

Daniel Marquis: a Scottish photographer in Brisbane

Peter Marquis-Kyle*

Daniel Marquis, photographer, came to Brisbane with his family in 1865, and operated a studio in George Street from 1866 until his death in 1879. This was in the heyday of the wet-plate collodion photographic process, the carte-de-visite portrait, and the large-format topographic view. The story of Daniel's Scottish origins, his emigration and work as a photographer in Queensland, follows some familiar historical patterns. But his story, like everyone else's, includes unique as well as typical themes.

This account is drawn from contemporary newspapers, directories and official archives, and from surviving photographs made by Daniel. Sadly, he does not appear to have left any letters or diaries that might have illuminated his personality. Parts of this account are based on hunches and circumstantial evidence, signalled in the text by *probably* or *possibly* or *perhaps*.

Daniel Marquis was born in Glasgow in 1829. Both his parents had moved to the city from the countryside – his father from Argyllshire and his mother from Perthshire – and earned a living as grocers, victuallers, and spirit merchants in the fast-growing city. Daniel was the second-oldest of at least nine children. Like his siblings, he began his working life in one of Glasgow's major industries; in March 1851, at the age of 21, Daniel was working in a cloth warehouse in Glasgow.¹

In December 1851 he married Grace Murray in Glasgow.² She and her family had come to Glasgow from Stirlingshire to find work in the coal mines and textile mills.³ Daniel and Grace's first child, Janet Laird Marquis, was born in October 1852.⁴

Learning photography

When Daniel and Grace's second child, Isabella McGregor Marquis was born in Glasgow in November 1855, the birth register recorded Daniel's occupation as a *photographer*.⁵ Exactly how he came to this calling is unknown.

The earliest practical methods of photography – such as Louis Daguerre's daguerreotype and William Fox Talbot's calotype, both in use from around 1840 – were costly and not commonly available. Daniel Marquis came

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to photography after the wet-plate (collodion) process was invented and published by Frederick Scott Archer in 1851.⁶

Archer's process produced a negative monochrome image on a glass plate coated with a collodion emulsion, from which any number of positive prints could be made on paper coated with albumen emulsion. Photographs produced in this way were detailed, durable and economical, and there was no limit to the number of prints that could be made from each negative. It was a finicky process requiring specialised equipment, skill and experience to get good, consistent results, but it was a great advance on the earlier methods. It was quickly adopted around the world. The number of practitioners of photography grew, and new studio businesses were set up.

When Archer published details of his process there were only two photographic studios listed in the Glasgow directory.⁷ Five years later there were 24.⁸ Many of these Glasgow studios stayed in business for years, and others joined them. The pattern of growth was repeated in other places, showing that photography could be a lucrative business in the late nineteenth century.

It is likely that Daniel learned the science, art and business of photography in one of those Glasgow studios. Perhaps it was in John Bowman's portrait studio in Jamaica Street, where Robert Leck worked. We will hear more of Robert Leck presently.

Practice in Scotland

In 1856 Daniel opened his own studio in Grangemouth, a port town on the Firth of Forth.⁹ In 1857, when their third child, John Marquis, was born the family was in Hamilton near Glasgow.¹⁰ By 1858 they had moved to Stirling



Carte-de-visite photographs by Daniel Marquis, Barnton Place studio in Stirling.
(Author's collection).

where Daniel initially had a studio in Mill Lane,¹¹ then in King Street,¹² and later in Barnton Place.¹³

Grace and Daniel's eldest child, Janet, died of scarlet fever in Stirling in 1858 at the age of five.¹⁴ A fourth child, James Murray Marquis, was born in Stirling in 1859.¹⁵ A fifth child, Grace Campbell Marquis, was born in Stirling in 1862.¹⁶ When the baby was about four months old, Daniel's wife Grace became distressed. On doctors' orders she was sent to the Royal Lunatic Asylum at Montrose, about 85 miles north-east of Stirling.¹⁷ While she was away receiving care and treatment, her baby, Grace Junior, who was left behind in Stirling, died of diarrhoea.¹⁸

Grace Marquis was discharged from the Montrose asylum, her condition recorded as 'recovered', on Christmas Day 1862. But the recovery did not last. Two months later she was sent to the Edinburgh Royal Asylum for more care and treatment. From there she was discharged, 'recovered', on 29 December 1863, in time to celebrate a new year with her family.

Emigration

The doctors who assessed Grace Marquis's mental condition in 1862 noted that Daniel had told them she had been depressed for some time 'in consequence of the death of some near relations'.¹⁹ During the previous 18 months her paternal grandmother had died at 83 years-of-age, her father had died at 56, and her brother had died at 23, possibly as a result of an industrial accident.

Grace's state of health, and hopes for a fresh start, may have been factors in the family's decision to emigrate. How they chose Brisbane in particular is not recorded, but Queensland migration agents were scouting for immigrants in Scotland with offers of inducements at the time. And they could have heard good reports from other Scots on the ground in Brisbane – perhaps from the ex-Glasgow photographer Robert Leck who had set up a studio in Queen Street in 1862.²⁰

Whatever their reasons, the family made their way from Stirling to London where they boarded the clipper *Flying Cloud* in December 1864. After a non-stop voyage the ship arrived at Cape Moreton on 8 March 1865 and anchored in Moreton Bay. The Marquis family – Daniel (35 years-old), his wife Grace (33), their children Isabella (9), John (7), and James (5), and Grace's sister Margaret Murray (23) – had paid for their passage. This entitled them to receive land orders from the Queensland government, which they were able to use to buy land at government auctions.²¹



Carte-de-viste reproduction of a painting of Flying Cloud. Built in Boston in 1851 to carry passengers from the east coast to the west coast of North America, in 1862, after the Californian gold rush subsided, the ship was sold to the Black Ball Line, Liverpool, and carried emigrants from Britain to Queensland under contract to the Queensland government. (Author's collection).

Establishment in Brisbane

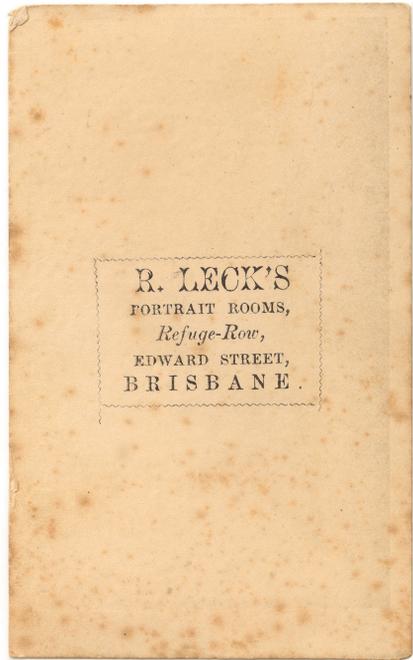
Flying Cloud remained at anchor in Moreton Bay while the Marquis family and the other passengers were ferried up the river to Brisbane. They stepped ashore at the South Brisbane immigration depot on 13 March 1865.²² Where the family lived when they first arrived is unknown.

While getting his bearings in the colony, Daniel may have worked in one of the studios already established in Brisbane, perhaps the one operated by Robert Leck in temporary premises in Refuge Row in Edward Street.²³

By the beginning of 1866 Daniel Marquis had set up his own studio in George Street, in the newly-built *Markwell's Buildings*, a row of four two-storey stone and brick shops designed by the architect William Henry Ellerker.²⁴ The building was on the north-east side of George Street, in the block between Elizabeth and Charlotte Streets, opposite St John's Pro-Cathedral. Daniel probably arranged to lease space in the building, and to have his photographic facilities incorporated while it was being built – with a glass-roofed studio in the back yard and, perhaps, living quarters for the family on the upper floor. This was a good location, not far from the retail centre of the town in Queen Street, and close to the government offices and the *Courier* newspaper office in George Street.

Early in the new year Daniel's advertisement for his new business appeared in *Pugh's Queensland almanac, directory and law calendar for 1866*.²⁵ In his first appearance in the Brisbane newspaper, he put his name on a list of supporters for the election to the municipal council of fellow Scotsman, and treasurer of the Caledonian Society, William Pettigrew.²⁶ He was mentioned again, in the editorial columns, when he photographed a workers' procession in favour of the eight-hour day movement, at the gates of Government House.²⁷ His business, in providing a non-essential service, was probably set back by the economic slump in the middle of 1866. He would have seen the workers' riots in George Street that followed.

Daniel and his family, having resided in Queensland for two years, used their land orders to buy 33 acres of land fronting the Brisbane River at Fig Tree Pocket.²⁸ Soon after, Daniel bought 26 perches of land at South Brisbane, in Lower River Terrace, opposite the Government House Domain.²⁹ Here a small house was built, with a porch and front verandah facing the river, and a pair of dormer windows to light the attic rooms in the gabled roof.³⁰ Daniel



Front and back of a carte-de-visite photograph by the Scottish photographer Robert Leck. The studio address, *Refuge Row, Edward Street, Brisbane*, indicates it was made after Leck's previous studio in *Queen Street* had been destroyed by fire, and he had moved to *Edward Street* in April 1864. (Author's collection).

continued to consolidate his photographic business, photographing the people and places of the colony.

At some time in early 1873 or before, Grace Marquis was admitted to the Woogaroo Lunatic Asylum. The hospital superintendent recorded that she appeared ‘quite recovered from [her attack] of insanity,’ and discharged her in May 1873.³¹ Daniel wrote a will, bequeathing his estate to his sister-in-law Margaret Murray, as trustee, with instructions for the use of the estate to support Margaret, her sister Grace, and the children. The will stipulated that Margaret should continue the photographic business until it could be sold.³²

In 1879 Daniel died of hepatitis.³³ He was 49-years-old, his life perhaps shortened by long-term exposure to photographic chemicals. The Reverend Isaac Harding gave a funeral sermon at the Wooloongabba Wesleyan Methodist Church, and he was buried at South Brisbane cemetery.³⁴

Two weeks after the funeral, James Dickson, the auctioneer, advertised:

Private sale, the lease, goodwill, fixtures, stock-in-trade, &c., of the Photographic Establishment conducted by the late Daniel Marquis, situate in George-street, Brisbane, established since 1865, being one of the largest and best patronised photographic businesses carried on in Queensland, there being over 7,000 negatives, including various panoramas of Brisbane, &c.³⁵

The advertisements ran first in the Sydney newspaper, perhaps to reach a larger pool of buyers than might be found in Brisbane, and avoid selling at a fire sale price. By June 1879, the business had been sold to the Imperial Photographic Company, which appears to have been newly-established. The company advertised that having bought the business, and:

entirely Refitted, Refurnished, and Re-lighted it, have placed it in charge of the well-known Photographer Mr D F Metcalfe. The Plant is very complete and of the best quality thus making this Gallery the finest and most commodious in Queensland. Mr Metcalfe’s well-known skill will be a sufficient guarantee that all work turned out by this Company will be of the very best style and finish.³⁶

Much of the business done by the Imperial Photo Company involved re-printing negatives taken by Daniel Marquis – portraits of Aboriginal people and notable colonists, landscapes, buildings, and panoramas – with the new company’s name attached. This enterprise did not last long. By June 1880 the business was on the market again.³⁷ ‘For sale’ advertisements appeared repeatedly in the Brisbane paper until the end of July, but there is no indication of a sale having been made. Daniel Metcalf moved to Gympie and worked in various studios there. It is not known where those 7,000 negatives went.

At the time Daniel Marquis died, his wife Grace was 47-years-old and living at South Brisbane with their three children, Isabella (23), John (21), and James (19). Grace’s sister (36) was keeping house. The children all stayed in Queensland, married, and had children. Grace was admitted to Woogaroo Asylum for a second time in 1881 and, a year later, she took her own life.³⁸

Margaret Murray stayed in the house at Lower River Terrace until she sold it in 1887. She was working as a house keeper on a property near Crow's Nest when she died of heart failure in 1906.³⁹

Daniel's work in Brisbane

Daniel Marquis brought to Brisbane an extensive photographic outfit, along with the skills and experience to do the range of work undertaken by commercial photographers of his time. He did a steady business producing portraits in the studio, mostly in the carte-de-visite format – a small print pasted onto a card about 85×105 mm. These relatively affordable photographs were suitable for sending by post, displaying in small frames or collecting in albums. Through the 1860s and 1870s in Brisbane, photographers charged between 10 and 20 shillings for a dozen carte-de-visite photographs. Larger portraits cost considerably more. Through his portrait subjects, Daniel developed connections with people in business, government and the church. His social standing (and the health of his business) received a boost when the Governor, Colonel Blackall, granted him a vice-regal appointment as photographer.⁴⁰

Taking views of individual buildings and estates, townscapes and landscapes was another important part of Daniel's business. Most of these were taken on larger plates, such as the whole-plate (6½×8½ inches) and 10×12 inch sizes. Daniel was commissioned to take some of these; others he produced for sale as stock items from the studio or through stationers and bookshops. Prints of these were commonly framed, or pasted into albums. The Queensland government commissioned an album, containing photographs by Daniel, for presentation to Prince Alfred, the Duke of Edinburgh, as a memento of his visit in 1868.⁴¹

Daniel produced a number of panoramic series of views



Carte-de-visite portrait of the Governor of Queensland, Colonel Samuel Wensley Blackall, c.1868. (Marcel Safier collection).



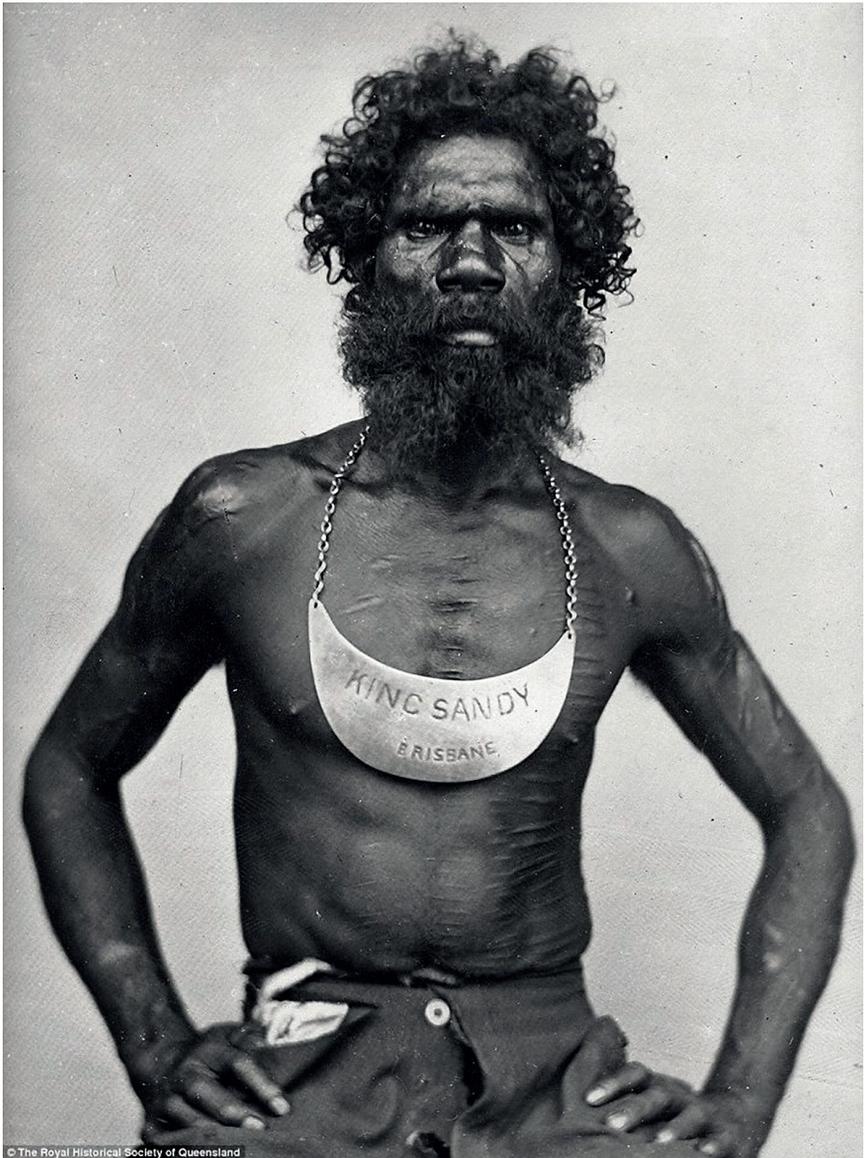
A view of the old windmill on Wickham Terrace, photographed in the 1870s by Daniel Marquis. The large box on the spring cart in the picture is possibly a portable darkroom used to prepare and develop the photographic plates. (National Gallery of Australia)

from high points of view around Brisbane. Prints of these series were pasted together to form continuous images, or were mounted on separate album pages. His camera locations for these panoramas included the ridge behind his house, looking across the river towards Government House, Parliament House and the town beyond, the old windmill on Wickham Terrace overlooking the town centre, and Bowen Terrace in New Farm overlooking Kangaroo Point and Petrie Bight.

Photographs of Aboriginal people were popular with Daniel's colonist clients – as inclusions in albums and for sending by mail to relatives 'at home.' They were also included in collections made by scholars of anthropology. Daniel was not the only photographer taking such images in Brisbane, but he was the most prolific of them.⁴² This body of work includes people singly and in groups, posing in the studio with weapons and other artefacts, in some cases against painted backdrops representing the Brisbane setting.

Daniel's legacy

Daniel Marquis's death was marked by brief newspaper notices, but no obituary was published. His grave at South Brisbane cemetery is unmarked. The glass plate negatives he produced in Brisbane between 1866 and 1879 have disappeared. But he has left a substantial legacy of albumen prints, of various formats.



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Portrait of Kirwallie Sandy by Daniel Marquis c.1866–1872. This photograph was included in material assembled by Richard Daintree for display at overseas exhibitions, and has been incorrectly attributed to him.

(Royal Historical Society of Queensland collection).

His work is held in the collections of the state libraries of Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, as well as state and national museum and university collections. His photographs of Aboriginal people are to be found in collections in Oxford, Cambridge, and Berlin, and digital copies are being returned to Aboriginal Australians through the Returning Photos project.⁴³

Endnotes

- 1 Census of Scotland 1851, Crown Street, Parish of Gorbals.
- 2 National Records of Scotland: Old Parish Registers, Marriages 644/02 0080 0060 Gorbals, 1 December 1851.
- 3 Census of Scotland 1851, Cathcart Road, Parish of Govan.
- 4 Janet Marquis's birth date calculated from information in the record of her death, in National Records of Scotland, register of deaths in the Parish of Stirling, 4 September 1858.
- 5 National Records of Scotland: birth register entry for Isabella McGregor Marquis, Daniel's and Grace's second child.
- 6 Frederick Scott Archer, 'On the use of collodion in photography,' *The Chemist*, 1850-51, pp. 257-8.
- 7 *Glasgow post-office annual directory for 1851-1852*, Glasgow, William Mackenzie, 1851.
- 8 *Post-office Glasgow directory for 1856, 1857*, Glasgow, William Mackenzie, 1856.
- 9 Advertisement in the *Falkirk Herald*, 5 June 1856.
- 10 National Records of Scotland, birth register entry for John Marquis, Daniel's and Grace's third child.
- 11 Advertisement in the *Stirling Observer*, 5 June 1858.
- 12 Listing in *Slater's royal national commercial directory of Scotland*, 1860 and 1861.
- 13 Carte-de-visite with Barnton Place backmark, dated 24 July 1863, in the author's collection.
- 14 National Records of Scotland, register of deaths in the Parish of Stirling, 4 September 1858.
- 15 National Records of Scotland, register of births in Parish of Stirling, 2 July 1859.
- 16 National Records of Scotland, register of births in Parish of Stirling, 6 February 1862.
- 17 Montrose Royal Asylum records.
- 18 National Records of Scotland, register of deaths in the Parish of Stirling, 19 June 1862.
- 19 Montrose Royal Asylum records, report of Dr Andrew Beath. A separate report by Dr Robert Drummond has a similar note.
- 20 Advertisement in *The Courier*, 6 September 1862.
- 21 QSA, Series ID S16297. Orders valued at £135 were issued to Daniel Marquis and Margaret Murray.
- 22 A letter to the editor of the *Brisbane Courier*, 15 March 1865, includes criticism of the treatment of the immigrants, who were delivered to the depot late at night.
- 23 Advertisements in the *The Courier* and *Brisbane Courier* indicate that Robert Leck was operating the Refuge Row studio from September 1864 until October 1866 or later.
- 24 Advertisement for builders to tender inserted by WH Ellerker, *Brisbane Courier*, 29 April 1865.
- 25 Publication of the 1866 *Almanac* was announced in the *Brisbane Courier*, 18 January 1866.
- 26 *Brisbane Courier*, 3 February 1866.

- 27 *Brisbane Courier*, 2 March 1866.
- 28 *Brisbane Courier*, 28 February 1867. Daniel Marquis and Margaret Murray purchased Portions 189 and 190 in the Parish of Indooroopilly for a total of £139/18/6, £4/18/6 more than the value of their land orders.
- 29 Memorandum of conveyance, 7 March 1867, for purchase of the land from George Mayle for £115.
- 30 Daniel Marquis's house is visible in one of a panoramic series of photographs taken from the roof of (old) Government House by (then) Captain George Verney, aide-de-camp to Governor Blackall, c.1869, Verney album, Queensland Parliamentary Library.
- 31 Release warrant signed by John Jaap MD, Surgeon Superintendent, 10 May 1873.
- 32 Last will and testament of Daniel Marquis, Brisbane, signed 7 March 1873, QSA, Ecclesiastical (will) file, ITM2803147.
- 33 Register of deaths in the district of Brisbane, 25 January 1879, Births Deaths and Marriages, register record 1879/B/12775.
- 34 Funeral notices, *Brisbane Courier*, 25 and 27 January 1879.
- 35 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 February 1879.
- 36 *Telegraph*, 7 June 1879.
- 37 Advertisement, *Brisbane Courier*, 24 June 1880.
- 38 Inquest file, QSA, ITM2725918.
- 39 *Brisbane Courier*, 9 June 1906.
- 40 Advertisement, *Brisbane Courier*, 24 September 1868.
- 41 *Brisbane Courier*, 18 May 1868.
- 42 Michael Aird, 'Aboriginal people and four early Brisbane photographers,' in Jane Lydon (editor), *Calling the shots: Aboriginal photographs*, Canberra, Aboriginal Studies Press, 2014, p. 144.
- 43 Returning photos: Australian Aboriginal photographs from European collections, <https://ipp.arts.uwa.edu.au/>