



# Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

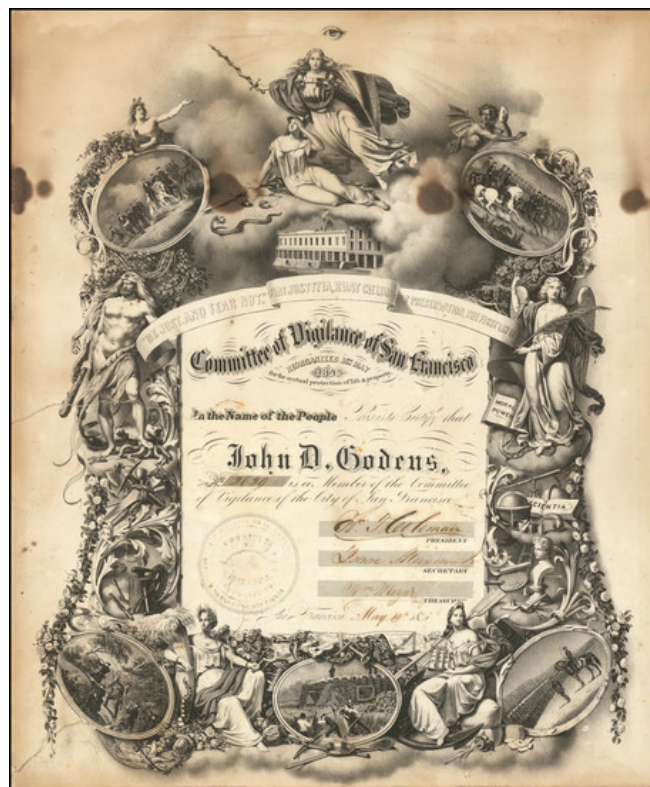
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## Committee of Vigilance of San Francisco -- John D. Godeus (Certificate of Membership)

**Stock#:** 81891  
**Map Maker:** Britton & Rey  
**Date:** 1856  
**Place:** San Francisco  
**Color:** Uncolored  
**Condition:** Good  
**Size:** 14 x 17.5 inches  
**Price:** SOLD



### Description:

#### *Vigilance Committee Membership of San Francisco Photographer John D. Godeus*

Finely engraved Vigilance Committee certificate, lithographed by Britton & Rey and copyrighted to Charles Nahl & C.E. Lang in 1856.

The certificate includes a number of allegorical vignettes, including images of soldiers marching and officers on horseback in oval frames, interspersed between images of men and women symbolizing virtues like strength, bounty, patriotism, and moral power.

The certificate is signed by President Wm. T. Coleman, Secretary Isaac Bluxome, Jr., Deputy Treasurer William Meyers.

The photo is mounted on the verso of a large 19th Century photograph, which is almost certainly from the Studio of John D. Godeus and Mary Anna Clifton Godeus, and may be an image of Mary Anna Clifton Godeus, although the latter is speculation at best.



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### Committee of Vigilance of San Francisco -- John D. Godeus (Certificate of Membership)

The San Francisco Vigilance Movement consisted of two popular ad hoc organizations formed during the Gold Rush period in 1851 and 1856. Their stated purpose was to reign in crime and government corruption. They were among the most notorious and, especially the 1856 Committee, the most successful organizations in the vigilante tradition of the American West.

John D. Godeus was a well regarded early San Francisco photographer, for whom Godeus Street in San Francisco is named, just west of Bernal Heights Park. He and his wife Mary Anna Clifton Godeus were active in San Francisco for 4 decades. Mary Anna began working with John in 1866, marrying John at age 16. At 17, the couple was operating the South Park Photographic Gallery on Third St. in San Francisco. They operated several galleries together in San Francisco until 1879. Godeus family lore suggests John was the photographer for the prisoner mugbooks at San Quentin Prison. Again in the 1890s, couple had a studio together until John's death in 1895. Mary Anna continued to run the shop with her daughter Mary Clara, also a photographer, under the name Godeus Art Studio on Sixth Street until at least 1901.

The following biographical piece was written about Godeus in *The Bay of San Francisco: The Metropolis of the Pacific Coast and Its Suburban Cities: a History* · Volume 2 (1892), pp 67-68:

*JOHN D. GODEUS, a photographer San Francisco, was born in the city of Rotterdam, Holland, May 10, 1831. In 1840 his parents moved to the city of Cleve, Germany, where he attended school and also studied engineering. In 1848, came with his parents to America. He first lived in New York four years, and afterward held the position of engineer at the Croton Water Works three years. During the days of the gold discoveries in California he determined to come to the Pacific coast, and sailed from New York on the ship North Star around the Horn, and during the voyage the dreaded disease of small-pox broke out on the ship. After a passage of 165 days he reached San Francisco, October 20, 1851, and first worked for John Morris in the survey for the Presidio Water Works, and was also engaged as architect and contractor for some time. In 1856, the time of the Vigilance Committees, he was a member, and also captain of a company.*

*In 1857 he tried his luck at Fraser river, in British Columbia, and returned after a short stay again to San Francisco, where he started in the butcher business in 1858, and was married the same year. He was taken sick in 1863 and had to sell out his business in consequence. In 1864, when he and his wife were going to Sacramento on the steamer Washoe, the boiler exploded and his wife was killed: he himself escaped uninjured.*

*After making a trip to the Eastern States on a visit, in 1865, and was married Mary Clifton Kemp, van - E., October 10, 1865. He returned in 1866 to San Francisco, where he engaged in*



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*the photograph business in the South Park Gallery on Third street, near Bryant. In 1872 he opened People's Art Gallery at No. 34 Third street, which he afterward sold. He then built his present gallery, No. 10 Sixth street, which he has conducted for the past five years, doing all kinds of photograph work, and employs several persons in the different departments of his business. Mr. Godeus has invested his surplus means from time to time in real estate , and in this has been quite successful. Godens street, running from Mission street to California avenue, was named October 8 , 1883. He has one daughter, Mary Clara .*

**Rarity**

Vigilance Committee Certificates are rare on the market.

We note at least 2 different certificates for the 1856 Committee, with minor differences in the text at the center.

**Detailed Condition:**

Laid down on the back of a large photograph, likely from the Studio of John D. Godeus and Mary Anna Clifton Godeus. Long tear entering from the lower left corner and a second shorter tear at left. Evidence of older burn marks across the top center.