

## John F. Nice of Williamsport

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*Figure 1: Verso of a carte-de-visite issued by the John F. Nice studio, Williamsport, Pennsylvania.*



Courtesy of the authors.

John F. Nice (1837-1924) was a photographer active in Williamsport from 1867 to 1883.<sup>1</sup> The verso of a carte-de-visite gives the address of his studio as "Corner of 3rd and Market Streets" (Figure 1). Although the staples of his business were the standard portraits and family groups of the period, Nice had both time and taste to lavish on a special commission. Obvious pains have been taken over the cabinet card shown in Figure 2. One musket, two masks, three pretty girls, and an irresistible plumed bonnet have been arranged in a charming tableau, with a mirror artfully placed to catch the reflection of a graceful back. The studio must have been understandably pleased with the result, for a variant of the image was sent to *The Philadelphia Photographer* by L. G. Bigelow, a camera operator who worked for Nice.<sup>2</sup> An engraving of the photograph was published in the June 1874 issue of the journal, under the title "Dressed for the Masquerade", with the three figures identified as "Huntress", "Vivandière", and "Curiosity". It is hard to imagine a more satisfactory demonstration of professional ability. The faded pleasure of a moment long ago has been caught and kept fresh for every viewer by the artistry of a provincial photographer.

### References:

1. Personal communication (1981), from A. K. Grugan of the Lycoming County Historical Society; acknowledged with thanks.
2. "Mask and Musket", Correspondence from Richard T. Rosenthal in *History of Photography*, vol. 7, no. 1, January-March 1983, p. 85.

Courtesy of the authors



*Figure 2: Standard cabinet card, gelatin silver print, issued in 1874 by the John F. Nice studio, Williamsport, Pennsylvania.*