



# Pardee Home Museum Newsletter

Spring 1994

Volume 1 Issue 1

## Valentine's Day Event Illuminates Early Pardee Courtship

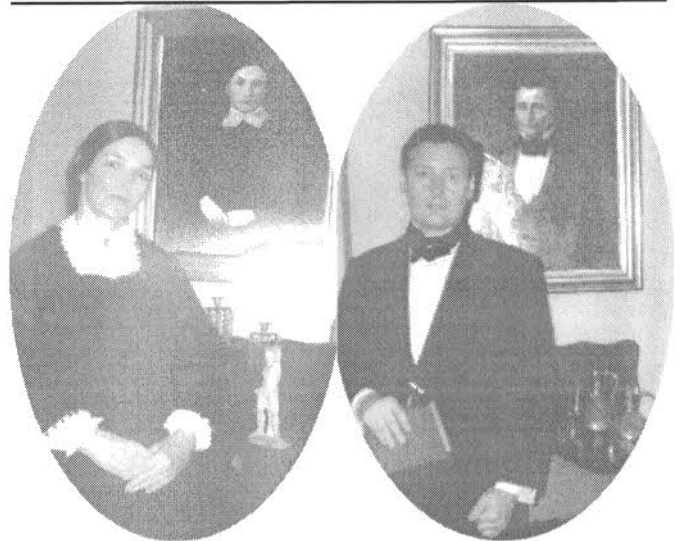
**T**he music room at the Pardee Home was the site of a performance by members of the Corinthian League, a group devoted to recreating historical events through events and performances. Reading excerpts from letters, actors Cherie Morrison, David Dobbs, and Paul Anders treated the audience to an astoundingly authentic portrayal of Enoch Pardee, his wife, Mary, and their son George.

The actors script was culled from letters written by Enoch and Mary during their long-distance courtship in the 1850's and from a series of journal entries by George in 1885.

Enoch Pardee arrived in California in 1852. He and Mary kept up a regular correspondence from 1848 until 1855. That year she made the journey to California in 1855 to be finally wed to the man she loved through letters but whom she had not seen in seven years.

Living in our current technological age we can hardly imagine the tremendous effort of communication and travel that these two experienced. Yet, the aspirations and the frustrations in the letters was aptly dramatized in the performance: *"Perhaps in my dreams I shall be blessed with your presence. Oh! How often have I wept over you when you were restored to me in my dreams."*

Literary readings were quite popular in the 19th-century. This event, organized by museum staff and volunteers, is an effort to recreate this early form of entertainment. The success of this event ensures the likelihood more literary events will be offered in the future.



The actors, Cherie Morrison and David Dobbs pose in front of 1855 portraits of Enoch & Mary Pardee by Charles Christian Nahl.

## Gerstacker Foundation is presented with plaque

**A**pril 19 marks the day that the Rollin M. Gerstacker Foundation of Midland, Michigan was recognized for their generous support of the Pardee Home Museum. A plaque was presented to Mr. E.N. Brandt, a board member of the Gerstacker Foundation and a recent appointee to the Pardee Home Foundation Board.

The Gerstacker Foundation has most recently committed \$78,000 to the Museum in support of the Archives Access Project. This is a four year project that will promote the use of the museum archives by researchers.

*"When this you see remember me though many miles apart, I will it's true remember thee, And bring you to my heart."*

PARDEE HOME  
MUSEUM  
672 ELEVENTH  
STREET  
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(510 444-2187)

Join us in June for a Father's Day picnic on the Pardee Home grounds. See page 4 for details...

## Collection Spotlight

# Watkins Lamp Prominent Feature at Pardee Home

**C**arlton Emmons Watkins, known as "Prince of Photographers", was born in 1829 in Oneonta, New York. He first became involved with photography and the Daguerrotype process at the age of twenty-five when he replaced a portrait photographer in a San Francisco studio. Not until four years later in 1858 did he photograph outdoors. Throughout his early career Watkins was hired by litigants in court cases to photograph mining sites where there were disputes about property lines.

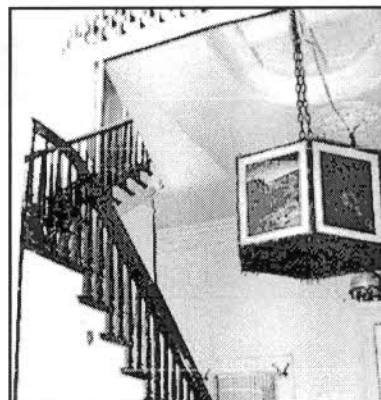
Even though he earned his living as a portrait and court photographer, Carleton Watkins was a landscape photographer at heart. He photographed all twenty-one Missions in California, as well as views from Mariposa Grove, Mount Shasta and Lake Tahoe, and in other Southwestern states including Montana, Arizona and Nevada. Watkins was most well known, however, from his images of Yosemite. His photos of Yosemite were significant not only because they were some of the first taken by a professional photographer, but also because they had influenced the U.S. Congress to turn Yosemite into a national park.

Working on location in Yosemite was an arduous task. Watkins had to transport all his equipment on mules, including his cameras, his glass plates, which required special care so they wouldn't crack or shatter, as well as water and solutions so he could later develop his mammoth plates on site.

Watkins worked with wet-collodion photography, a process by which he could produce highly detailed images, but was a painstaking one to accomplish outdoors. First, the 18 by 22 inch plates needed to be coated with liquid collodion, which consisted of potassium iodide and guncotton dissolved in ether, and then the plate would be immediately sensitized with silver nitrate. Watkins would then carefully carry the wet plate to the camera, preventing dust particles settling on the plate, or light exposing it. After one or two minutes of exposure time in the camera, the plate would be taken to a dark tent to be further processed.

Watkins enjoyed more than twenty years of success before he started to go bankrupt. In 1867 he opened the Yosemite Art Gallery at 425 Montgomery Street in San Francisco. The following year he won the only gold medal awarded for his landscape photographs at the Paris Exposition. In 1889 he opened a sales room in the Palace Hotel.

Several factors led to Carleton Watkins' bankruptcy. The advent of the gelatin dry plates, which made the plates sensitive enough for snapshot speeds, contributed to the development of hand held cameras and stereographs, and as a result, mass produced landscape photographs. The San Francisco earthquake and fire were most damaging to Watkins' career. The photographer, now



*Watkins' lamp has hung in the Pardee Home since 1907. It was a gift from the photographer to the Governor around 1903 and hung in the old Governor's mansion in Sacramento for a year before being transported to Oakland by train.*

77, had reached an agreement with Governor Pardee that the remains of his personal archive would be sold to the state of California. Charles B. Turrill, a friend of Watkins and a photographer himself, played an important role in communicating with Pardee on behalf of Watkins, by this time nearly blind. On April 15, 1906 a curator of Sutter's Fort Historical Museum was sent by Governor George Pardee to Watkins' gallery to assess the quality and condition of his photographs. Four days before his work was to be taken to Sacramento the earthquake had already destroyed them. The earthquake shattered all the plates in his studio, and what was left was burned by the fire.

Fortunately, the lamp that now hangs in the Pardee foyer was given to Governor Pardee around 1903 and therefore survived the tragic destruction. Watkins gave the lamp as a gift expressing his gratitude for Pardee's support in trying to get him back on his feet after bankruptcy.

The Watkins lamp is the only surviving memorial of Pardee's supportive efforts. Previously, it hung in the Governor's Mansion in Sacramento, but Pardee brought it to his Oakland residence in 1907 where it still remains hung in the foyer. It contains plates of his well-known Yosemite scenes. The lamp is truly a rare document from a brilliant photographer and visual historian of early California.

—Melissa Michelson

*Melissa is a spring intern at the Museum. She is currently a junior in the art history department at U.C. Berkeley.*

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**"The San Francisco earthquake and fire were the most damaging to Watkins career. The earthquake shattered all the [mammoth glass] plates in his studio, and what was left was burned by the fire."**

