

**Rediscover the incomparable beauty of California's Yosemite Valley in this picture-perfect quarto**

Josiah Dwight Whitney, *The Yosemite Book*. New York: Julius Bien, 1868. 12 1/2 inches x 10 1/2 inches (318 x 267 mm), 116 pages, 28 photos, 2 maps.

Josiah Dwight Whitney's *Yosemite Book* is a stunning record of the most celebrated scenic valley in the world. The Massachusetts geologist was one of eight commissioners appointed to oversee Yosemite Valley when it was designated as a park in perpetuity in 1864, by decree of a Congressional Act that marked the beginning of the American system of national parks. In fact Whitney, in a ringing denunciation of efforts to establish private claims in Yosemite Valley, made the first documented use of the term "national park."

Whitney was also California's first state geologist, supervising much of the early scientific exploration of the Sierra Nevada, from 1860 until the Geological Survey was disbanded in 1879. Although publication of Survey results was erratic and fragmentary, it fortunately included *The Yosemite Book*, a splendid quarto gift book with twenty-eight mounted photographs by Carleton E. Watkins (1829–1916). The plates contained in *The Yosemite Book* are original albumen prints, which effectively limited the edition: only 250 copies were produced.

Watkins, a New York–born artist, was well known for a series of enormous and stereoscopic images of Yosemite Valley that he produced in 1861. These photographs of Yosemite were instrumental in convincing the U.S. Congress to preserve Yosemite Valley as "inviolable"; they are not so much a documentary record of vanished splendor as a timeless response, the direct precursor of the work of an entire school of environmental photographers.

This copy of *The Yosemite Book* is from the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; it was almost certainly bought new by the Franco-American banker and entrepreneur François-Louis-Alfred Pioche (1818–72). Its binding is contemporary half tan sheep and dark red-brown cloth, gilt foliating title to front cover: "the | yosemite book," gilt-decorated spine with raised bands and six compartments, title in gilt in the second compartment:

“the | yosemite | book.”

Octavo code: wtnyos