4.12 [extract] O.V. Lange, “A Portrait Photographer for More than Half a Century in San Francisco,” 1900. In *Camera Craft* 5, no. 3 (1902): 101-102. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

Chapter 5

The San Francisco Photographic Salons, 1901-1903: new insights into context and reception for a historiographical revision

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Fig. 5.1a Oscar Maurer, *[The Storm]*, 1899. In *Camera Notes* 4 (1900): 69. Retrieved from Hathitrust Digital Library, original from University of Michigan.

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Fig. 5.1b, Fig. 5.1c [recto and verso] Oscar Maurer, *[unknown (In Mexico City 1899)]*, gelatin silver print, 1899. Gift of Aronovici (2008.6.1.38), Collection of the Oakland Museum of California.

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Fig. 5.2 Alfred Stieglitz, *Alfred Maurer*, gelatin silver print, 1915. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (93.XM.25.60, The J. Paul Getty Trust).

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Fig. 5.3a, Fig. 5.3b Oscar Maurer, *[untitled]*, 1899. In David Starr Jordan, “Mexico: A New Nation in an Old Country,” *Sunset* 2, no. 5 (1899): 83, 86. Retrieved from Hathitrust Digital Library, original from New York Public Library.

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Fig. 5.4 *Sunset* magazine advertisement, published in “Convention Souvenir Program and Annual of the Photographers’ Association of California, San Francisco, October 1903,” n.p., 1903. Peter E. Palmquist Collection of Male Photographers in the American West (Box 215), MSS S-2733. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

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Fig. 5.5 [extract] O.V. Lange, [*Interior of the Hopkins Mansion*], ca. 1894. In “Pacific Coast Salon a Fact,” *Camera Craft* 1, no. 5 (1900): 264-265. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 5.6 [unknown], *The Camera Craft Medals*, 1900. In *Camera Craft* 2, no. 2 (1900): 146. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 5.7 [unknown], [*Display of Arnold Genthe's work at First San Francisco Salon, January 1901*], 1901. In Oscar Maurer, "The Grand Prize Exhibit: A Criticism of the Work of Arnold Genthe," *Camera Craft* 2, no. 4 (1901): 298. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 5.8 F.E. Monteverde, *Fish Cleaners*, n.d. In *Catalog of the Second Chicago Photographic Salon* (Chicago: Society of Amateur Photographers and Art Institute of Chicago, 1901), n.p. Digital copy retrieved from the Art Institute of Chicago.

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Fig. 5.9 W.J. Street, *Passing of the Storm*, n.d. From *Catalog of the Second Chicago Photographic Salon*, n.p. Digital copy retrieved from the Art Institute of Chicago.

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Fig. 5.10 R.J. Waters, [*Arches, Stanford University*], n.d. In *Photo-Beacon* 13 (1901): 123. Retrieved from Hathitrust Digital Library, original from Harvard University.

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Fig. 5.11 [cover] *Catalogue of the First Los Angeles Photographic Salon* (Los Angeles: Issued by A.S.C. Forbes, 1902). California History Room, California State Library, Sacramento.

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Fig. 5.12 [first page] *Catalogue of the First Los Angeles Photographic Salon*, 1902. California History Room, California State Library, Sacramento.

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Fig. 5.13 Putnam and Valentine, *Moonlight Capistrano*, photo-engraving, n.d. In *Catalogue of the First Los Angeles Photographic Salon*, n.p. Retrieved from Hathitrust Digital Library, original from the Getty Research Institute.

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Fig. 5.14 Putnam and Valentine, *Capistrano by Moonlight*, n.d. In Mrs. A.S.C. Forbes, *California Missions and Landmarks and How to Get There* (Los Angeles: Official Guide, 1903), p. 28. The Huntington Library, San Marino.

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Fig. 5.15 [unknown], [cover] *Los Angeles Camera Club News 3, no. 2*, 1902. In Pacific Photo Club records (Collection Number 784, Box 6, folder 1). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California Los Angeles.

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Fig. 5.16 Alvin Langdon Coburn, *The California Missions – San Juan Capistrano*, 1902. In *Photo-Era 9* (1902): 253. Retrieved from Hathitrust Digital Library, original from Harvard University.

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Fig. 5.17 Oscar Maurer, *Mission Santa Barbara*, n.d. In *Camera Craft* 7, no. 3 (1903): 90. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.
NB: The photograph was submitted to the third San Francisco salon.

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Fig. 5.18, Fig. 5.19, Fig. 5.20 Joseph LeConte, “Take a Trip to the New Wonderland this Summer,” *Camera Craft* 2, no. 6 (1901): 465-468. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 5.19

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Fig. 5.20

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Fig. 5.21, Fig. 5.22 [extract] Oscar Maurer, “Around Mt. Shasta in Winter,” *Sunset* 6 (1901): 142, 144. Retrieved from Hathitrust Digital Library, original from New York Public Library.

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Fig. 5.23, Fig. 5.24, Fig. 5.25 Howard C. Tibbitts, photographic reproductions in W.G. Woods, "Through the Snowsheds," *Camera Craft* 1, no. 6 (1900): 332-336. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 5.26 Howard C. Tibbitts, *[unknown]*, albumen print, n.d. In *Across the Sierras in Winter, Photos of H.C. Tibbitts* (PA-147), California Historical Society, San Francisco.

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Fig. 5.27 Howard C. Tibbitts, *[unknown]*, albumen print, n.d. In *Across the Sierras in Winter, Photos of H.C. Tibbitts* (PA-147), California Historical Society, San Francisco.

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Fig. 5.28 Howard C. Tibbitts, *[unknown]*, albumen print, n.d. In *Across the Sierras in Winter, Photos of H.C. Tibbitts* (PA-147), California Historical Society, San Francisco.

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Fig. 5.29 Howard C. Tibbitts, *The Graces – Mariposa group of big trees / Wawona*, photographic prints, 1894. In *Photographs of the Southern Pacific Route, taken by H.C. Tibbitts*, Vol. 1 (BANC PIC 1996.002--fALB), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 5.30 Howard C. Tibbitts, [advertisement] in *Country Life in America* 1, no. 1 (1901): vi. Retrieved from Hathitrust Digital Library, original from University of Minnesota.

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Fig. 5.31 Carleton Watkins, *[El Capitan, Yosemite Valley]*, albumen silver print, ca. 1875, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

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Fig. 5.32 Howard C. Tibbitts, *El Capitan*, 1894. In “The California Camera Club’s Outing to Yosemite,” *Camera Craft* 3, no. 2 (1901): 68. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 5.33 Howard C. Tibbitts, *El Capitan*, photographic print, 1894. In *Photographs of the Southern Pacific Route, taken by H.C. Tibbitts*, Vol. 1 (BANC PIC 1996.002--fALB), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 5.34 Charles Weidner, photographic reproductions in Dr. G.G. Burnett, “Outing of the California Camera Club to the Yosemite,” *Camera Craft* 5, no. 3 (1902): 121-122. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 5.35 William Henry Jackson, *Yosemite Valley, Rock at Glacier Point*, ca. 1888-1889. Colorado Historical Society.

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Fig. 5.36 George Fiske, *Kitty Tatch and Friend on overhanging rock, Glacier Point, Yosemite, California*, albumen print, ca. 1895-1905. The Yosemite Museum, Yosemite National Park.

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Fig. 5.37 R.Y. Young, [*California Camera Club Outing*], 1902, detail from a stereograph by the American Stereoscopic Company. Retrieved from Peter E. Palmquist, “100 Years of California Photography: Women Innovators and Their Contributions, 1850-1950,” in *Women Artists of the American West*, edited by Susan R. Ressler (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2003), p. 210.

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Fig. 5.38 [unknown], *The Nation's Chief Before the Forest King – President Roosevelt in Big Tree Grove, Santa Cruz, California*, Underwood & Underwood Publishers, 1903. (LC-USZ62-116511) Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

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Fig. 5.39, Fig. 5.40 “The Eastern Print Exhibit,” *Camera Craft* 2, no. 3 (1901): 231-233.
Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 5.40

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Fig. 5.41 Arnold Genthe, *On the Rim of the Yosemite*, n.d. Frontispiece to Alfred Stieglitz, “The Photo-Secession – Its Objects,” *Camera Craft* 7, no. 3 (1903): 81. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 5.42 [extract] Albert J. LeBreton, “The First American Photographic Salon,” *Camera Craft* 10, no. 5 (1905): 279. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 5.43 Anne Brigman, *Soul of the Blasted Pine*, platinum print, 1907. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1933 (33.43.111), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Reproduced in *Camera Work* 25, no. 1 (1909).

Chapter 6

Creating “representative Western pictures”: Spanish missions, Native American settlements, and San Francisco’s Chinatown in the corpus of the California Camera Club

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Fig. 6.1

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Fig. 6.1, Fig. 6.2 William E. Dasonville, *[untitled]*, ca. 1908. In Charles S. Aiken, “Upon the King’s Highway,” *Sunset* 21 (1908): 713, 701. Retrieved from Hathitrust Digital Library, original from University of Minnesota.

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Fig. 6.3 William E. Dasonville, *The Cloister at the Mission of San Juan Capistrano*, platinum print, 1908. In *California Mission Views* (1908), (BANC PIC 2007.058--ffALB, Vol. 1), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 6.4 William E. Dasonville, *The Passing of Time – A Composition Arranged at San Luis Rey Mission*, platinum print, 1908. In *California Mission Views* (1908), (BANC PIC 2007.058--ffALB, Vol. 2), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 6.5 William E. Dasonville, *Hand Illuminated Books at the Mission of Saint Luis Rey*, platinum print, 1908. In *California Mission Views* (1908), (BANC PIC 2007.058--ffALB, Vol. 2), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 6.6, Fig. 6.7 Harry Putnam, "Mission Saint Xavier de Bac," *Camera Craft* 1, no. 3 (1900): 118-121. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 6.7

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Fig. 6.8 George Wharton James, *The Dance in Full Swing*, ca. 1902. In George Wharton James, “The Snake Dance of the Hopis,” *Camera Craft* 6, no. 1 (1902): 7. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 6.9 Frederic Hamer Maude, *[snake dance of Moki Indians]*, gelatin silver print, ca. 1899. (LOT 12883 (F)), Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

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Fig. 6.10 [cover] Frederick I. Monsen, *With a Kodak in the Land of the Navajo* (Rochester: Eastman Kodak Company, 1909). The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 6.11 Frederick I. Monsen, *A Study in Bronze*, mounted photographic print, ca. 1907. (LOT 12774 (F)) Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

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Fig. 6.12 [cover] Henry R. Knapp, *Chinatown*, 1889. Gift of Muriel Wolverton in memory of Thomas Patrick Andrews, (1999.21.94.1-13). Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, Legion of Honor Museum, San Francisco.

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Fig. 6.13 Memorabilia from T.P. Andrews, clipping from *S.F. Daily*, 1889, showing T.P. Andrews with camera (seated) and Jesse B. Cook (far left). Gift of Muriel Wolverton in memory of Thomas Patrick Andrews, (1999.125.15). Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, Legion of Honor Museum, San Francisco.

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Fig. 6.14 [T.P. Andrews], *A Quiet Smoke*, ca. 1889. In *Chinatown* (San Francisco: Henry R. Knapp, 1889). Gift of Muriel Wolverton in memory of Thomas Patrick Andrews, (1999.21.94.12). Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, Legion of Honor Museum, San Francisco.

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Fig. 6.15 [T.P. Andrews], *Sleeping-off Opium*, ca. 1889. In *Chinatown* (San Francisco: Henry R. Knapp, 1889). Gift of Muriel Wolverton in memory of Thomas Patrick Andrews, (1999.21.94.1). Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, Legion of Honor Museum, San Francisco.

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Fig. 6.16 [T.P. Andrews], *Oldest Inhabitant, 96. Lives on Opium Smoke Only*, ca. 1889. In *Chinatown* (San Francisco: Henry R. Knapp, 1889). Gift of Muriel Wolverton in memory of Thomas Patrick Andrews (1999.21.94.11). Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, Legion of Honor Museum, San Francisco.

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Fig. 6.17 [extract] Arnold Genthe, “The Children of Chinatown,” *Camera Craft* 2, no. 2 (1900): 102-103. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 6.18 Charles Weidner, *The Cobbler*, ca. 1900. Frontispiece of *Camera Craft* 1, no. 1 (1900). Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

Chapter 7

The California Camera Club after the catastrophe: losses and forms of material recovery

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Fig. 7.1 W.J. Street, [*fire viewed from street level*], photographic print, 1906. (BANC PIC 1958.021 Vol. 1: 5--fALB), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 7.2, Fig. 7.3, Fig. 7.4, Fig. 7.5, Fayette J. Clute, “With Earthquake and Fire,” *Camera Craft* 12, no. 4 (1906): 150-153. Retrieved from Hathitrust Digital Library, original from University of Chicago.

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Fig. 7.3

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Fig. 7.4

élément sous droit, diffusion non autorisée

Fig. 7.5

élément sous droit, diffusion non autorisée

Fig. 7.6 [unknown], *[Academy of Science interior view]*, 1906. San Francisco Historical Photograph Collection (Negative #2721), San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 7.7 Charles Weidner, *San Francisco — one year after. The beginning of new and greater San Francisco showing a large amount of reconstruction in the heart of the city. Millions of dollars spent to make San Francisco one of the finest cities in the world*, 1906. (BANC PIC 19xx.169:074--AX), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 7.8 Arnold Genthe, *Looking down Sacramento Street*, gelatin silver print, 1906. (LC-DIGds-07750), Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

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Fig. 7.9 [unknown], *Camera Craft's Former Home [...] 819 Market Street, April 19th, 1906*, 1906.
Frontispiece of *Camera Craft* 12, no. 4 (1906). Retrieved from Hathitrust Digital Library, original from University of Chicago.

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Fig. 7.10 [unknown], *Carleton E. Watkins [with cane, during aftermath of earthquake, April 18, 1906]*, photographic print, 1906. (Watkins, Carleton E.--POR 1), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 7.11 [extract] “California Camera Club,” *Camera Craft* 10, no. 4 (1905): 245. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 7.12 Dr. H. D'Arcy Power, *An Impression*, 1906. In Dr. H. D'Arcy Power, "Earthquake and Fire: From a Photographer's Viewpoint," *Camera Craft* 12, no. 4 (1906): 159. Retrieved from Hathitrust Digital Library, original from University of Chicago.

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Fig. 7.13 H.E. Poehlmann, *Picturesque Ruins of S.F., City Hall*, glass plate, 1906. No. 93 in Lantern Slide Collection of the California Camera Club, Los Angeles Public Library.

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Fig. 7.14 O.V. Lange, *Donahue Fountain, Market Street, Opposite First*, 1906. Cover of *Camera Craft* 12, no. 5 (1906). San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 7.15 O.V. Lange, *The fire as seen from Berkeley, ten miles distant, on the second day*, 1906. In Charles S. Fee, "Men, Material and Money here for Greatest City," *Camera Craft* 12, no. 5 (1906): 216. San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 7.16 [extract] Arthur Inkersley, “An Amateur’s Experience of Earthquake and Fire,” *Camera Craft* 12, no. 5 (1906): 195. Retrieved from Hathitrust Digital Library, original from University of Chicago.

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Fig. 7.17, Fig. 7.18 [extract] Edgar A. Cohen, “With a Camera in San Francisco,” *Camera Craft* 12, no. 5 (1906): 187, 192. Retrieved from Hathitrust Digital Library, original from University of Chicago.

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Fig. 7.19 Arnold Genthe, [*Untitled (Portals of the Past)*], gelatin silver print, 1906, printed 1956. (James D. Phelan Bequest Fund. 1943.407.130.2), Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

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Fig. 7.20 Louis J. Stellmann, [*fire ravages earthquake damaged buildings*], photographic print, 1906. (#14,226), California History Room, California State Library.

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Fig. 7.21, Fig. 7.22 [extract] Louis J. Stellmann, “Through the Ruins with a Premoette,” *Camera Craft* 14, no. 1 (1907): 4-5. San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 7.23 [cover] Louis J. Stellmann, *Vanished Ruin Era. San Francisco's Classic Artistry of Ruin Depicted in Picture and Song* (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Son, 1910). Retrieved from the Internet Archive, California Digital Library.

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Fig. 7.24 Louis J. Stellmann, *Strawberry Hill Observatory*, n.d.. In Louis J. Stellmann, *Vanished Ruin Era. San Francisco's Classic Artistry of Ruin Depicted in Picture and Song* (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Son, 1910). Retrieved from the Internet Archive, California Digital Library.

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Fig. 7.25 [cover] Charles Keeler, *San Francisco Through Earthquake and Fire* (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company Publishers, 1906). Retrieved from Paul Elder & Company, www.paulelder.org.

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Fig. 7.26 H.S. Hooper, *The Sweep of the Fire – viewed from Twin Peaks*, 1906. Fold-out frontispiece of Keeler, *San Francisco Through Earthquake and Fire*. Retrieved from Paul Elder & Company, www.paulelder.org.

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Fig. 7.27 H.S. Hooper, *The Burning of San Francisco*, photographic print, 1906. (BANC PIC 2003.098:2--D), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 7.28 Oscar Maurer, *[portrait of Charles Keeler]*, photographic print, n.d. In *California Faces: Selections from the Bancroft Library Portrait Collection*, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 7.29 Oscar Maurer, *The Earthquake – Break on Filled Land Across Van Ness Avenue*, 1906. In Keeler, *San Francisco Through Earthquake and Fire*, p. 6. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from California State Library.

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Fig. 7.30 Oscar Maurer, *The Ruins – Total Devastation about St. Francis Church*, 1906. In Keeler, *San Francisco Through Earthquake and Fire*, p. 40. San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 7.31 Oscar Maurer, *The Exodus*, gelatin silver print, 1906. (A65.28.4), Oakland Museum of California.

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Fig. 7.32 O.V. Lange, *The Ruins – Old Safes at a Discount. California Street, looking West*, 1906. In Keeler, *San Francisco Through Earthquake and Fire*, p. 32. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from California State Library.

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Fig. 7.33 O.V. Lange, *Relief and Reconstruction – Refugees in Camp*, 1906. In Keeler, *San Francisco Through Earthquake and Fire*, p. 44. San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 7.34 Shaw and Shaw, *Relief and Reconstruction – A Breadline*, 1906. In Keeler, *San Francisco Through Earthquake and Fire*, p. 48. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from California State Library.

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Fig. 7.35 Arnold Genthe, *After the Fire, 1906*, 1906. In Arnold Genthe and Will Irwin, *Old Chinatown: A Book of Pictures* (New York: Mitchell Kennerly, 1913), p. 203. San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 7.36 R.J. Waters, *San Francisco rising from the ruins, April 18, 1907*, photographic print, 1907. (BANC PIC 19xx.169:062--PIC), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 7.37 Oscar Maurer, *Relief and Reconstruction – Clearing the Streets Before the Bricks are cold*, 1906. In Keeler, *San Francisco Through Earthquake and Fire*, p. 52. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from California State Library.

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Fig. 7.38 Turrill & Miller, *Blasting the walls, St. Ignatius Church. August 11, 1906*, photographic print, 1906. (BANC PIC 19xx.169:01--PIC), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 7.39 Turrill & Miller, *Unburned Section, Washington St. May 13, 1906*, photographic print, 1906. (BANC PIC 19xx.169:012--PIC), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 7.40 Turrill & Miller, *Down Market St. from Twin Peaks, May 28, 1906*, photographic print, 1906. (BANC PIC 19xx.169:007--PIC), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 7.41 Turrill & Miller, *Phelan Building under Construction*, mounted photographic print, ca. 1907. (#2008-1131), California History Room, California State Library.

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Fig. 7.42 Turrill & Miller, *Removing debris by car, June 7, 1906*, photographic print, 1906. (BANC PIC 19xx.169:017--PIC), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 7.43, Fig. 7.44 Charles Weidner and Edgar A. Cohen, photographic reproductions in Albert J. Le Breton, "The Camera Club's Yosemite Outing," *Camera Craft* 14, no. 7 (1907): 302-303, 306-307. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 7.44

élément sous droit, diffusion non autorisée

Fig. 7.45 [unknown], [*Yosemite Valley Railroad with California Camera Club Banner*], glass plate, n.d. No. 5 in Lantern Slide Collection of the California Camera Club, Los Angeles Public Library.

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Fig. 7.46 [unknown], [*California Camera Club at El Portal*], glass plate, n.d. No. 4 in Lantern Slide Collection of the California Camera Club, Los Angeles Public Library.

Chapter 8**Album-making in times of catastrophe: a new material culture through photography**

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Fig. 8.1 George R. Lawrence, *Photograph of San Francisco in ruins from Lawrence Captive Airship, 2000 feet above San Francisco Bay overlooking water front. Sunset over Golden Gate*, gelatin silver print, 1906. (LOT 5785, no. 15 (OSF)), Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

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Fig. 8.2 [unknown], *The spirit of patriotism helps them bear up happily after the great calamity*, photographic print, 1906. Album PA-11, (#FN35503), California Historical Society, San Francisco.

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Fig. 8.3 [unknown], *One of the well regulated streets in camp town*, photographic print, 1906. Album PA-11, (#FN35502), California Historical Society, San Francisco.

élément sous droit, diffusion non autorisée

Fig. 8.4 [unknown], *Some of the scenes of refugee life*, photographic print, 1906. Album PA-11, (#FN35504), California Historical Society, San Francisco.

élément sous droit, diffusion non autorisée

Fig. 8.5 [unknown], *Many times have we trodden this street*, photographic print, 1906. Album PA-11, (#FN35530), California Historical Society, San Francisco.

élément sous droit, diffusion non autorisée

Fig. 8.6 [unknown], *It was very startling to see Russian Hill from Powell and Washington*, photographic print, 1906. Album PA-11, (#FN35531), California Historical Society, San Francisco.

élément sous droit, diffusion non autorisée

Fig. 8.7 [unknown], *Dear old 926*, photographic print, 1906. Album PA-11, (#FN35528), California Historical Society, San Francisco.

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Fig. 8.8 [unknown], *Cooking in street, S.F. Cal. (After April 18, 1906.) (For several months.) I.C. Baron and his grandsons Schalk in front of 2409 Washington St.*, photo-postcard, 1906. (#FN34069), California Historical Society, San Francisco.

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Fig. 8.9 [unknown], *City Hall from Market St. A great example of corrupt ways*, photographic print, 1906. Album PA-11, (#FN35537), California Historical Society, San Francisco.

élément sous droit, diffusion non autorisée

Fig. 8.10 [unknown], *One time when money did not count. The offer of a million dollars by Spreckels to the firemen had no effect to save his mansion*, photographic print, 1906. Album PA-11, (#FN35513), California Historical Society, San Francisco.

élément sous droit, diffusion non autorisée

Fig. 8.11 [unknown], *Real Estate is booming on Van Ness*, photographic print, 1906. Album PA-11, (#FN35510), California Historical Society, San Francisco.

élément sous droit, diffusion non autorisée

Fig. 8.12 [unknown], *Looking down California St. from Powell St.*, photographic print, 1906. Album PA-25, (#FN35571), California Historical Society, San Francisco.

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Fig. 8.13 R.J. Waters, *No. 28. Fire on Third and Mission*, 1906. Album PA-25, (#FN35620), California Historical Society, San Francisco.

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Fig. 8.14 W.E. Worden, *[The Burning City as seen from Hopkins Art Institute]*, 1906. Album PA-25, (#FN35584), California Historical Society, San Francisco.

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Fig. 8.15 Pillsbury Picture Company, *The Burning of San Francisco, April 18, View from St. Francis Hotel*, 1906. Album PA-25, (#FN35616), California Historical Society, San Francisco.

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Fig. 8.16 W.J. Street, *[Looking down Market St. towards the Ferry]*, 1906. Album PA-25, (#35652), California Historical Society, San Francisco.

élément sous droit, diffusion non autorisée

Fig. 8.17 [unknown], *No. 610 Clay St.*, 1906. Album PA-25, (#35578), California Historical Society, San Francisco.

élément sous droit, diffusion non autorisée

Fig. 8.18 [unknown], *1200 Block North Side of Market St.*, 1906. Album PA-25, (#FN35591), California Historical Society, San Francisco.

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Fig. 8.19 Crittenden Van Wyck, [*page 5*], photographic print, 1908. In *Reconstruction Period of San Francisco After Great Earthquake and Fire, April 18-19-20, 1906, 5:16 a.m.* (SFP4) San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 8.20 Crittenden Van Wyck, *[detail of page 13]*, 1908. In *Reconstruction Period of San Francisco After Great Earthquake and Fire, April 18-19-20, 1906, 5:16 a.m.* (SFP4) San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 8.21 Crittenden Van Wyck, *[detail of page 14]*, 1908. In *Reconstruction Period of San Francisco After Great Earthquake and Fire, April 18-19-20, 1906, 5:16 a.m.* (SFP4) San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 8.22 Charles Weidner, *Camp 6, Speedway, G.G. Park*, photographic print, 1906. Page 3 in *Relief Camps for Refugees from the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire* (BANC PIC 1933.006--ALB), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 8.23 Charles Weidner, *Camp 9. Lobos Square*, photographic print, 1906. Page 4 in *Relief Camps for Refugees from the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire* (BANC PIC 1933.006--ALB), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 8.24 Charles Weidner, *Camp 9. Lobos Sq. Sterilized water*, photographic print, 1906. Page 5 in *Relief Camps for Refugees from the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire* (BANC PIC 1933.006--ALB), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 8.25 Charles Weidner, *Camp Ingleside*, photographic print, 1906. Page 18 in *Relief Camps for Refugees from the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire* (BANC PIC 1933.006--ALB), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 8.26 Charles Weidner, *Camp Ingleside – Reading Room*, photographic print, 1906. Page 23 in *Relief Camps for Refugees from the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire* (BANC PIC 1933.006--ALB), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 8.27 Charles Weidner, *Camp Ingleside – Bed-Room*, photographic print, 1906. Page 21 in *Relief Camps for Refugees from the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire* (BANC PIC 1933.006--ALB), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 8.28 Charles Weidner, *Home of the Aged*, photographic print, 1906. Page 25 in *Relief Camps for Refugees from the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire* (BANC PIC 1933.006--ALB), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 8.29, Fig. 8.30 Charles Weidner, *San Francisco of Yesterday and To-day*, 1906. (F869.S3.93.W45), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 8.31 Charles Weidner, *San Francisco – one year after. The beginning of new and greater San Francisco showing a large amount of reconstruction in the heart of the city. Millions of dollars spent to make San Francisco one of the finest cities in the world*, 1907. (BANC PIC 19xx.169:074--AX), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 8.32 Edward N. Sewell, *California Street N. from Market St.*, photographic print, 1908. Page 5 in *San Francisco: A Few Views Showing Progress in Reconstruction Two Years after the Great Conflagration*, (917.9461 S516), California History Room, California State Library, Sacramento.

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Fig. 8.33 Edward N. Sewell, *Market and Post Streets, Looking West*, photographic print, 1909. Page 3 in *New San Francisco: Three Years after the Great Conflagration*, (BANC PIC 1933.007--ALB), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 8.34 Edward N. Sewell, *Market and O'Farrell Streets. Phelan Building*, photographic print, 1909. Page 9 in *New San Francisco: Three Years after the Great Conflagration*, (BANC PIC 1933.007--ALB), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 8.35 Edward N. Sewell, *Montgomery, Market, Post and New Montgomery Streets, South*, photographic print, 1909. Page 5 in *New San Francisco: Three Years after the Great Conflagration*, (BANC PIC 1933.007--ALB), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 8.36 Edward N. Sewell, *North Side of Post St. at Grant Ave.*, photographic print, 1909. Page 23 in *New San Francisco: Three Years after the Great Conflagration*, (BANC PIC 1933.007--ALB), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 8.37 Edward N. Sewell, *Market St. West from Phelan Building*, photographic print, 1909. Page 11 in *New San Francisco: Three Years after the Great Conflagration*, (BANC PIC 1933.007--ALB), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
NB: The tallest building on the left with the white façade is the Commercial Building. Its upper floor was occupied by the California Camera Club at the time that the photograph was taken.

Chapter 9
The Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915 and the redefinition of the California Camera Club in a new decade

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Fig. 9.1 [cover] Paul Elder, *California the Beautiful. Camera Studies by California Artists; with Selections in Prose and Verse from Western Writers* (San Francisco: Elder and Company, 1911). Author's collection.

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Fig. 9.2 [cover] Paul Elder, *The Old Spanish Missions of California. An Historical and Descriptive Sketch by Paul Elder. Illustrated chiefly from Photographs by Western Artists.* (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company Publishers, 1913). Author's collection.

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Fig. 9.3 Oscar Maurer, *The Golden Gate*, n.d. Frontispiece in Elder, *California the Beautiful*. Author's collection.

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Fig. 9.4 O.V. Lange, *Berkeley Oaks*, n.d. In Elder, *California the Beautiful*, p. 48. Author's collection.

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Fig. 9.5 Arnold Genthe, *Old Chinatown*, n.d. In Elder, *California the Beautiful*, p. 44. Author's collection.

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Fig. 9.6 Adam Clark Vroman, *The Interior of the Chapel of Mission Dolores*, n.d. [left page] / E.N. Sewell, *Mission San Francisco de Asis (Dolores)*, n.d. [right page]. In Elder, *The Old Spanish Missions of California*, p. 24. Author's collection.

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Fig. 9.7 [unknown], *San Francisco Solano, From an Old Painting*. Courtesy of Charles B. Turrill, Esq., n.d. In Elder, *The Old Spanish Missions of California*, p. 88. Author's collection.

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Fig. 9.8 [cover] *First Annual California Camera Club*, edited by Maude E. Chase and Herman S. Hoyt (San Francisco: California Camera Club, 1912). The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 9.9 [extract] H.E. Poehlmann, "Our Club," in *First Annual California Camera Club*, p. 10-11. The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 9.10 Mervyn Silberstein, *President Edw. H. Kemp and Moving Picture Machine*, glass plate, ca. 1913. In Lantern Slide Collection of the California Camera Club, Los Angeles Public Library.

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Fig. 9.11 [unknown], *2nd California Camera Club Dance. Native Sons' Hall, S.F., Tues. Eve. Jan. 27, 1914, 140 couple*, gelatin silver print, 1914. (BANC PIC 2005.045), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 9.12 Edward H. Kemp, *Culebra Cut, Panama, May, 1912*, 1912. In *First Annual California Camera Club*, p. 43. The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 9.13 Mervyn Silberstein, *Mrs. E.H. Kemp, of the C.C.C.*, glass plate, ca. 1913. In Lantern Slide Collection of the California Camera Club, Los Angeles Public Library.

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Fig. 9.14 Howard C. Tibbitts, *San Francisco – Looking up Market Street at Post*, n.d. Plate 7 in *San Francisco, California: Site of the Proposed Panama-Pacific International Exposition, 1915, Celebrating the Completion of the Panama Canal* (San Francisco: Panama-Pacific International Exposition Co., ca. 1910-1911). Getty Research Institute, Getty Center, Los Angeles.

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Fig. 9.15 Howard C. Tibbitts, *San Francisco – in Golden Gate Park*, n.d. Plate 8 in *San Francisco, California: Site of the Proposed Panama-Pacific International Exposition, 1915*. Getty Research Institute, Getty Center, Los Angeles.

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Fig. 9.16 Howard C. Tibbitts, *San Francisco – in the fashionable café and theater district*, n.d. Plate 9 in *San Francisco, California: Site of the Proposed Panama-Pacific International Exposition, 1915*. Getty Research Institute, Getty Center, Los Angeles.

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Fig. 9.17 Howard C. Tibbitts, *San Francisco – Chinatown*, n.d. Plate 10 in *San Francisco, California: Site of the Proposed Panama-Pacific International Exposition, 1915*. Getty Research Institute, Getty Center, Los Angeles.

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Fig. 9.18 Howard C. Tibbitts, *On Mount Tamalpais*, n.d. Plate 16 in *San Francisco, California: Site of the Proposed Panama-Pacific International Exposition, 1915*. Getty Research Institute, Getty Center, Los Angeles.

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Fig. 9.19 Howard C. Tibbitts, *The Tree Wawona*, n.d. Plate 18 in *San Francisco, California: Site of the Proposed Panama-Pacific International Exposition, 1915*. Getty Research Institute, Getty Center, Los Angeles.

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Fig. 9.20 Walter A. Scott, *The Grand Canyon of the Colorado*, n.d. Plate 23 in *San Francisco, California: Site of the Proposed Panama-Pacific International Exposition, 1915*. Getty Research Institute, Getty Center, Los Angeles.

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Fig. 9.21 Dr. Percy Neymann, *Arcade Italian Court*, glass plate, 1916. California Camera Club Lantern Slide Collection of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition (Box 1), San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco History Center.

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Fig. 9.22 Louis J. Stellmann, *Court Verrochio [sic] ... Italian Bldg.*, glass plate, 1916. California Camera Club Lantern Slide Collection of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition (Box 1), San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco History Center.

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Fig. 9.23 Dr. E.O. Jellinek, *Arch of the Setting Sun. Night.*, glass plate, 1916. California Camera Club Lantern Slide Collection of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition (Box 1), San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco History Center.

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Fig. 9.24 Dr. E.O. Jellinek, *Arch of the Setting Sun by Night*, 1916. In Frank Morton Todd, *The Story of the Exposition*, Vol. 2 (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 1921), p. 178. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 9.25 Dr. E.O. Jellinek, *Entrance to Colonnade, Pal. Fine Arts, Night.*, glass plate, 1916. California Camera Club Lantern Slide Collection of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition (Box 2), San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco History Center.

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Fig. 9.26 Dr. E.O. Jellinek, *Lights and Shadows*, 1916. In Todd, *The Story of the Exposition*, Vol. 2, p. 238. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 9.27 Dr. E.O. Jellinek, *Reflected Radiance*, 1916. In Todd, *The Story of the Exposition*, Vol. 3, p. 50. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 9.28 [cover] Louis J. Stellmann, *That was a Dream worth building: The Spirit of San Francisco's Great Fair Portrayed in Picture and Words. Reproductions from the Author's exclusive Camera Studies as colored by Edith Kinney Stellmann* (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Company Publishers, 1916). Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from the Getty Research Institute.

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Fig. 9.29 Louis J. Stellmann, *The Exposition at Dusk*, ca. 1915. In *That was a Dream worth building*, p. 4-5. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from the Getty Research Institute.

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Fig. 9.30 Louis J. Stellmann, [*Palace of Fine Arts*], photographic print, 1915. In Panama-Pacific International Exposition photograph album, p. 29, (#2011-2292), California History Room, California State Library.

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Fig. 9.31 Louis J. Stellmann, [*colonnade, Palace of Fine Arts*], photographic print, 1915. In Panama-Pacific International Exposition photograph album, p. 27, (#2011-2056), California History Room, California State Library.

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Fig. 9.32 Louis J. Stellmann, *A Misty Day in the Fine Arts Colonnade, and a Glimpse of the Half Dome Doorway in Palace of Education*, ca. 1915. In *That was a Dream worth building*, p. 16-17. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from the Getty Research Institute.

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Fig. 9.33 Louis J. Stellmann, [*construction site, Palace of Transportation*], photographic print, 1915. In Panama-Pacific International Exposition photograph album, p. 48, (#2011-1998), California History Room, California State Library.

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Fig. 9.34 [unknown], [*Demolition of the Court of the Universe*], photographic print, 1916. San Francisco Historical Photograph Collection (#AAE-0284), San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 9.35 [unknown], [*Fall of the Arch of the Rising Sun*], photographic print, ca. 1916. San Francisco Historical Photograph Collection (#AAE-0283), San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 9.36 Louis A. Goetz, *Somewhere in California*, n.d.

In John Paul Edwards, "The California Salon," *Camera Craft* 24, no. 1 (1917): 10. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 9.37 Dr. Percy Neymann,

A Dance for you: Old Cerberus!, n.d. In John Paul Edwards, "The California Salon," *Camera Craft* 24, no. 1 (1917): 12. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 9.38 William E. Dasonville, *Trees, San Francisco, Russ Building under Construction*, silver print on Charcoal Black Paper, ca. 1925.

Courtesy of Michael S. Whalen, Pasadena, California. Reproduced in *William E. Dasonville: California Photographer, 1879-1957*, eds. Susan Herzig and Paul Hertzmann (Nevada City: Carl Mautz Pub., 1999), p. 65.

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Fig. 9.39 William E. Dasonville, *Oil Refinery, Richmond, California*, silver print on Charcoal Black Paper, ca. 1925.
Courtesy of Michael G. & Jane Wilson. Reproduced in *William E. Dasonville: California Photographer, 1879-1957*, p. 67.

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Fig. 9.40 [extract] Sigismund Blumann, "Hanging Salon Prints," *Camera Craft* 29, no. 8 (1922): 379. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 9.41 Imogen Cunningham, *Glacial Lily*, gelatin silver print, 1927. (72.1940), The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Copyright 2018 Estate of Imogen Cunningham.

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Fig. 9.42 Edward Weston, *Shells*, gelatin silver print, 1927. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, The Henry Swift Collection, gift of Florence Alston Swift. Copyright 1981 Center for Creative Photography, Arizona Board of Regents.

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Fig. 9.43 [extract] Sigismund Blumann, "Our Japanese Brother Artists," *Camera Craft* 32, no. 3 (1925): 109. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 9.44 “Ghosts to meet on Halloween at Camera Club,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 22, 1916, p. 36. Retrieved from California Digital Newspaper Collection.

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Fig. 9.45 [advertisement], California Camera Club Yosemite Excursion. In *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 6, 1917, p. 36. Retrieved from California Digital Newspaper Collection. NB: see lower right corner.

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Fig. 9.46 [extract] *California Camera Club Calendar*, April 1918. Ephemera collection of the California Camera Club, California State Library.

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Fig. 9.47 [unknown], *C.C.C. Family I*, glass plate, ca. 1919. No. 10 in Lantern Slide Collection of the California Camera Club, Los Angeles Public Library.

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Fig. 9.48 [unknown], *[no title]*, glass plate, ca. 1919. No. 13 in Lantern Slide Collection of the California Camera Club, Los Angeles Public Library.

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Fig. 9.49 [unknown], *Yosemite / In Our Garden*, n.d. No. 266, 267 in Photograph album with photographs documenting California Camera Club Outings, 1917-1924, Vol. 1 (photCL 438). The Huntington Library, San Marino.

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Fig. 9.50 [R.W. Diedrickson], *C.C.C. Christmas Tree, Dec. 27, 1917*, 1917. No. 104 in Photograph album with photographs documenting California Camera Club Outings, 1917-1924, Vol. 1 (photCL 438). The Huntington Library, San Marino.

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Fig. 9.51 [unknown], *Valentine Yama Yama Party, California Camera Club, S.F., Feb. 25, 1919*, 1919. No. 345 in Photograph album with photographs documenting California Camera Club Outings, 1917-1924, Vol. 2 (photCL 438). The Huntington Library, San Marino.

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Fig. 9.52 [unknown], *Scenes in Golden Gate Park*, n.d. No. 112, 113 in Photograph album with photographs documenting California Camera Club Outings, 1917-1924, Vol. 1 (photCL 438). The Huntington Library, San Marino.

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Fig. 9.53 [unknown], *[Portals of the Past, Golden Gate Park]*, n.d. No. 295 in Photograph album with photographs documenting California Camera Club Outings, 1917-1924, Vol. 1 (photCL 438). The Huntington Library, San Marino.

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Fig. 9.54 [unknown], *Sacramento, June 1918*, 1918. No. 176 in Photograph album with photographs documenting California Camera Club Outings, 1917-1924, Vol. 1 (photCL 438). The Huntington Library, San Marino.

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Fig. 9.55 [unknown], *Alcatraz & S.F. Bay, June 29, 1919*, Tiburon, 1919. No. 355, 356, 357, 358 in Photograph album with photographs documenting California Camera Club Outings, 1917-1924, Vol. 2 (photCL 438). The Huntington Library, San Marino.

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Fig. 9.56

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Fig. 9.56, Fig. 9.57 Program of personally conducted Yosemite tour with the California Camera Club, copy sent to Sutro Library branch of California State Library, June 12, 1919. Ephemera collection of the California Camera Club, California State Library.

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Fig. 9.58 Ansel Adams, *Palace of Fine Arts*, gelatin silver print, 1915.

David H. Arrington Collection.

Reproduced in James A. Ganz, "Exposing Photography at the Fair," in *Jewel City: Art from San Francisco's Panama-Pacific International Exposition*, edited by James A. Ganz (San Francisco and Berkeley: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and University of California Press, 2015), p. 248.

Epilogue

The “good old California Camera Club” and the institutionalization of photography in the 1930s

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Fig. 10.1

Paul Strand, *Panama-Pacific Exposition*, platinum print processed with mercury, 1915. (1995.36.113) Patron’s Permanent Fund, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Paul Strand, *Wall Street*, platinum/palladium print, 1915, printed 1977. (1992.96.2) Gift of Michael E. Hoffman, New York, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

Reproduced in James A. Ganz, “Exposing Photography at the Fair,” in *Jewel City: Art from San Francisco’s Panama-Pacific International Exposition*, p. 249.

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10.2 Karl A. Baumgaertel, *Curves*, n.d., verso. (BANC PIC 2001.088--ffALB, Box 1), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 10.3 Arnold Genthe, *untitled [View of Fire Down Sacramento Street]*, gelatin silver print, 1906, printed 1956. (1943.407.2.3) Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, Legion of Honor Museum, San Francisco.

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Fig. 10.4 [unknown], *[untitled] [Oscar Mauer exhibition, Oakland Art Museum, February 1965]*, gelatin silver print, 1965. (2008.6.1.148), Oakland Museum of California.

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Fig. 10.5 W.E. Dasonville, *Don Oliver*, n.d. Frontispiece of *Camera Craft* 46, no. 11 (1939). Retrieved from the Internet Archive, original from San Francisco Public Library.

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Fig. 10.6 [unknown], [*California Camera Club at Jeffrey Pine, Sentinel Dome, Sierra Nevada*], photographic print, ca. 1914-1920. (BANC PIC 2005.045), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fig. 10.7 [unknown], [*Charles Weidner on mule in Yosemite*], ca. 1901. Private collection of Robert Weidner, San Francisco.

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Fig. 10.8 Charles Weidner, [*Yosemite souvenir*], n.d. Private collection of Robert Weidner, San Francisco.

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Fig. 10.9 Louis J. Stellmann, *Edward Weston & daughter-in-law at Carmel Highland*, photographic print, 1946. (#17,425), California History Room, California State Library.

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Fig. 10.10 [cover] *View Finder* 22, no. 6 (1944). (BEIN Zc72 +V67), From the library of Peter E. Palmquist, Western Americana Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

