

## *Augustus Kollner, Artist*

THE little, black-gowned woman opened the door to her father's room and entered, followed by a man. "There they are," she probably said, as she pointed to the numerous scrapbooks and portfolios which took up so much space. It was a large collection, literally thousands of sketches, water colors, etchings, and lithographs, all done by the hand of her parent, Augustus Kollner. Josephine, if not particularly interested in her father's artistic career, had at least been in a position to watch him work and to notice how his drawings took up more and more room. Had he been successful in selling them, the house-cleaning job she faced would not be so hard. She had decisions to make, some of them painful, for it is not easy to leave a house where one has lived for more than fifty years. But now Kollner was dead and his house for sale. He had lived to a great age, his work had long been out of fashion, and the world had forgotten all about him. His obituary had not even named him as an artist, contenting itself merely with giving details for the forthcoming funeral and stating his age.

Kollner died in 1906, and no one bothered to set down the circumstances of his birth ninety-four years earlier in distant Württemberg. It is clear, however, that he had demonstrated an extraordinary aptitude for drawing at an early age. By 1828, when only sixteen years old, he was an engraver of professional competence and was employed by the Stuttgart printer Carl Ebner. His chief delight was in portraying animals, particularly horses. In the 1830's, he published three portfolios of etchings at Stuttgart: one of ten plates entitled "Studies of Animals"; another of eleven plates, "Horse Studies"; and one of eight plates again called "Studies of Animals." It is not likely, however, that Kollner supported himself through such publishing ventures. His daily bread was earned by designing and drawing advertisements and illustrations for books. For a time he worked in Paris where Thierry Frères printed a trade card he drew for A. Prevost, a perfumer whose products had been

commended by the Duke and Duchess of Orléans. Prevost's "Eau Triple Éthérée de Cologne" was the admiration of several "Cours Étrangers."<sup>1</sup>

If Paris had lured Kollner from Stuttgart, the New World offered even more promise than the great Parisian lithographic shops. His European masters had taught him to draw and paint, to engrave and etch, and to trace on stone that most commercially promising of all graphic media, the lithograph. Where else but in America could he make better use of these abilities? Packing his *Liederbuch*, in which he had written the verses and music of many German songs, Kollner boarded ship in 1839, and before long was busily employed in the lithographic establishment of Philip Haas at "Washington City."<sup>2</sup>

Kollner appears to have been rather whimsical in the use of his name, possibly because he had so much to choose from—Augustus Theodore Frederick Adam Kollner.<sup>3</sup> Usually he ignored his middle names, but sometimes he fancied himself as A. Th. Kollner, and again as A. A. Kollner. In Washington and during his first American years, he signed his name interchangeably as Köllner or Koellner, but eventually he dropped both the umlaut and the "e."

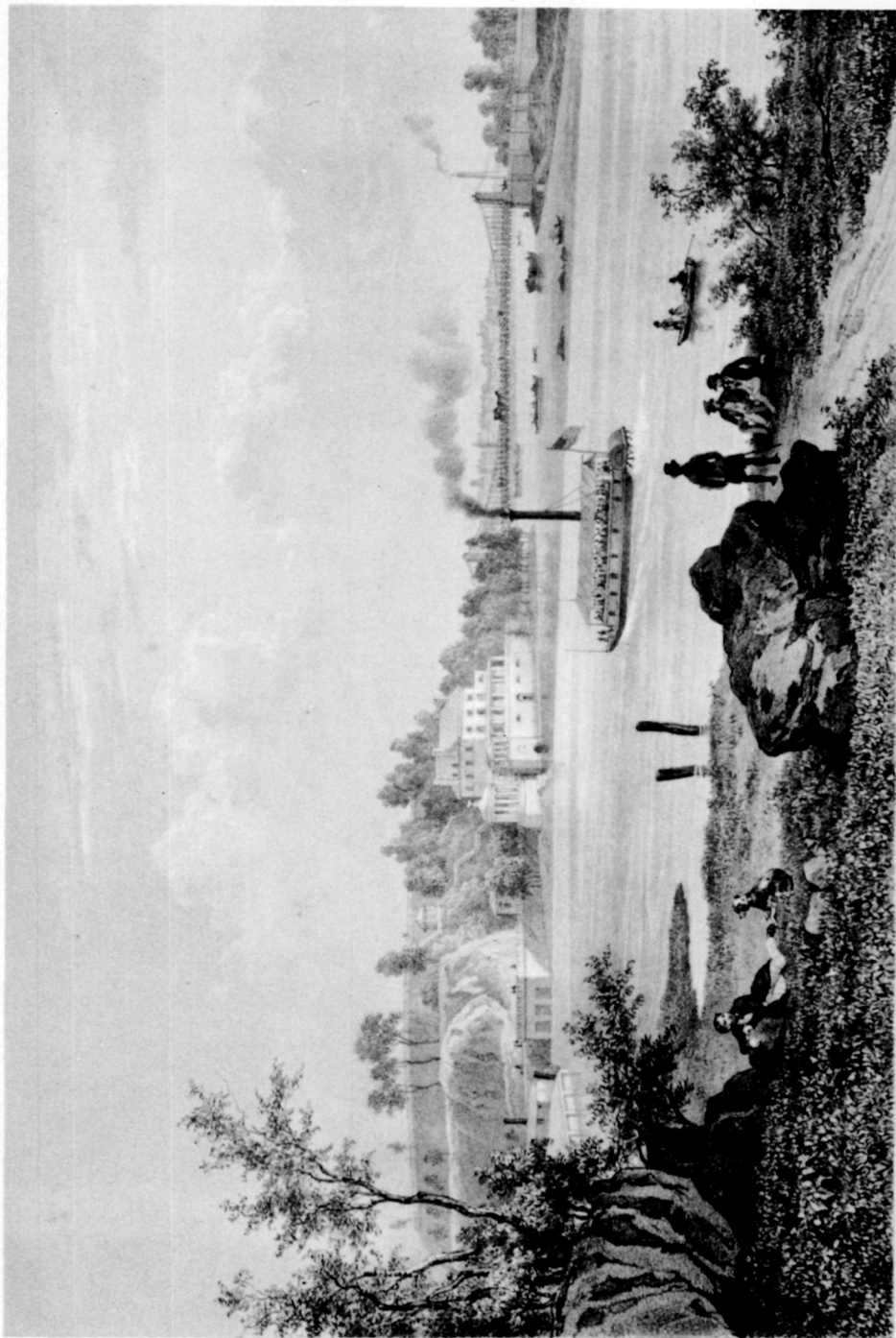
Haas gave the bachelor artist a pleasing variety of work to do. Kollner drew a number of Washington views to illustrate a book and also designed title pages. He made advertising trade cards for a Washington hat manufacturer who was located "east of Gadsby's Hotel," and for a Georgetown coach and harness maker. Kollner also lithographed a number of bank notes for Baltimore and Washington concerns, as well as the United States House of Representatives' check on the Patriotic Bank of Washington.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In a scrapbook which Kollner kept of his commercial work are examples of engravings and lithographs done for Ebner and Thierry Frères. This book is owned by the Library of Franklin and Marshall College, but is on deposit at The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. For his portfolios, see Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker, *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler* (Leipzig, 1927), XXI, 138. Harry T. Peters in his *America on Stone* (New York, 1931), 254-255, states that Kollner was born in Dusseldorf in 1813, studied art there and lithography under Dorndorf at Frankfurt.

<sup>2</sup> Kollner's *Liederbuch*, signed and dated 1834, is owned by his great-grandson Edward W. Mears. Examples of work which Kollner did for Haas are contained in the Kollner scrapbook.

<sup>3</sup> Kollner's name is given in full in genealogical notes owned by Edward W. Mears.

<sup>4</sup> Kollner scrapbook.





The Historical Society of Pennsylvania

**GENERAL WINFIELD SCOTT**  
Lithograph for Huddy & Duval, 1841

In 1840, he severed his connection with Haas and took off on a long excursion, sketching the American countryside. In May, June, and July, he was industriously depicting Gettysburg views which were later to become so memorable. With the approach of autumn these happy months of drawing country scenes came to an end, and in September Kollner set himself up in business in Philadelphia. Slimly built, five feet seven inches tall, the artist was a rather romantic-looking man. He had a prominent, well-shaped nose, large grey eyes, and he wore his dark hair brushed forward over his forehead in Napoleonic style.<sup>5</sup>

His ambition was to paint in oils, with etching second in importance artistically, and lithography last. However, it was only in lithography that he was to achieve distinction in his own time. September, 1840, found him full of impractical plans. Locating his studio at the corner of Chestnut and Exchange streets, Kollner advertised that he painted portraits of ladies and gentlemen on horseback, as well as portraits of military persons. He was also eager to execute portraits of horses in oils or water colors.<sup>6</sup>

Kollner was not a good businessman, and in this instance he completely misjudged his Philadelphia market. There just were not enough people interested in the type of portraiture that this unknown artist wanted to paint. Moreover, the times were bad, and, as a crowning blow, a portrait on ivory which Kollner attempted was subjected to very adverse criticism by one W. L. J. Kiderlen, a bookseller.<sup>7</sup>

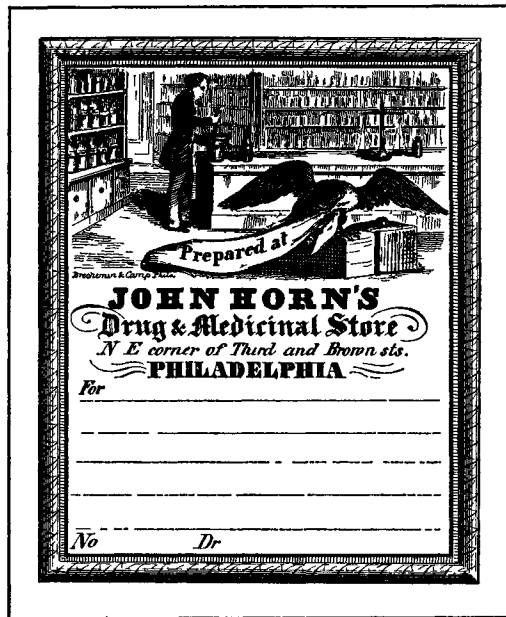
Fortunately for Kollner, on his arrival in Philadelphia he had called on P. S. Duval, who ran the city's major lithographic establishment. Duval had printed Kollner's trade card which informed the public of his desire to paint military and equestrian portraits. It so happened that Duval, in partnership with William M. Huddy, was the publisher of the *U. S. Military Magazine*, a monthly periodical notable for its hand-colored lithographs of military persons, many of whom were mounted on prancing chargers. It

<sup>5</sup> Fourteen of his Gettysburg views are owned by George MacManus of Philadelphia. Kollner's self-portrait, signed and dated 1840, is owned by the Free Library of Philadelphia. A physical description of Kollner is found in his certificate of discharge from the army, Sept. 16, 1863. Property of Edward W. Mears.

<sup>6</sup> Kollner's trade card is owned by Edward W. Mears.

<sup>7</sup> See Kollner's statement on the reverse of his trade card noted in Note 6.

was Kollner's great good luck, just when his fortunes were at their lowest ebb, that Alfred Hoffy, Huddy and Duval's chief artist, retired from the *U. S. Military Magazine*. Duval picked Kollner to take his place, and for the next year and a half, until the magazine folded, Kollner was well employed drawing military figures, some of whom, such as Generals Winfield Scott and Edmund P. Gaines, he depicted mounted. Kollner's work was fully as good as Hoffy's



and brought him to the attention of Philadelphia's other lithographic printers.

During his first seven years in Philadelphia, Kollner earned his living as an independent artist. His closest association was with Duval, for whom he did a great deal of work. But Duval's principal competitors, Thomas Sinclair and Wagner & McGuigan, frequently employed Kollner, as did Frederick Kuhl, J. T. Bowen, and other less well-known printers. In 1842, Kuhl printed Kollner's lithograph of Philadelphia and Camden from the Camden side of the Delaware. Above and below the view are ten small scenes of Philadelphia's most celebrated buildings. Work such as this brought out the best

in Kollner's artistry, but, unfortunately, opportunities for it were rare. The market for art prints was so small. A good deal of his time was spent in drawing illustrations for juvenile or religious books, which at least enabled him to employ his engraving techniques. The bulk of his work, however, was reproduced lithographically and comprised trade cards, elaborate labels needed by druggists and manufacturers, billheads, maps, drawings of machinery, and such odd jobs as the handsome invitation to the Odd Fellows' Ball held at the Musical Fund Hall on March 25, 1841. Duval was one of the managers of this ball and printed the invitation. Typical of the labels Kollner designed for medicine bottles are those for "Dr. Cullen's Indian Vegetable Remedy," printed by Wagner & McGuigan, and "Dr. Yates's celebrated Expectorant or Consumptive Remedy for the Cure of Obstinate Coughs," printed by Thomas Sinclair. Such work kept Kollner busy from autumn until summer.<sup>8</sup>

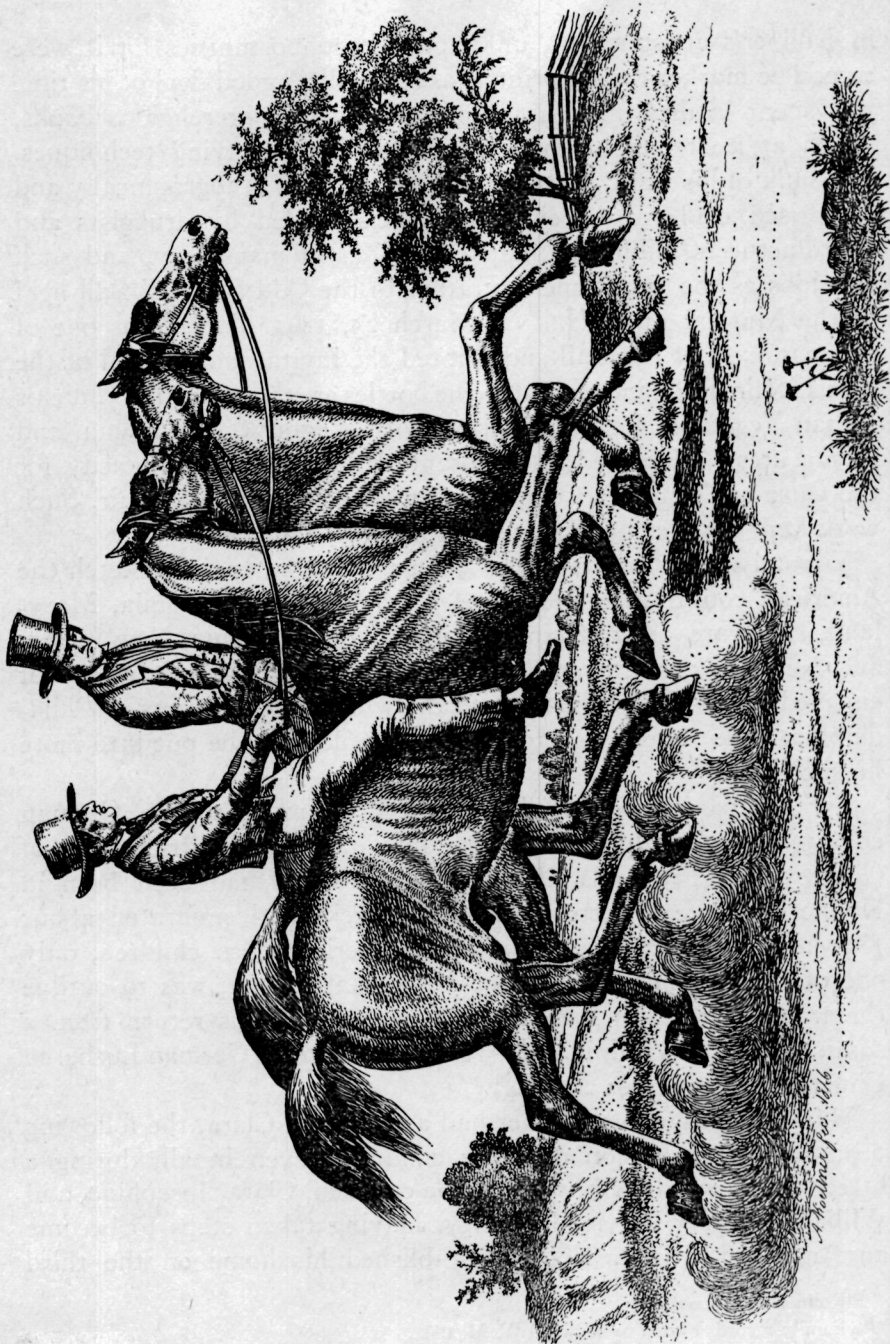
Virtually every summer, the artist made long trips to sketch the American countryside. He traveled extensively in Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, out to Ohio, throughout Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York, and even up to Canada. At other times, when not engaged at his studio, he roamed the wharves and streets of Philadelphia, making hasty sketches which could later be put into more finished form.

For companionship, Kollner naturally turned to the German colony in Philadelphia and was fortunate in the friendship of Godfrey and Frederika Sheek, both of whom had been born in Kollner's native Württemberg. The Sheeks had emigrated about 1820 and were the parents of eight American-born children, only one of whom, their oldest child Mary Margaretha, was to outlive them. Kollner fell in love with Mary, and, on his return from a summer jaunt to Virginia, they were married in the German Lutheran Church on September 26, 1843.<sup>9</sup>

Mary and Augustus Kollner had a daughter, Clara, the following year, and a succession of other children, seven in all, during a fifteen-year period. Only three of the children, Clara, Josephine, and William Godfrey survived infancy. Having taken steps to become an American citizen, Kollner established his home on the third

<sup>8</sup> Kollner scrapbook.

<sup>9</sup> Family records owned by Edward W. Mears.





floor of 39 North Fourth Street, opposite Appletree Alley. The second floor was occupied by C. L. Rademacher and his wife Catharine, one of Mary Kollner's sisters, and on the ground floor was Rademacher's book and drug store. Rademacher was an agent for the sale of Leipsic Homoeopathic Medicines. It was from 39 North Fourth Street that "A. Th. Koellner" issued a portfolio of twelve etchings, "Studies of Horses in Different Positions."<sup>10</sup>

In 1847, probably the same year in which these etchings were offered to the public, Kollner took an important forward step in his business career. He graduated from being an artist-on-hire to an association with the printing firm of Brechemin and Camp. John Henry Camp, a German, and the French artist-jeweler Lewis Brechemin became partners in 1847 as copperplate and lithographic printers. They took up quarters in the four-story building known as the Phoenix Block, on the southwest corner of Second and Dock streets, and persuaded Kollner to join them as designer, engraver, and lithographer. Instead of working for the many lithographers of the city, Kollner now channeled virtually all his local work through the presses of Brechemin & Camp.

As the artist for the firm, he drew the landscapes, animals, vignettes for books and music titles, maps, plans, business and visiting cards, and designed the drafts, show bills and labels advertised on their elaborate trade card, which itself was a Kollner production. Publishers and manufacturers were notified that Kollner was in possession of more than five hundred views of picturesque scenery which he had drawn from nature in seven states.<sup>11</sup>

The artist had not been long associated with Brechemin & Camp when the most horrifying event of his life occurred. About 2 A.M. on the morning of March 23, 1848, both he and his wife were awakened by cries, confused sounds, and awful groans from the Rademachers' room below them. Hastening downstairs they found

<sup>10</sup> A copy of this portfolio is owned by the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and, when examined by the writer, was in the temporary custody of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The writer expresses his thanks to Kneeland McNulty of the Museum's staff for help in finding Kollner material.

<sup>11</sup> A copy of this trade card is owned by the Atwater Kent Museum. After Brechemin dropped out of the firm, Kollner and Camp issued a new trade card identical to their old one except for the omission of Brechemin's name. The Free Library of Philadelphia owns a copy of this card.

the door locked. The groans had ceased, and all they could hear was heavy breathing. Kollner was about to get an axe when the door swung open, and Rademacher, clad only in his nightshirt and covered from head to foot with blood, came reeling out of the bedroom. The artist started back in fright, but recovered himself to assist his brother-in-law back to bed. On the floor he found Rademacher's young wife, who was to have had a baby in several months. He felt for her pulse, but she was dead. What had happened was soon apparent. A burglar had entered through a window which opened onto a porch roof. When discovered, he had attacked with a large knife, inflicting many fatal wounds on Mrs. Rademacher and many dangerous ones on her husband. The murderer, a German just released from the Eastern Penitentiary, was arrested almost immediately, and was executed later in the year.<sup>12</sup> Continued residence at 39 North Fourth Street, with its lurid memories, was now impossible, and Kollner moved to 239 Arch Street where his bereaved brother-in-law accompanied him. Rademacher soon married another of Mary Kollner's sisters and continued in business with Mary's brother Jacob as partner. His store was again located in the house where both he and Kollner lived.<sup>13</sup>

Although the year 1848 contained so much horror, it also saw the launching of Kollner's most ambitious undertaking and most successful artistic achievement. Through the publishing house of Goupil, Vibert & Company of New York and Paris, he arranged for the publication of a large number of views of American and Canadian cities. He made a hundred drawings, all beautifully colored, and these, or at least fifty-four of them, for that was all that ever appeared, were sent to Paris where they were lithographed by Derooy and printed by Cattier. The series was copyrighted in Kollner's name between the years 1848 and 1851, and was sold by Goupil, Vibert & Company.

Like most of his work, these views teem with details of human interest and are historically important because they preserve the appearance of many important buildings and lovely scenes. The

<sup>12</sup> *Public Ledger*, Mar. 24, 1848; *The Pennsylvanian*, Mar. 24, 1848. For a gory pictorial description of this tragedy, see Nicholas B. Wainwright, *Philadelphia in the Romantic Age of Lithography* (Philadelphia, 1958), 101.

<sup>13</sup> Lower Delaware Ward, Philadelphia Co., 1850 Census.

cities featured are Baltimore, Philadelphia, Washington, New York, and Saratoga. There are individual views of Quebec, Kingston, Montreal, and Toronto, seven views of Niagara, and scenes of several other places, including Mount Vernon. A single set of this attractive work would sell today for far more than Kollner's annual income. While some of the prints were issued plain, most of them are hand colored in varying degrees of brilliance. They bear faithful witness to Kollner's charming style, and furnish token evidence of his indefatigable industry. Few artists worked as hard as he did. Every morning he left his house at daybreak and did not return from his studio until dusk.<sup>14</sup>

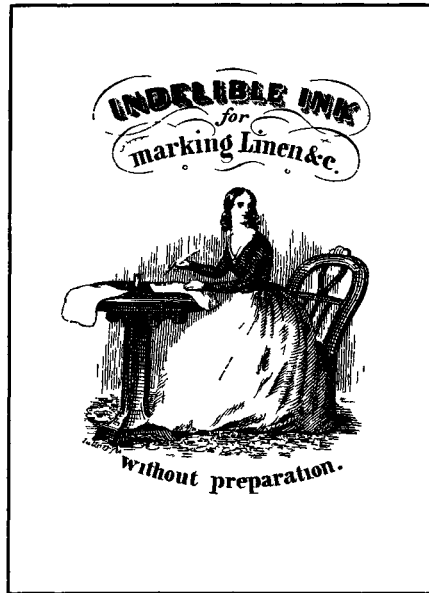
At the Phoenix Block, Kollner devoted himself to furnishing original designs for almost any commercial purpose, preparing them either on steel, copper, or stone. His trade card for John Krider, the famous gunmaker, is an example of his work at this time.<sup>15</sup> Brechemin retired from the firm in 1848, but Kollner and Camp continued their association, which, at least in its last year, 1851, was formalized in the name of Kollner, Camp & Co. They exhibited their work at the Franklin Institute's annual fairs, and turned out prints like their 1849 "View of Chicago As seen at the Top of St. Mary's College." Unlike most of their work, this view did not stem from an original drawing by Kollner; he copied the picture on stone after a sketch by another artist.

Over the years, Kollner had done much work for the American Sunday-School Union. The Union had an active publication program, boasting that it published a book every Saturday, a mark it often exceeded. Its books to be meaningful and appealing to children required illustrations, and Kollner drew many of them. The usual Sunday-School Union's book was small and cheap, its pictures necessarily lacking in distinction. But in 1850, Kollner drew the plates for a volume that has lasting merit. *Common Sights in Town & Country. Delineated & described for Young Children* contains twelve finely executed lithographs of relatively large size, approximately 7½ by 9½ inches. Kollner's ability to reproduce the commonplace in an interesting manner is nowhere better seen than in these plates

<sup>14</sup> *Public Ledger*, Mar. 24, 1848. For a list of the prints in this series, see I. N. Phelps Stokes and Daniel C. Haskell, *American Historical Prints* (New York, 1932), 164.

<sup>15</sup> A copy of John Krider's trade card is owned by the Atwater Kent Museum.

and in successive books in this series. Among the common sights were pictures of a countryman's ride to the city in his wagon, a village store, a stagecoach in the mountains, a coal cart, an oyster-man selling his wares on a city street, draymen, and a farmer at market. Each plate was accompanied by a page of text in large print, which described the scene and pointed up a moral value. The book sold for fifty cents.<sup>16</sup>



The last important work on which Kollner and Camp collaborated was the so-called "Dripps Map," named for its publisher M. Dripps, and copyrighted in 1851. This "Map of the City of New-York Extending Northward to Fiftieth St." is approximately four by seven feet in size and shows the city in unprecedented detail. Its border contains a series of views of the principal buildings in New York.<sup>17</sup> Kollner was very proud of this piece and for a time featured

<sup>16</sup> In the *XXVIIth Annual Report of the American Sunday-School Union* (Philadelphia, 1851), 21, *Common Sights in Town & Country* is listed under "books published during the past year." This book was advertised for several years and may have been reprinted. *Youth's Penny Gazette*, Sept. 27, 1854.

<sup>17</sup> I. N. Phelps Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1498-1909* (New York, 1918), III, 706-707.

his reputation as a map maker. Before the year was out, Camp had moved to a more modern building and Kollner was on his own at the old stand as artist and printer. He had thus worked his way to the top, from journeyman artist, to chief artist, then partner, and now proprietor of an engraving and lithographic establishment.

Kollner was prompt in advertising his new status. He issued trade cards for himself, and published a comprehensive brochure with the following title: "Specimens. Lithography, Engraving and Printing Establishment of Augs. Kollner, Designer, Engraver & Lithographer: Copperplate & Lithographic Printer. Phoenix Block corner of Second & Dock Streets, Philadelphia." Inside the brochure he placed samples of his lithographic skill—a diploma, bank checks, an architectural rendering, botanical and anatomical illustrations, and pictures of Indians.<sup>18</sup> During the next few years, he solicited business from the United States at large and from Canada and Mexico. Examples of work he did for druggists in Louisville, Kentucky, and in Memphis, Tennessee, attest to some success in his efforts to attract distant clients.<sup>19</sup>

In his advertising brochure, Kollner particularly stressed that

Druggists, Chemists and Manufacturers etc will find it to their interest to call at the Lithographic, Drawing, Engraving & Printing Establishment of A. Kollner, S. W. Cor. of 2nd & Dock Sts. Philadelphia, and examine for themselves a great variety of patterns of tasteful labels, showcards, ornamental borders, drawings etc, and the facilities with which any design in drawing & lettering from the most elaborate to the more common productions in this art can be drawn, engraved, written & printed, & an indefinite number of copies can be struck off at short notice and at very moderate charges.

Transfers from steel & copper plates made and printed so as to equal impressions from the original plate, by which process any number of copies can be obtained and the original plate will be preserved forever.

What speaks yet in his favour is: you will find copies of his engravings in the pattern books of almost all other Lithographers in this City.

During the 1850's, Kollner appears to have done a fair-sized business, particularly in the designing and printing of labels. "Reakirt's Vegetable Tonic Elixir, Warranted a safe certain prompt & permanent cure for the Chills and Fever and every simptoms

<sup>18</sup> A copy of this brochure is owned by the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

<sup>19</sup> Kollner's scrapbook. Kollner's advertisement in *O'Brien's Philadelphia Wholesale Merchants' and Manufacturers' Directory*, 1853 (Philadelphia, 1853), 329.

**REAKIRTS**

**VEGETABLE TONIC ELIXIR**

Warranted a safe certain prompt & permanent cure  
for the  
**CHILLS AND FEVER**  
AND EVERY SIMPTONS OF GENERAL DEBILITY.

Prepared only by the Sole Proprietors at their  
Wholesale Drugwarehouse  
SE corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> & Callowhill streets Philadelphia  
And without their Signature to this Label it cannot  
be genuine

*J. S. Reakirt*  
Livery of A. Kolmer

**REAKIRT'S**

**VEGETABLE TONIC ELIXIR**

Warranted a safe certain prompt & permanent cure  
for the

**CHILLS AND FEVER**

AND EVERY SIMPTONS OF GENERAL DEBILITY.

*Prepared only by the Sole Proprietors at their  
Whole-sale Drugwarehouse  
S.E. corner of 3<sup>d</sup> & Callowhill streets Philadelphia.  
And without their Signature to this Label it cannot  
be genuine.*

*J. S. Reakirt*  
Lithy of A. Kollmer

[sic] of General Debility,” sported a label made by Kollner. Examples of other labels may be cited, such as ones for “Mrs. Madison’s Unrivalled Indelible Ink For Marking Linen Silk or Cotton—It will not come out,” “Erasmus C. Pratt’s Superior School Pens,” and “Bryam’s Oriental Tricophorous Hair Restorative.” This hair tonic not only beautified the hair, but was excellent for headaches. If one’s head ached, one rubbed Bryam’s on it. For those who could not make the trip all the way to Saratoga to take the waters, Kollner drew a label for Saratoga powders. Pour the powders into half a glass of water, drink while they are still effervescing, and save traveling expenses.<sup>20</sup>

Kollner continued his work for the American Sunday-School Union by supplying the plates for other books identical in form and purpose to *Common Sights in Town and Country*. Among these works are *Common Sights on Land and Water* (1852), *City Sights for Country Eyes* (1856), and *Country Sights for City Eyes* (1858). These books, with their delightful everyday scenes, were so popular that few have survived the hands of the children for whom they were designed. As a group, they constitute one of Kollner’s most attractive and important efforts and verify Harry T. Peters’ statement: “He had an alert sense of interesting details in the American scene.”<sup>21</sup>

Kollner was willing to try his hand at almost anything. He even took up woodcutting.<sup>22</sup> But as the decade of the fifties drew to its close, his position in the field of commercial lithography and engraving became tenuous. He fell behind other printers because he would not or could not modernize his methods. He could not achieve volume because he did not adopt the new steam-powered presses. Moreover, and perhaps to his credit as an artist, he was not much interested in chromolithography, which had become the rage.<sup>23</sup> His

<sup>20</sup> Kollner scrapbook.

<sup>21</sup> *Common Sights on Land and Water* also appeared under the title of the first volume in this series, *Common Sights in Town & Country*. It is probable that a shortage in the title page occurred and was solved by using surplus stock of the title page of the earlier work. Peters, 254-255.

<sup>22</sup> In the Kollner scrapbook is a letterhead on which, in addition to lithography, Kollner noted “Original designs and drawings executed on wood.”

<sup>23</sup> An example of a Kollner chromolithograph is his trade card for the Mount Joy Car Manufacturing Co. This piece, however, is not printed in oil colors. The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.



work was unexcelled in delicacy and skillful design, but it had become old-fashioned.

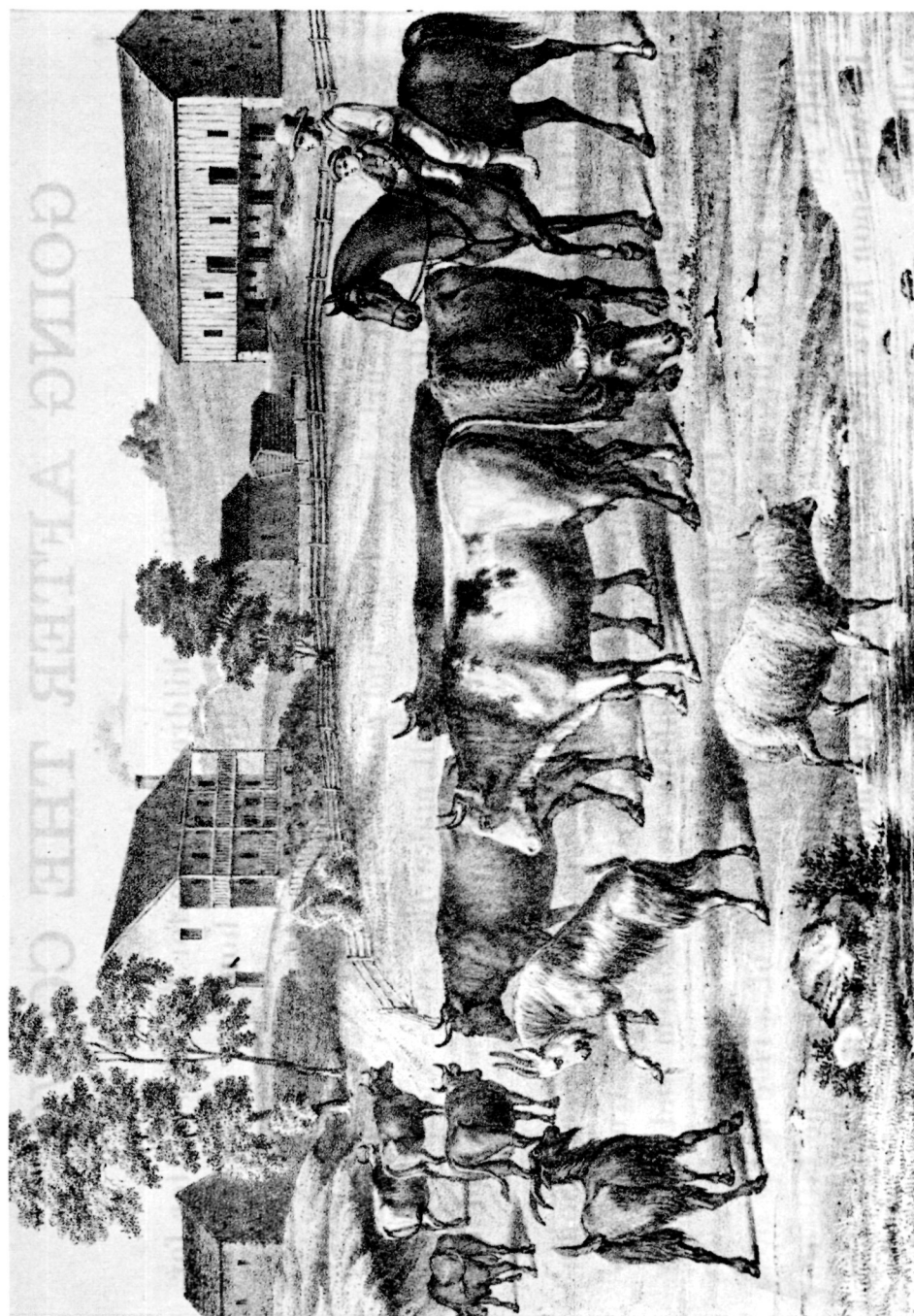
Kollner himself was a bit old-fashioned. Of a naturally retiring disposition, he entered less and less into the life of the city, and, as a consequence, fewer and fewer customers came to his shop. By contrast, P. S. Duval, Kollner's first employer, was not only a leader of the French population in Philadelphia, but a person of recognized stature in the community at large. John Henry Camp, Kollner's former partner, was an outstanding figure among the local Germans. A member of almost every German organization and president of the Maennerchor, the sporting Camp was vice-president of the Belmont Park Driving Association, and was actively interested in politics, a friend of the mayor.<sup>24</sup> Compared with Duval and Camp, Kollner was inconspicuous, a personal trait which soon characterized his business and led to his giving up his quarters in the Phoenix Block in 1861. With the exception of 1863, when he described himself in the Philadelphia directory as a "gentleman," he continued to be listed as lithographer or artist, but he seldom had any other place of business than his home.

When the Civil War broke out, Kollner's sympathies lay with the Union, but he was a little too old for regular field service. However, in the summer of 1863, Lee's army invaded Pennsylvania, and the Commonwealth issued frantic appeals for its citizens to join the militia. Recruiting stations decorated with such signs as "Patriots, To Arms!" and "To the Rescue—hesitate no longer," appeared all over Philadelphia. Governor Andrew G. Curtin came to the city to speed up enlistments, and on the evening of July 1 exhorted a large crowd to rally to the colors. The following day, fifty-one-year-old Augustus Kollner enrolled as a private to serve ninety days, unless sooner discharged, in the Dana Troop. His interest in horses had made a cavalrman of him.<sup>25</sup>

During his two and a half months of service, and at other times during the war, Kollner sketched military scenes, usually of cavalry or field artillery. Some of these pictures he made into etchings,

<sup>24</sup> For Camp's obituary, see the *Public Ledger*, Apr. 9, 1881.

<sup>25</sup> Kollner's certificate of discharge, property of Edward W. Mears. A large plaque at the Union League of Philadelphia commemorates the service of military units raised by the League during the Civil War. Among them was the Dana Troop, July, 1863—September, 1863, Capt. Richard W. Hammell.





Owned by Nicholas B. Wainwright

THE WISSAHICKON

others he reproduced photographically, mounting the photographs on cardboard for sale. A patriotically colored label on the back of one of these photographs reads: "Memorials From the Field and other objects designed and from life by A. Kollner. Photographed from the original drawings."<sup>26</sup>

Having given up commercial lithography, Kollner's artistic output was limited to ventures such as this. His surviving work of this type is now so rare that it was probably not issued in large enough volume to have earned him much money. Fortunately, Kollner's father-in-law, Godfrey Sheek, had been successful as a confectioner and had amassed a tidy fortune. Since 1855 the Kollners had been living at 616 North Seventh Street, a house which belonged to Sheek and which he gave to his daughter Mary Kollner five days before he died in 1864.<sup>27</sup> When Mrs. Sheek died five years later, Mary Kollner became a life beneficiary in one-half the income from her father's estate. The Kollners were now financially independent, and, although Augustus continued to list himself as an artist until 1882, when he reached the age of seventy, he was able to order his work to suit himself.

Of an independent nature, Kollner took little interest in the artistic life of the city. He was not a joiner and his name does not appear in the membership lists of the various art clubs. In 1865, and again in 1868, he did exhibit some of his drawings at exhibitions of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, but such public displays of his work were unusual. The subjects which he selected for the Academy shows are revealing of his romantic concept of art: "Constancy, or the Knight of Toggenburg," "Twenty-three Hundred Years Ago," "Aeneas at Carthage," "Meditation," and "Falls of Lauter Bach, Southern Germany."<sup>28</sup>

In the 1870's, Kollner published some of his lithographic work, a final phase of his career in lithography. A puzzle portrait of Dante which bears the following caption, "Note: As the name of this

<sup>26</sup> Examples of Kollner's Civil War pictures are owned by the Free Library of Philadelphia and by Edward W. Mears.

<sup>27</sup> A record of the deed of gift is owned by Edward W. Mears. For Godfrey Sheek's will, see Will Book 53, 161, City Hall, Philadelphia. Before 1857, the number 616 North Seventh St. was designated as 360.

<sup>28</sup> Anna Wells Rutledge, *Cumulative Record of Exhibition Catalogues. The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1807-1870 . . .* (Philadelphia, 1955), 105.

celebrated Poet is interwoven into the backgroundwork of this copy, it was deemed superfluous of repetition underneath," dates from this period. In 1872, he lithographed a large sheet, "Dedicated to the Friends and Admirers of the Horse," showing six different types of horses—"The Principal Breeds of Horses in Use in North America." A more ambitious undertaking was his small folio picture book in paper covers entitled "Bits of Nature and some Art Products, in Fairmount Park, at Philadelphia, Penna. From Nature lithographed by A. Kollner." Many of these pictures were copied from sketches he had made in the early 1840's. Although the book has a handsomely lettered cover, its general make-up is primitive, and the lithographs, in dark brown tones, do not come up well.<sup>29</sup> Kollner attempted another work of this sort, which contained Virginia, Maryland, Canadian, and upstate Pennsylvania scenes,<sup>30</sup> and he also tried to sell some of his drawings and water colors. In 1878, he issued a small broadside advertising four volumes of them at \$3,000.<sup>31</sup> This represented an approximate price of twenty-five dollars a picture, which was, no doubt, too high for his market.

After his retirement from business, Kollner spent much time painting water colors, and occasionally oils, based on sketches he had drawn years before. Not infrequently, he would date the picture with the year the sketch was made to indicate that that was how the scene appeared at that time. The result is confusing. A water color entitled "Moyamensing Prison, Philadelphia in 1841," signed by Kollner and bearing the date 1841 in the lower left corner, suggests that he made the water color in 1841, when, in fact, this version of an early sketch was not done until some years after the Civil War.

In elaborating his sketches into finished water colors, Kollner was frequently overcome with longing for the past. How those wooded streams and bucolic country scenes had changed since first he saw them! He made many discouraged notes below his later rendering of

<sup>29</sup> A copy of this rare work is owned by The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. This book has been dated as early as 1843 because of dates which appear in its views. However, on the view entitled "Schuylkill Riv above Fairmount Dam, Philada in 1843" is the added note "A K 1878." Even without this date, it is obvious that the lithographs represent a late period in Kollner's development.

<sup>30</sup> Unbound prints, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

<sup>31</sup> Peters, 254-255.

the views—words such as “since destroyed” and “now under water.” To accompany a water color of “Grey’s Ferry, in former times,” he wrote a poem, dating it Philadelphia, July, 1884, and signing himself Aug. A. Kollner. The water color and poem are owned by the Atwater Kent Museum, which has kindly consented to our printing Kollner’s poetical recollections.

On River Schuylkill’s rock begirthed lovely shore,  
One may notice the site of a once romantic spot;  
To you, Grey’s Ferry, if I were master of the lore,  
Justice would be done, branded would be the blot,  
Which blasted thy romantic beauty to the winds,  
Thy venture clothed granit rocks, the cosey dwelling  
gone,  
From where gay parties, descended for lively sailes,  
Where youthful beauty in captivating lustre shone,  
Thy remembrance, “fair Grey’s Ferry,” I call back  
to eye and mind,  
Through this painting, perhaps the only one of its  
kind!

Kollner’s water colors of this period are usually about twelve by fourteen inches in size. Hundreds of them he mounted on large sheets which he hinged into albums. Kollner made up many such albums, each one containing about forty views. In 1914, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania purchased two of these volumes, the pictures being all of Bucks County scenes. Occasionally, Kollner provided title pages, such as the one which he laid out in a copper-plate hand and in pleasing design: “Remarkable Rock-Formations, (colored views from nature) on and in the River Schuylkill, Wissahickon—Creisheim—Tacony—and Cobb’s—Creeks, Philadelphia City, Penna. Executed by Aug. Kollner, Philada. Only one copy extant.”<sup>32</sup> This latter comment was probably added to promote the sales value of the pictures.

Sometimes Kollner made more than one copy of a scene. This appears to be particularly true of his little oil paintings of views in and about Philadelphia. Four of these paintings are owned by The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, one of them showing the Columbia Bridge over the Schuylkill in 1847. This picture is dated 1873, the

<sup>32</sup> This title page, as well as other drawings and prints mentioned in this article but not located, belongs to the author.

year it was made, and is evidently identical to another picture of the same 1847 scene painted in 1887 and once owned by the late Samuel Castner, Jr.<sup>33</sup> It may be that Kollner found a better market for his little oils than he did for his other works; even so, his oil paintings are rare.

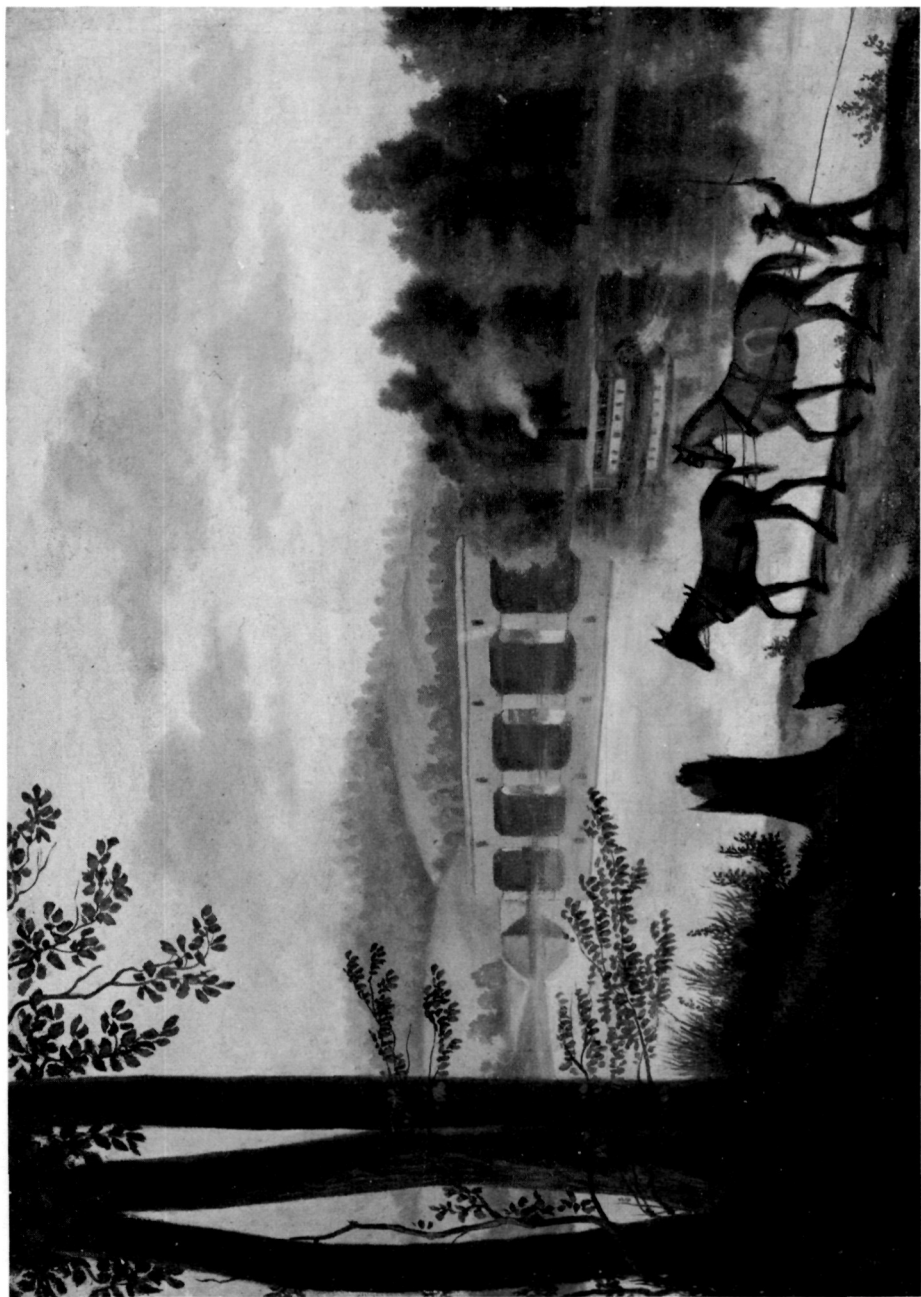
Whether he sold pictures or not really didn't matter except from the standpoint of pride. Comfortably fixed in their Philadelphia home, the Kollners lived a conventional life, from time to time issuing a card like the following: "Mr & Mrs A. Kollner at Home Tuesday evening Oct 29th at 8 o'clock." In 1867, their daughter Clara married handsome Edward B. Mears, Jr., a member of an old Philadelphia family and a partner in the sporting goods firm of Edward K. Tryon Co. Josephine, the Kollners' younger daughter, never married, and she and her brother William, a machinist, continued to live with their parents.<sup>34</sup>

Throughout his life, Kollner had been a tireless sketcher, weather permitting—he did not draw scenes of rain or snow. Old age did not change his habits. While in residence at home, he made repeated visits to Manayunk, Fairmount Park, Germantown, the Wissahickon area, Darby Creek, Cobb's Creek, and other nearby places, diligently recording their appearance. And he was equally industrious during summer vacations in Bucks County.

Kollner was a true romantic, a product of his times and German background. There is nothing formal about his work. He admired the disordered aspects of nature—tumbling rocks, tangled trees, rushing rivers—and he sought to capture their moods. His work is uneven. While many of his pictures are delicately drawn and colored, there are also many which feature muddy colors and unconvincing bulging rocks. His concentration on painting odd-looking boulders, sunless glades, and cows standing under trees produced a large volume of work of little inherent interest. But, in the course of drawing such scenes, he occasionally brought forth a gem. Of more

<sup>33</sup> *The Historical Collection of the late Samuel Castner, Jr., of Philadelphia: Catalogue of the Samuel T. Freeman & Company Sale*, Mar. 8 and 9, 1943, item 123.

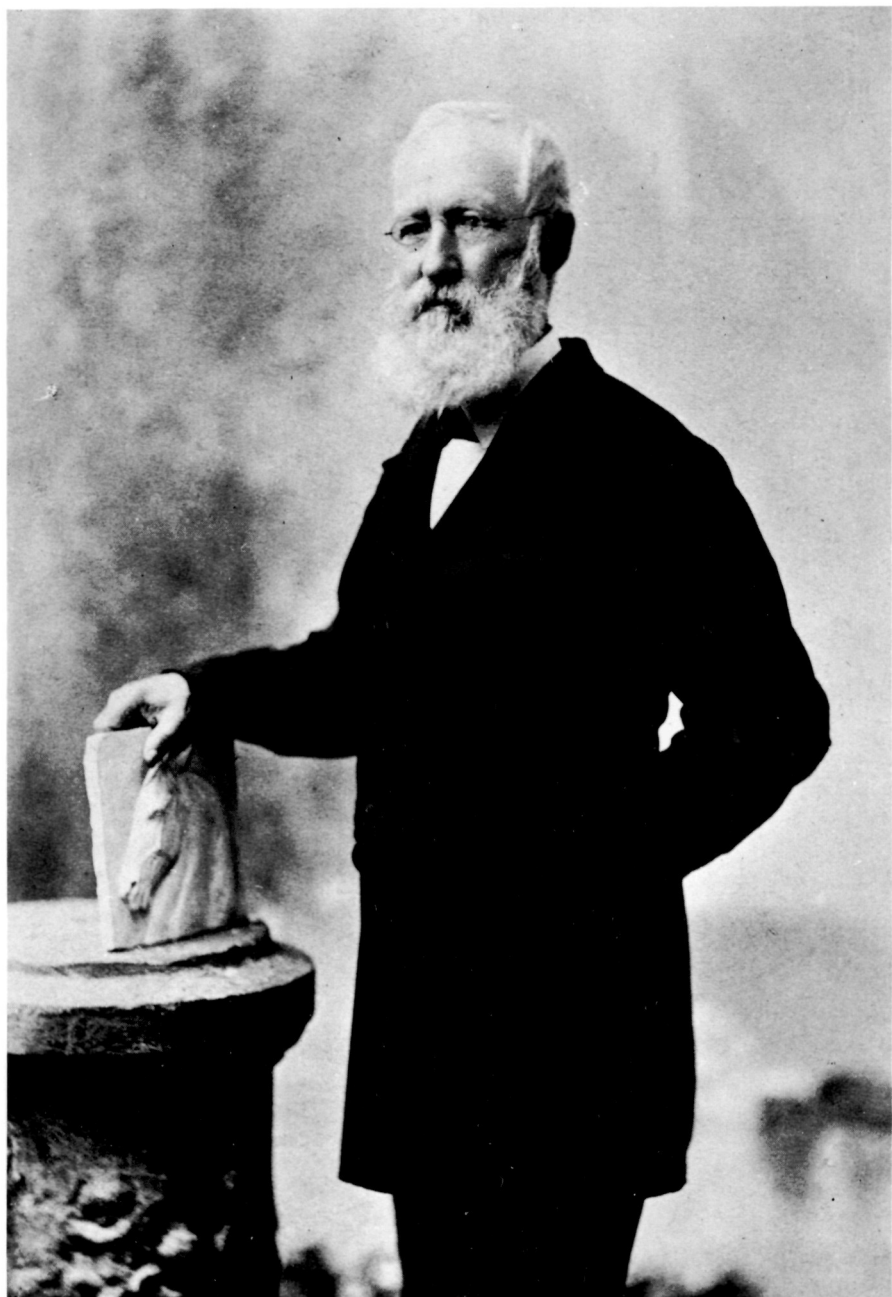
<sup>34</sup> The calling card and Clara's certificate of marriage are owned by Edward W. Mears. For Clara's husband, see *Edward B. Mears, Commemorating Sixty Years of Business Life, 1864-1924*. Clara and Edward B. Mears had one son, Frederick Kollner Mears, the father of Edward W. Mears.



The Historical Society of Pennsylvania

COLUMBIA BRIDGE OVER THE SCHUYLKILL





Courtesy of Edward W. Mears

AUGUSTUS KOLLNER

lasting value than these "art products" are his genre pictures and views of identifiable areas and buildings.

In his romantic way, this gentle-spirited artist was a far from practical man. He is perhaps the only person ever to employ poetry in a complaint to the Board of Health. In 1881, styling himself "Temporary agent houses Nos 635-37 Arch St.," Kollner drew a colored plan of a building and stables to indicate an area of defective paving. He mailed this exhibit to the Board of Health with the following letter:

Honorable Gentlemen:

The honorable Board of Health is respectfully requested to have the small patch of now loose cobble stones replaced by a single row of Belgian blocks, and thereby abate a now very troublesome nuisance produced by slop water. Said cobble stones cannot be kept in place by reason of heavily loaded wagons and carts constantly passing in and out in the court east of North Seventh street, above Arch. By this alteration a great good will accrue to the neighborhood, the more so as the horrible stench is carried along Seventh Street up to Race, down Race Street to corner of Sixth Street, where it finally reaches the culvert.

Oh! blessedness of airy purity!  
It gives gladness to nostril and eye,  
Sends pleasure to health's security,  
Adds pleasing lustre to wealth and eye.

Very respectfully,  
Aug. Kollner

The people at the Board of Health had a good laugh at this quaint effusion, and, after showing it around for three months, finally sent it off to the Highway Department. Kollner was doubtless surprised to see his letter published as a "novel communication" in the *Public Ledger* Supplement of February 4, 1882.

A few blocks from Kollner's home was Louis Walker's photographic studio, and there, probably at the urging of his wife and children, Kollner took himself one day in the mid-1890's. A slim man, still very erect and full of life, Kollner was carefully dressed in his long frock coat. He wore a fine mustache, a full beard, and sideburns which connected these facial ornaments with a luxuriant head of white hair. Steel-rimmed spectacles sharpened his vision. Walker posed him beside a waist-high pillar on which Kollner placed a piece of sculpture, a bas-relief of a horse's head. His hand

resting on this symbol of his artistic career, the old man gazed serenely at the camera, a faint expression of amusement on his face.<sup>35</sup>

Sketching and painting filled the years of his retirement. He gave up lithography, but continued to etch, producing a series of prints around 1895 entitled "Life Scenes in the Park"—Fairmount Park, of course—and he turned out endless horse studies. Other etchings of this final period depict Germantown and the environs of Philadelphia. He went to see Buffalo Bill's show and made an etching of Colonel Cody and some of his Indians on their prairie steeds. As late as 1899, the year his wife died, Kollner was still painting water colors.<sup>36</sup> Cared for by his daughter Josephine, "Aunt Phine" to her little nephews, Augustus Kollner continued to live in his old home until his death on December 10, 1906.

Kollner's Philadelphia career had extended over a sixty-year period and had been a full and versatile one. One of the very few artists in the 1840's to sell etchings in the city, he found his real calling in the field of lithography. His military prints for Huddy & Duval, his excellent designs, and his varied lithographic work place him in the front rank of those who drew on stone. As a depicter of genre scenes, whether as etchings, lithographs, or water colors, he deserves praise. Notable in this line of endeavor are his prints for the American Sunday-School Union's picture books. Much of his reputation rests on his views of American cities published by Goupil, Vibert & Company. That his work was good has been recognized. Its lasting value, however, does not depend on its worth as art, but on its merit as documentation of the nineteenth-century American scene.

His pictures did not sell readily and so he collected them himself, preserving a remarkably large corpus of his work, a monument to his career. It is difficult to assess its value at the time of his death, but from an Americana point of view the value was substantial. The collection included such relatively mundane but interesting matters as scrapbooks in which Kollner had pasted examples of his commercial output—lithographic labels, and the like. It also included

<sup>35</sup> The original photograph is owned by Edward W. Mears.

<sup>36</sup> Some of his "Life Scenes in the Park" are owned by the Free Library of Philadelphia. His etching of Colonel Cody is owned by Edward W. Mears. In 1899, Kollner painted a water color of the Episcopal Hospital. Free Library of Philadelphia.

the original water colors for his Huddy & Duval plates and for his American Sunday-School Union prints. Kollner was methodical and neat, and it is a fair guess that in his collection, carefully titled and dated, were copies of nearly everything he had ever done. Rarely has an artist died in possession of so comprehensive a collection of his life's work.

Well, thought Josephine, the reason was obvious enough. Her father's work didn't sell. They had been indulgent with him. Painting had kept him happy even if no one seemed interested in what he produced. But now he was dead, and no good purpose was to be served by protecting his hobby any longer. Josephine had to give up 616 North Seventh Street to go to live with her sister Clara Mears. That was why she had brought the man to her father's room and had shown him the accumulation of pictures. It had to go. "What will you give me for all that?" she asked the junk man. "Two dollars," he replied. Since all Josephine wanted to do was to clean out the house, and as the price was a good one for waste paper, she accepted the offer.<sup>37</sup>

### *Philadelphia*

NICHOLAS B. WAINWRIGHT

<sup>37</sup> The story of the disposal of Kollner's pictures was told to the writer by Edward W. Mears. A great deal of Kollner's material soon found its way to print dealers, and some of it is still to be had in their shops. The largest group of drawings which the writer has seen was purchased by the collector Joseph M. Fox, and later given to the Free Library of Philadelphia by William Logan Fox.

