



PHOTOGRAPHER: **GEORGE ROSS**, (1832 Edinburgh, Scotland - 1893 Petaluma, California; active in Petaluma 1862-1893)

SITTER: "Seated Baby With Top Curl"

DATE: late 1860's to early 1870's

FORMAT: enlarged reprint of original carte de visite

IMPRINT: "From Geo. Ross' [sic] Art and Photography Gallery, Main St., Petaluma, Cal. Immediately opposite the American Hotel"

PRIVATE COLLECTION

Reflecting a nineteenth century sense of humor reminiscent of Mark Twain, a handbill George Ross circulated to his customers entitled, "Hints to Sitters and Visitors," stated:

Considerable patience and tact are required in the visitor as well as the photographer in the portraits of little children. The most charming pictures are usually those in which, after having been kept amused by the parents or attendants up to the moment of exposure, they are then left to be amused by the artist alone. Children should not be allowed to form an idea that to be photographed resembles a surgical operation. The same remark is not inapplicable to adults.

There are several extant examples of portraits of Petaluma pioneer children, but none surpasses the charm of this little boy. Typical for the time, he is attired in a lace trimmed dress. His hair is parted on both sides and piled up in the middle, forming an adorable top curl. At this time, it was the custom to part girls' hair down the middle and boys' down the side.

Paula Freund, 2017