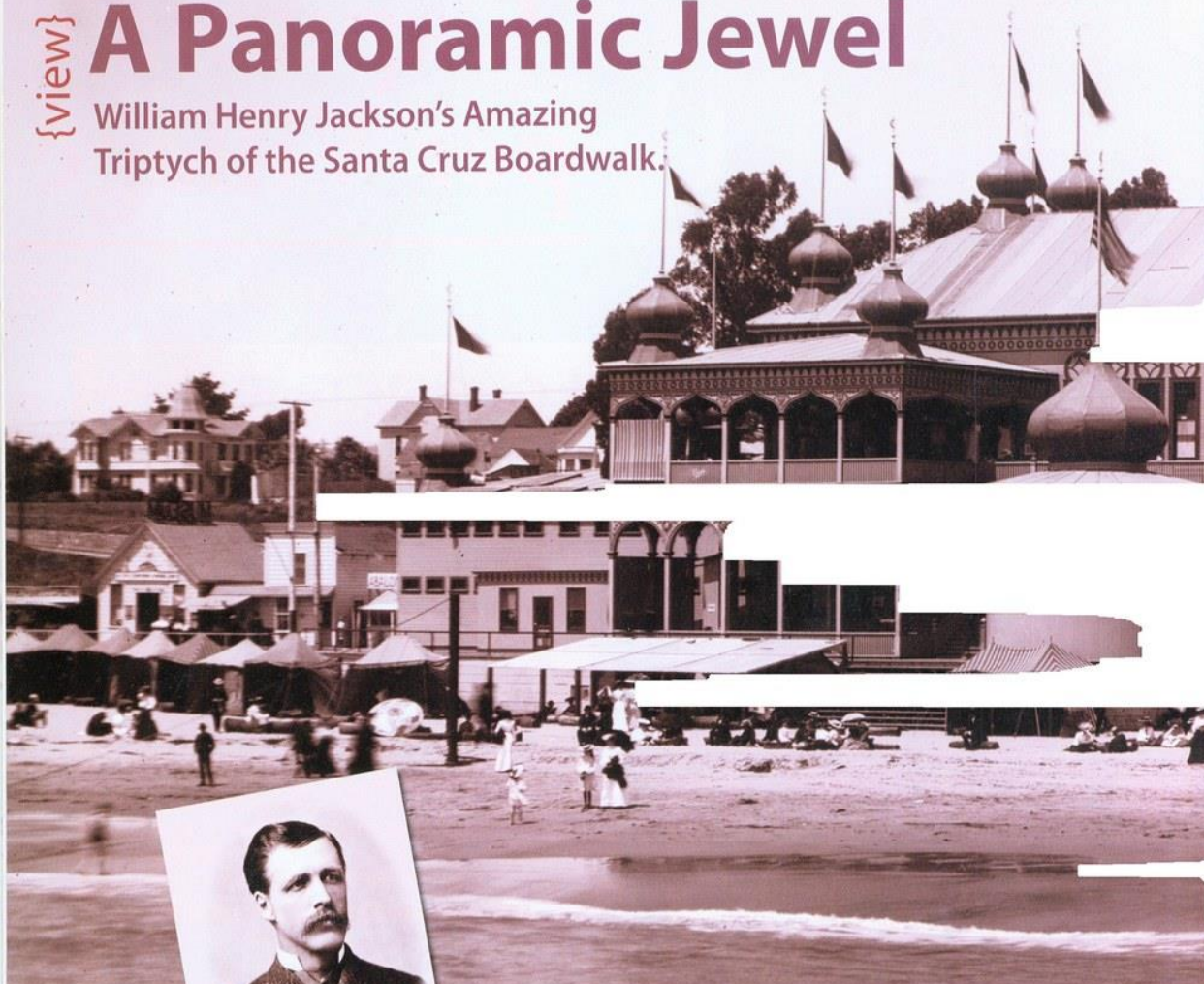


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A Panoramic Jewel

William Henry Jackson's Amazing
Triptych of the Santa Cruz Boardwalk.



William Henry Jackson

William Henry Jackson, a New Yorker by birth, is widely considered to be the premier pioneer photographer of the American West. His celebrated images of Yellowstone, the Grand Tetons, Yosemite and the Grand Canyon dating back to the 1860s serve as cornerstones of photographic archives and private collections throughout the world.

Born in 1843, Jackson began work as a photographic retoucher during his teens, studied painting and illustration, and made his

first accomplished sketches during the Civil War, in which he served as a private in Company K of the 12th Vermont Infantry, fighting in the Battle of Gettysburg. Following his service, he embarked on a career in the burgeoning art of photography. His formats varied considerably—from small and intimate *carte de visites* to single print multi-mammoth plate panoramas up to 92 inches wide.

According to legend, Jackson suffered a broken heart in the aftermath of the war, spurring him westward. He preferred outdoor work and delighted in taking grand vistas of the natural wonders of the West. In 1869 he was named as the official photographer for the U.S. Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories.

At some point during the 1870s or

early 1880s (the dates of the attributions vary), Jackson made his first visit to the Monterey Bay region, where he took a series of images in the Santa Cruz Mountains focusing on the giant coast redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*) and the narrow gauge railroad that had first linked Santa Cruz to the San Francisco Bay Area. One of his images from this series—a vertical albumen silver photograph of the Big Trees Train Station in Felton—is currently held by the Getty Museum in Los Angeles (although the date of its origin is incorrectly identified).

From 1879 to 1898, Jackson established a highly successful photography business based in Denver. In the late 1890s, he went to work for the Detroit Photographic Company. It was in this capacity that Jackson returned once again to Santa Cruz, whereupon he took two known



photographs—a richly colored “photocrom” image of Natural Bridges and a triptych panorama (using three 8” x 10” glass negatives) of the Santa Cruz Boardwalk from the vantage point of the Pleasure Pier, which had been constructed perpendicular to the main beach in 1904.

Again, there are no precise dates to Jackson’s Santa Cruz visit, but, based on the extant architecture depicted in the panorama and a copyright date on the negative, his appearance here likely took place in the summer of 1905.

The western section of the Boardwalk panorama focuses on the fabled Sea Beach Hotel, a sprawling construction with Victorian influences that burned to the ground in 1912. Details reveal tent dressing rooms on the beach, a tent restaurant, and a makeshift stand for selling “Woodward Pure Ice Cream.”

The central section of Jackson’s panorama features the ill-fated Neptune Casino, built by Fred Swanton in 1904, with its overwrought Moorish architecture featuring colorful onion domes and Venetian archways. Delightful details in this section reveal signs for an “Oriental Fish Pond,” a venue for viewing “Illustrated Songs and Moving Pictures,” and “Madame Zahara Scientific Palmist.” The structure burned down in June of 1906.

The third and final section of the panorama features the Boardwalk’s fabled Natatorium, or saltwater plunge, and includes a sign for “Tintypes Finished in 5 Minutes.” Above the promenade, on the second-story balcony of the plunge, are hundreds of the Seaside Company’s one-piece woolen bathing suits hanging out to dry.

Given the manner in which Jackson photographed the three images, it was clearly intended for a massive panorama to be marketed by the Detroit Photographic Company. No known original copies of the image are extant, but the original glass slides are among the holdings in the Jackson collection of the nonprofit organization History Colorado.

Jackson lived to the remarkable age of 99, his career spanning nearly a century. In 1924, at the age of 81, he moved to Washington, D.C., where he painted murals for the U.S. Department of the Interior. Widely recognized in his later years as one of the last surviving soldiers from the Civil War, he was buried at Arlington National Cemetery upon his death in 1942. ♦

—Geoffrey Dunn