Readers of a little book on Henry Lewis and his moving panorama of the Mississippi Valley, published by the Minnesota Historical Society in 1936,1 will be interested to learn that one of the huge rolls of painted canvas which unfolded the mysteries of Mid-America for delighted audiences of the 1850's has come to light recently. It is preserved in the anthropological museum of the University of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia, which received it in 1899 with the collection of Dr. Montroville Wilson Dickeson, a local physician and scientist. The enormous picture, which was painted by I. J. Egan “from drawings made on the spot” by Dr. Dickeson, depicts chiefly the mounds and other archaeological remains of the lower river.

Dickeson’s panorama, which probably was painted about 1850, was only one of perhaps a dozen “travel movies” of the Mississippi offered as entertainment in the East and in Europe in the middle decades of the last century. Until November, 1941, however, when the University Museum at Philadelphia displayed the Dickeson panorama, the Minnesota Historical Society had been unable to learn of the survival of a single Mississippi panorama. At that time the Eastern States Archaeological Federation met in Philadelphia, and the panorama was placed on view for the visitors. Because it “covered the walls and some of the cases in several halls” of the museum, “it was shown for only three days,” according to Dr. J. Alden Mason, curator of the American section of the institution. He expresses the hope that the Dickeson panorama “may later be placed on permanent exhibition, if a suitable place can be found for it.” The November display, he reveals, “was probably the first . . . in ninety years.”

Like other panoramas of the period, Dickeson’s evidently was unrolled to the accompaniment of a lecture explaining the significance of

MONUMENTAL GRANDEUR
OF THE
MISSISSIPPI
VALLEY!
NOW EXHIBITING FOR A SHORT TIME ONLY,

WITH SCIENTIFIC LECTURES ON
American Archaeology.

Dr. Dickeson, late Professor in Philadelphia College of Medicine; Member of the Academy of Natural Sciences, and Fellow of the Royal Society of Copenhagen, &c., &c., will Lecture THIS EVENING on the

ANTIQUITIES & CUSTOMS OF THE UNHISTORIED INDIAN TRIBES,
who dwelt on this Continent 3,500 years ago, and also on the leading peculiarities in the construction of those Mounds, Tumuli, Fossas, &c., with the Geology, Mineralogy and Botany of this beautiful country.

Dr. D. has devoted twelve years of his life in these investigations, having in that time explored the whole Valley of the Mississippi, and opened over 1,000 Indian Monuments or Mounds, and has now a collection of 40,000 relics of those interesting but unhistoried Native Americans.

During the entertainment, the Doctor will unroll a most magnificent Scenic Mirror, covering 15,000 feet of canvass, illustrating the Monumental Grandeur of the Valley, with the splendid scenes that occur upon the Father of Rivers.

His Lecture, which accompanies each movement of the Tableaux, abounds in invaluable information, and is worth alone, double the price of admission.

Broadside Issued to Advertise Dickeson's Panorama

[On this and the following page is reproduced in two sections a descriptive advertisement preserved with the panorama in the University Museum, Philadelphia. A copy of the broadside was presented to the Minnesota Historical Society by Dr. J. Alden Mason, curator of the museum's American section.]
THIS GORGEOUS PANORAMA,
WITH ALL THE
ABORIGINAL MONUMENTS
Of a large extent of Country, once roamed by the RED MAN, was painted by the
Eminent Artist I. J. EGAN, Esq.,
AND COVERS OVER 15,000 FEET OF CANVAS!
It has been pronounced by our Celebrated Artists to be the most
FINISHED AND MAGNIFICENT PICTURE
Ever presented to
THE AMERICAN PUBLIC.

Each View and Scene is taken from DRAWINGS MADE ON THE SPOT, by
Prof. M. W. DICKESON, M. D.,
Who spent TWELVE YEARS of his Life in opening
Indian Mounds.

SECTION I.
Marietta Ancient Fortification—A grand view of their Walls, Bastions, Ramparts, Fossa and Walls, with the
relics therein found—Circleville Aboriginal Tumuli—Cado Chiefs in full costume—Youths at their War Practice—
Hanging or Hieroglyphical Rock—Colossal Bust at low water mark, used as a metre by the Aborigines—Portsmouth
Aboriginal Group in a Storm—Cave in the Rock, Stalagmitic Chamber and Crystal Fountain, Desecrated and Mom-
mied Bodies in their burial places—Magnificent effect of Crystallization—Terraced Mound in a snow storm, at sun-
set—Twelve gated Labyrinth, Missouri—Indians at their piscatory exploits.

SECTION II.
Bon Hom Island Group—Distant view of the Rocky Mountains—Encamping Grounds of Lewis and Clark—
Louisiana Swale Group, with extensive Wall—Lakes and Sacrificial Monuments—Natchez Hill by Moonlight—In-
dian Encampment—Distant view of Louisiana—Indians preparing supper—The Tornado of 1844—Destruction of
Indian Settlements—Horrid loss of Life—Louisiana Squatter pursued by Wolves—Humorous Scene—Prairie with
Buffalo, Elk, and Gigantic Bust on the ledge of a Limestone Rock—Spring Creek, Texas—Fort Rosalie—Exter-
mination of the French in 1729—Grand Battle Scene—Mode of Scalping.

SECTION III.
Chamberlain's Gigantic Mounds and Walls—Natchez above the Hill—Indians at their Games—Balustic Shell,
Mounds—Ferguson Group—The Landing of Gen. Jackson—Lake Concordia and Aboriginal Tumuli—Huge Mound
and the manner of opening them—Cado Parish Monument—De Soto's Burial at White Cliffs—Mammoth Ravine—
Exhuming of Fossil Bones—Temple of the Sun by sunset.

Exhibition to commence at 8 every evening, and at 3 o'clock every Wednesday and Saturday afternoon.

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<th>Admission</th>
<th>25 cents.</th>
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<td>Children under 12</td>
<td>12 1/2</td>
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During the week a FREE ENTERTAINMENT will be given in the Afternoon, for the
examination of the Indian Museum.

PRINTED AT THE MERCURY OFFICE—NEWARK, N. J.
the successive scenes. The texts of such lectures frequently were available in printed booklets, which were sold in connection with the exhibition. So far as is known, no booklet of this type was published for the Dickeson panorama. It is, however, known that when Dickeson showed his panorama he also displayed his collection of "relics of those interesting, but unhistoried Native Americans" who built the mounds of the lower Mississippi Valley. Admission to his panorama doubtless included permission to examine his archaeological collection.

Although the University Museum does not have the text of Dickeson's lecture, it does own several hundred copies of a descriptive broadside evidently issued to advertise the panorama. One of these broadsides was presented to the Minnesota Historical Society by Dr. Mason and is reproduced herewith. It was through his courtesy and interest that the survival of the Dickeson panorama was called to the attention of the Minnesota organization. He also made available a short account of Dickeson and his panorama which he prepared for publication in the *Pennsylvania Archaeologist*. With the permission of the editor of that periodical and of Dr. Mason, extracts from the latter's article are reprinted herewith. B.L.H.

[From the *Pennsylvania Archaeologist: Bulletin of the Society for Pennsylvania Archaeology*, 12:14-16 (January, 1942).]

The [Dickeson] panorama was one of the first acquisitions of the [University of Pennsylvania] Museum, but was forgotten until several years ago, when it was discovered in the Museum storage. It came as a part of the archaeological collection of Dr. Montroville Wilson Dickeson, who

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3 A detailed account of the "Dickeson Collection of American Antiquities" by Stewart Culin appears in the *Free Museum of Science and Art of the University of Pennsylvania, Bulletin*, 2:113-168 (January, 1900). Included is a list of items in the archaeological collection. The author reveals that the collection was displayed in 1842 at agricultural fairs at Washington and Natchez, Mississippi. He notes also that Dickeson's reports on excavations of mound groups in Mississippi were published in *The Lotus*, a periodical issued at Philadelphia for a few months in 1848. References to these publications, which are not available in Minnesota libraries, were furnished by Dr. Mason.
was born in Philadelphia in 1810 and died in 1882. Dr. Dickeson was greatly interested in natural science and was one of the first to travel through the Mississippi Valley for scientific observations. He was especially interested in archaeology, and made some of the earliest excavations in the mounds of the southern Mississippi Valley. . . . From 1837 until 1844 he spent most of his time traveling and excavating in the mound region. He took notes and made many sketches which were used in the painting of the panorama; these are the more valuable because a number of these mounds and other archaeological features have long since disappeared.

Dr. Dickeson apparently traveled through the country exhibiting the panorama and his archaeological collection. A clipping from a Philadelphia newspaper of 1851 shows the following advertisement: "A Grand Moving Diorama of the Mississippi Valley and its Indian Antiquities is now open at Fotteral Hall, corner Fifth and Chestnut Streets. The diorama will be explained by Professor M. W. Dickeson, who will also exhibit his cabinet of Indian Curiosities. The Diorama was painted by I. J. Egan, Esq., one of our best artists, from drawings taken on the spot by Professor Dickeson. To commence at a quarter before 8 o'clock. Admittance 25 cts."

After 1851 I have been unable to find any certain reference to the exhibition of the panorama, but the archaeological collection — and possibly the panorama — were shown at several later periods. Scharf and Westcott, in their History of Philadelphia (1884), speak of the collection as shown in the City Museum, on the north side of Callowhill Street between Fourth and Fifth Streets, in 1854, and note that "the Professor of Natural Sciences having charge of the museum was Dr. Montroville W. Dickeson." Apparently the venture was not profitable and the museum did not long exist. In 1867-68 the objects were shown in the Swaim Building, Seventh Street below Chestnut, and again in the Main Building at the Centennial Exposition in 1876. After this Exposition the objects remained in Memorial Hall until 1885, and soon thereafter they were acquired by the Department of Archaeology and Palaeontology of the University of Pennsylvania, which later became the University Museum.

A century ago, when photography was in its swaddling clothes, lantern slides very rare, and the movies and the radio undreamt of, visual education was limited to a few media, and prominent among these was the painted panorama. Also the West was just being opened up, the Forty-niners were crossing the Great Plains with their immense herds of
buffalo and their savage Indians, and interest in the strange and unknown West was very great. Panoramas of the Mississippi Valley were apparently very popular, and some of them were advertised as being several miles in length. This statement must be discounted with many grains of salt, however, as advertising "blurbs"; for instance the Dickeson-Egan panorama is advertised as covering "more than 15,000 feet of Canvass," whereas it is actually about 2,500 square feet. . . .

Preserved with the panorama in the Museum are many of the handbills advertising it, banners, posters, notices of admission price, ordinary tickets, and tickets to a "Complimentary Benefit to the Reading Rifles." All are in the archaic printing or painting of the pre-Civil-War period. The handbills are superb examples of the advertising of a century ago. . . . Fortunately the handbill describes each scene, so that they may be identified on the panorama, which contains no lettering. The scenes, archaeological, ethnological, historic, and scenic, blend one into another. . . . In keeping with Dr. Dickeson's interest, however, a large part of the panorama is devoted to scenes of Indian mounds and of excavations in them. . . .

The panorama is in two sections, each about eight feet in height; one is about 190 feet in length, and the other about 130 feet. The colors are as bright as the day they were painted, evidently a sort of tempera on thin muslin so that the whole can be wound on a roller and weighs only a hundred pounds or so.

To date I have been able to obtain little information on the "eminent artist" I. J. (elsewhere given as John J.) Egan, but hope to secure more. He was apparently an Irish artist, born about 1810, who was in this country for only a short time around 1850. In that year he exhibited two paintings at the Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia. Though of course the immense scene was painted too rapidly for him to show his best work, he was evidently a painter of great ability.