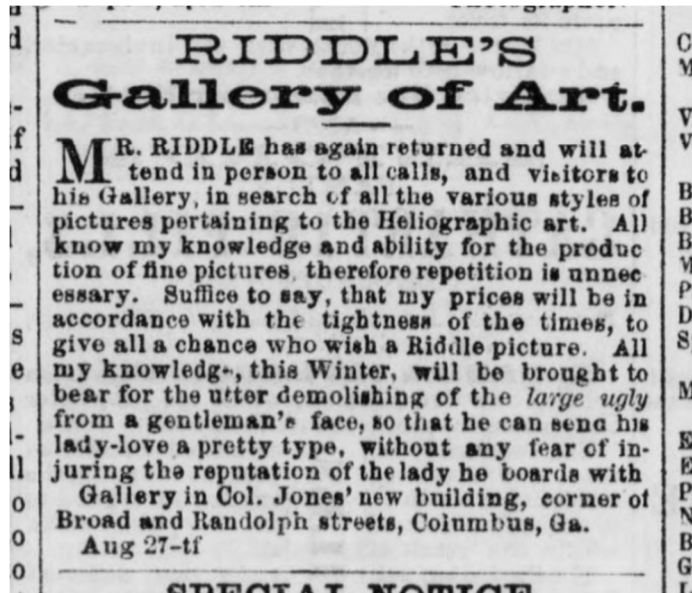
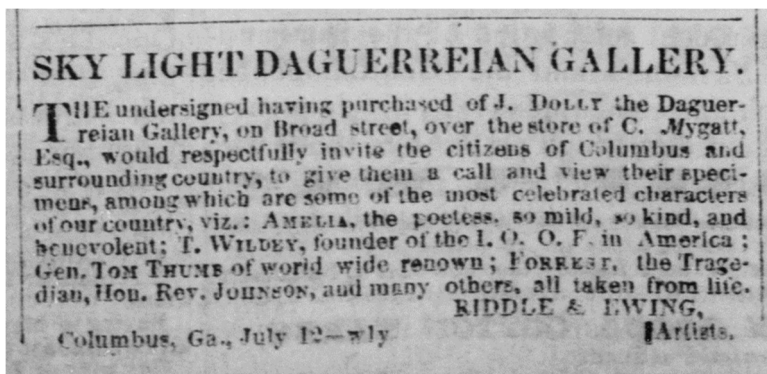


**Today in Columbus history, September 21, 1860**, an advertisement appeared in the *Columbus Sun* for Riddle's Gallery of Art. It seemed unassuming, even a little low key, at least graphically. It noted "Mr. Riddle has returned again and will attend in person to all calls," presumably instead of an assistant. It referred to "all the various styles of pictures pertaining to the Heliographic art," (meaning, "photographic"). He even promises competitive prices, "in accordance with the tightness of the times." But looking a little closer, we see hints that he might be not be quite so unassuming – especially, for example, when he says, "to give all a chance who wish a Riddle picture."



1 "Riddle's Gallery of Art," *Columbus Sun*, September 21, 1860

In fact, by 1860, Andrew J. Riddle (1825-1893) was quite a successful photographer in Georgia. After setting up a photography studio in 1851 in Baltimore, he came down to Columbus to open another by July 1852, taking over J. Dolly's Daguerreotype Gallery or "Sky Light Daguerreian Gallery" on Broad street, "over the store of C. Mygatt, Esq." Riddle set up photography studios and adjoining businesses ("ice cream saloons") in Columbus, Macon, Eufaula, and possibly Rome. In 1856 he married Anna P. Hunley from Harris County. Riddle went on to some renown in his century and in ours: most famously, he took the only images during the Civil War of the infamous Andersonville prison camp (Camp Sumter). Riddle was "the Confederacy's only confirmed official photographer" and he likely made the only photograph of the ironclad CSS Jackson, built at the Confederate Naval Shipyard in Columbus, before it was set on fire by Wilson's troops in April of 1865. (Davis, Bunn). Riddle also took a photograph of the arrival of the wagon train carrying Confederate president Jefferson Davis as a prisoner of the Federal army (Davis).



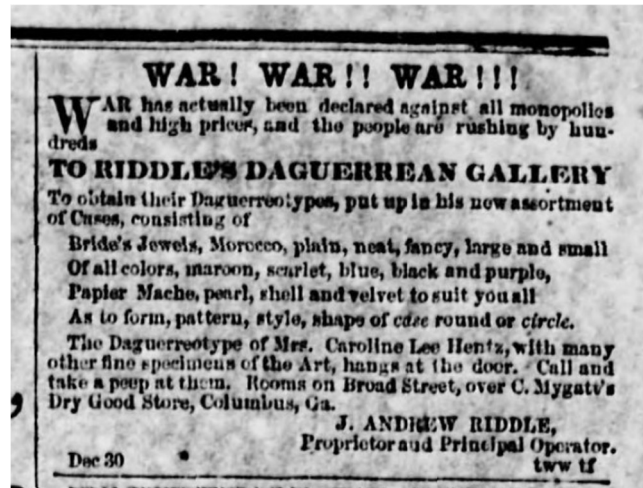
2 "Sky Light Daguerreian Gallery," *Columbus Tri-weekly Times and Sentinel*, July 16, 1853.

In his day, Riddle was known for making life-size prints of his subjects, for adding color to his work, and "especially for using three dimensional props to create realistic back grounds for his studio portraits." (Davis) Riddle's advertisements were "riddled" with clues about the characters he photographed, who he thought would appeal to his potential customers, including "Amelia, the poetess..., T. Wildey, founder of the I.O.O.F. in America (Independent Order of Odd

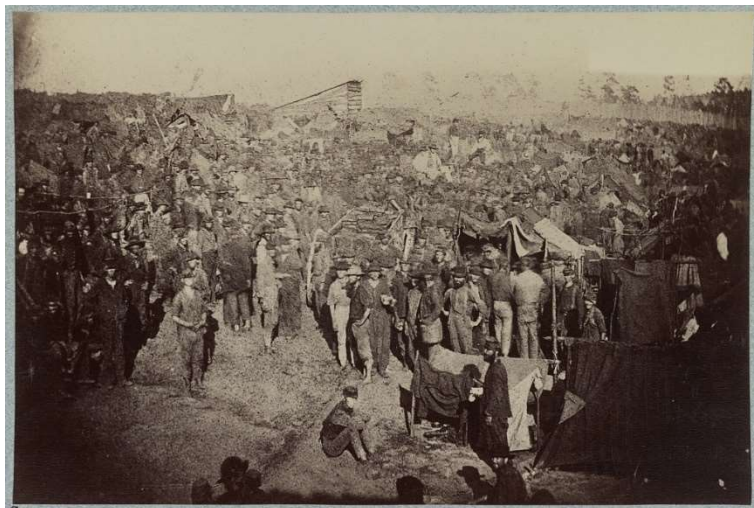
Fellows), Gen. Tom Thumb...Forrest the Tragedian [Edwin Forrest, a well-known 19th-century American Shakespearean actor]...and many others, all taken from life." (July 1853)

Evidently, his clients could dress up in or be surrounded by these props: "Bride's Jewels, Morocco...of all colors, maroon, scarlet... papier-mâché, pearl, shell and velvet to suit you all." He boasted a photo of the local celebrity author: "The Daguerreotype of Mrs. Caroline Lee Hentz...hangs at the door," taken before Mrs. Hentz wrote her novel *Linwood* (published 1856), (Jan. 1855). (See Callie McGinnis's post, Aug. 31, 2020.)

One gets the feeling in reading these ads that Mr. Riddle had a distinct and likeable personality, which must have contributed to his business success and popularity over the years. An editorial endorsement of his business in the *Macon Daily Telegraph*, May 27, 1869, refers to his "taste, energy, enterprise and desire to please." He added an "ice cream saloon" to several of his photography studios and did well for several years. His obituary in the *Macon Telegraph* (March 24, 1897) lauded him as "one of the pioneer photographers of the South. In thousands of homes in the South can be found samples of his skill as a photographer." Andrew J. Riddle is buried in Rose Hill Cemetery in Macon.



3 "War! War! War!," *Columbus Enquirer*, January 30, 1855



4 A.J. Riddle, "Andersonville Prison, Ga., August 17, 1864. Issuing rations, view from main gate," *Library of Congress*

To see the photograph of the ironclad C.S.S. Jackson, see Mike Bunn, "The Photograph of the C.S.S. Jackson in the Chattahoochee River at Columbus," *Muscogiana* vol. 22, no. 1, Spring 2011, 7. The remnants of the real thing are at the National Civil War Naval Museum in Columbus.

## SOURCES:

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Robert S. Davis, Jr., "Civil War Images: A Day Captured at Andersonville Prison Camp - The Photographs of Andrew J. Riddle," *Prologue - Quarterly of the National Archives and Records Administration*, vol. 34, no. 3, Fall 2002, 212-217.

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Frances Osborn Robb, *Shot in Alabama – A History of Photography 1839-1941 and a List of Photographers* (Tuscaloosa, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 2016).

*Our weekly snippets of Columbus history are usually based on a few days of searching through the most popular sources for Muscogee County history. Meant to inspire readers to explore more about Columbus history, they are not exhaustive dissertations on the topic and may contain mistakes. If you have corrections or additional information, feel free to share them with the group.*

**Rachel Dobson**