



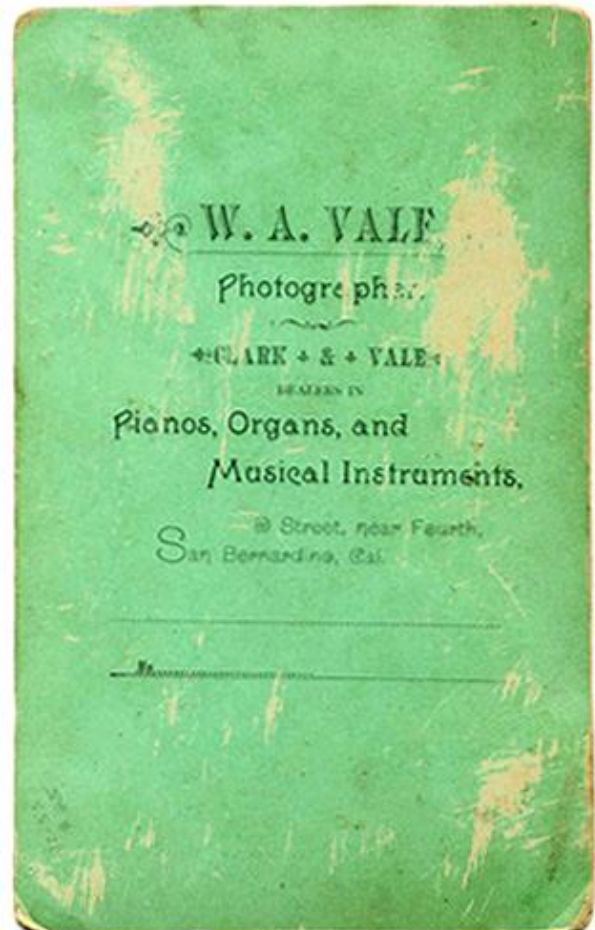
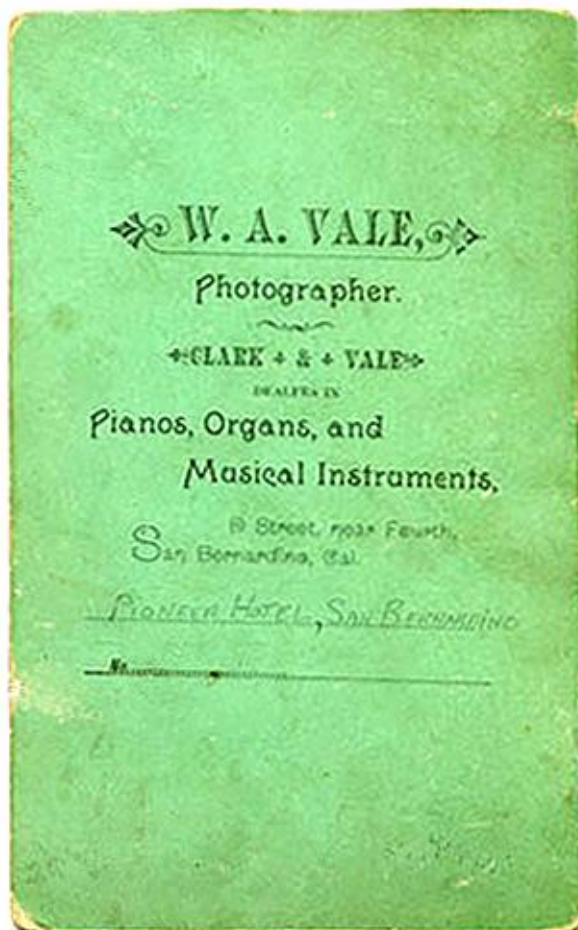
# City of San Bernardino Historical and Pioneer Society P.O. Box 875, San Bernardino, CA 92402

## **LIBRARY NEWS MARCH 2011**

By Richard D. Thompson, Librarian

### **WILLIAM ADAMS VALE AN 1800'S SAN BERNARDINO PHOTOGRAPHER**

The Historical and Pioneer Society recently purchased two pictures taken by William Adams Vale, a 19th Century San Bernardino photographer. The back of the photo cards are shown below, both of which prominently advertise the photographer W. A. Vale, followed secondarily by the firm of "Clark & Vale, Dealers in Pianos, Organs, and Musical Instruments." Neither of the photographs on the reverse side is of a San Bernardino structure (despite what someone has penned in on the card on the left), but they were obtained because, first of all, we want any original pictures by pioneer San Bernardino photographers, and secondly, we may be able to trade them someday for San Bernardino photos.



Unfortunately, Vale did not earn an entry into the encyclopedic book, *Pioneer Photographers of the Far West: A Biographical Dictionary, 1840-1865*, by Peter E. Palmquist and Thomas R. Kailbourn, Stanford University Press, 2000. This is the definitive work on the subject, but the authors drew the line at the year 1865, and Vale was only 18 at that time, although it is not known for sure when he began. He was born in 1847 (died 1932 in San Bernardino) and came to this area with his parents and brother in 1864, so theoretically he could have begun as a teenager, but that is highly unlikely. His parents stayed in San Bernardino for only two years before moving to Rincon, which is south of Chino, and did not return until 1872. In a brief biography appearing in Luther A. Ingersoll's *Century Annals of San Bernardino County*, photographer William Godfrey (who did make it into the book on pioneer photographers) is quoted as saying he sold his "viewing equipment" to "Adam Vail" in 1872. This has to be a mistaken entry for William Adams Vale. W. A. Vale is known to have been a partner with Godfrey, and we have a photograph of their studio (see page 34 below).

Local historian Arda M Haenszel prepared some notes on several photographers, and one entry contains the following:

I have an item from the S. B. Daily Times, Dec. 5, 1877, that says, "Vale's Photograph Gallery is now open, and is prepared to do all classes of work at low figures." Listed in [the] 1883 Directory, "Vale, W. A., photographer, pianos, organs, and insurance agent." In [the] 1887 Directory, "Vale, W. A., photographer, (Clark & Vale), D bet. 3rd & 4th." In 1889 and thereafter, he is listed, not as a photographer, but in the music business, and by 1895 he had ditched Clark, and had moved to 370 D St.

That last part which states he "moved to" 370 D Street may be incorrect. On the back of our photographs the address is written as "D Street near Fourth," which could be 370 D Street, so it is possible he was already at that location.

Also, W. A. Vale is listed in an 1875 city directory and his occupation is given as "photographer." Arda did not have access to that directory as it was only discovered in a coastal county library two or three years ago by Sue Payne, who copied it for local use.

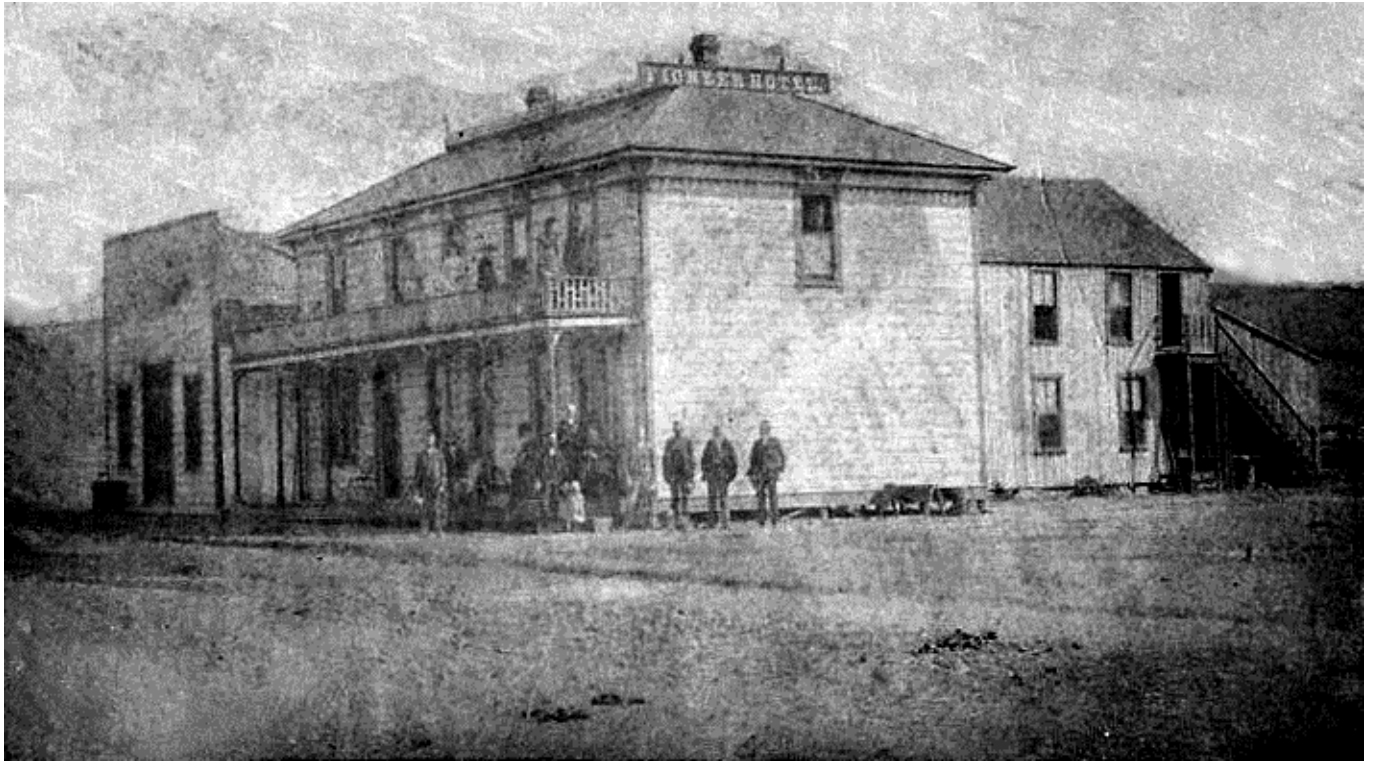
So why is all of this important? It is because we can roughly date our two mystery photographs based on his address and/or partners, or lack of partners. In 1872 he was in partnership with Godfrey, and it was sometime in that year that Godfrey sold his equipment and gallery and retired from the business. Vale was on his own for several years, and stamped on the back of his photos was "Vale's Art Gallery." In 1883 he had no partner, and the first we hear of Mr. Clark, of the "Clark & Vale" shown on the back of the photo cards above, is 1887. By 1889 he no longer was partnered with Clark. Ten years later, in 1899, there is a partnership known as "Vale and Pelligrin," or "Pelligrin and Vale," but nothing is known of this business as yet. Using this information, we can date our photographs to be from about 1884-1888.

The two photos are shown below. The quality of the pictures leaves something to be desired; they did not weather time very well.

The building in the first photo has a sign on top that reads "Pioneer Hotel." A hotel of this name is not known to have existed in San Bernardino. Arda Haenszel wrote a story on the subject for our *Odyssey* publication, and early city directories do not list one by that name.

The second photograph shows a man standing in front of a shack, probably a shed, and behind what looks like an irrigation ditch. A high resolution scan shows what appears to be the ocean in the background, with a wave breaking.

Since Vale is known only for his Southern California photographs, there are enough clues in these two photos to do some sleuthing, should anyone care to undertake the job.

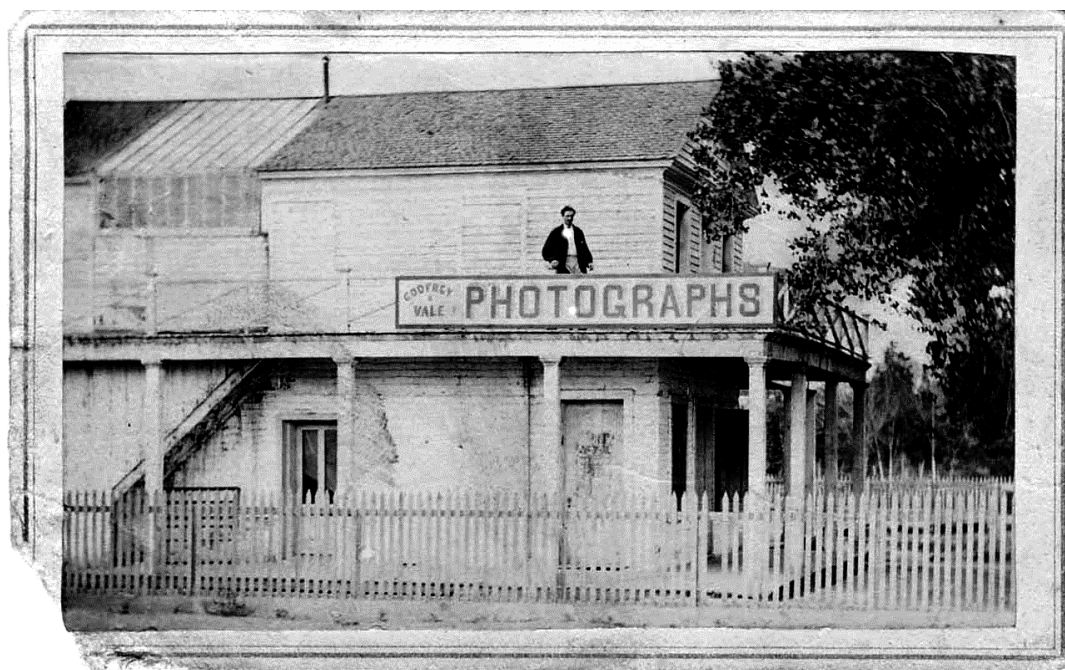


**Pioneer Hotel, unknown location, circa 1884-1888**

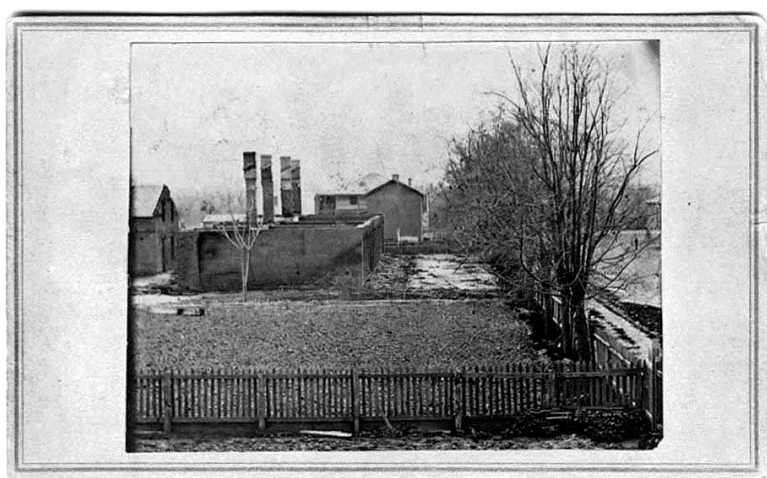


**Man standing behind ditch, possibly at beach, circa 1884-1888**

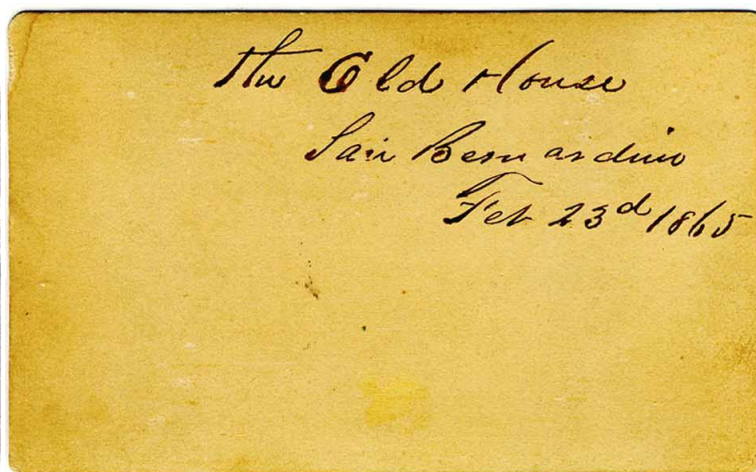
I have been intending to donate some Vale-Godfrey photographs from my own collection, and this seems to be an appropriate time. This first one probably dates to 1872. No later than that, although possibly earlier.



The sign reads Godfrey & Vale Photographs.  
San Bernardino, circa 1872.



Burnt remains of former Amasa Lyman house, 1865

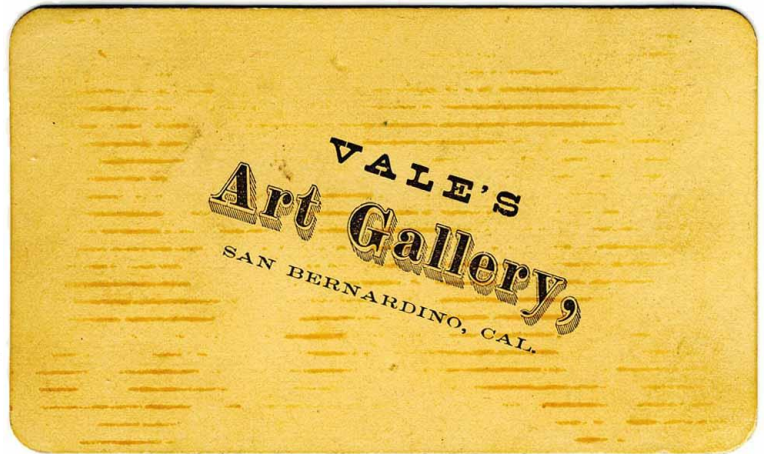


Back of Lyman house photo

This photo of the old Lyman House appears on page 215 of the first edition of George and Helen Beattie's *Heritage Of The Valley*, San Pascual Press, 1939. About 30 years ago Kate Beattie, George and Helen's daughter-in-law, sold me a box of photographs and papers and this photo was in it, so it is very likely the one used in the book. Mrs. Byron Waters, the daughter of John Brown, Sr., was given credit for supplying the photo for the book. I should also mention that three of the photographs being donated are all the same size, about the size and shape of most tintypes. I have scanned the photo side of the cards in greyscale so that details can be seen more clearly. This photo was probably shot by either Godfrey or Maurice Franklin, another pioneer San Bernardino photographer, who was a partner of Godfrey's in the mid-1860s, about the time this picture was taken.



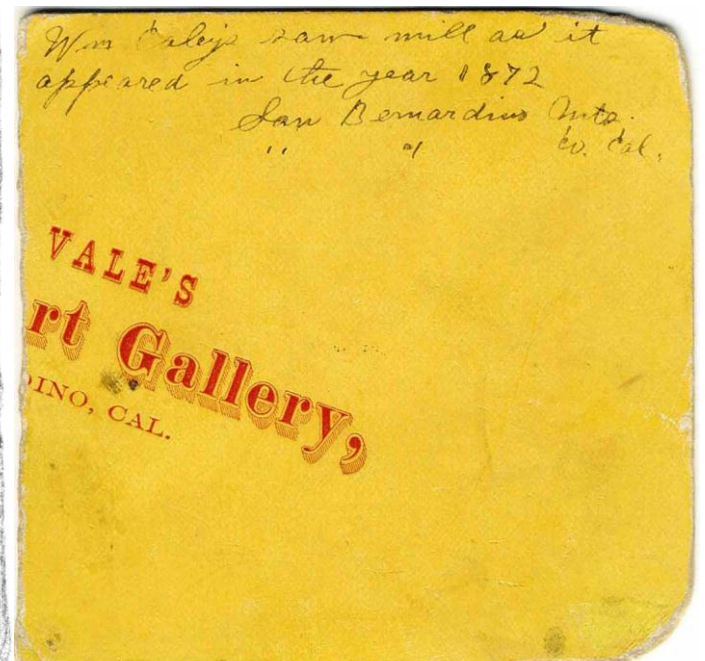
Commercial building on southwest corner of 3rd and D



Back of photo showing Vale's Art Gallery stamp

The Society has other photographs of this building, but not originals. Ginger Urquhart, a descendant of Sheldon Stoddard, brought in some originals last year that we scanned. The Stoddards have some family photographs taken in the early 1870s and one is a decent shot of the same building. A high-resolution scan allowed for an enlargement to the point that Vale's photography sign could be seen on the upper floor. Earlier, the upstairs studio had been the gallery of Maurice Franklin. Franklin went out of business about the same time as Godfrey, and so it would be instructive to know when Vale took over. Perhaps early newspaper advertisements would help.

The lines on the back of the card are from a photograph album I put it in decades ago. Fortunately, I spotted the problem before the entire collection was destroyed. At the time, I was quite disturbed that some photo album company put out a product that destroyed photographs. I have since seen other albums of the same make, and woe to any photos within.



William Caley's Little Bear Valley Saw Mill in the vicinity of today's Blue Jay in the San Bernardino Mountains

This photo of Caley's saw mill is dated 1872, and is the earliest example I have seen from Vale's Art Gallery. This particular picture is a stereo view that was torn in half, and was originally in the collection of George and Helen Beattie.



Apparently an independent music dealer could order a book with his firm's name on it

This music book is already in the possession of the Historical Society. It has been exhibited on an old organ in the Heritage House music room. I have added it here simply as an item of interest.

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