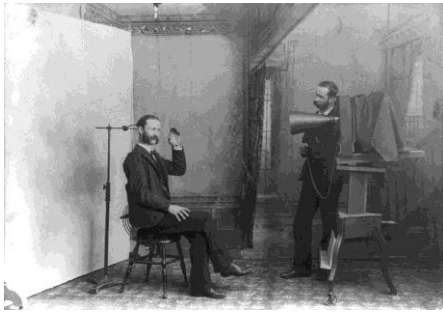


# Fundamentals of the Conservation of Photographs



---

**SESSION:** History of the Daguerreotype

**INSTRUCTOR:** Grant B. Romer

---

## SESSION OUTLINE

### ABSTRACT

The daguerreotype process evolved out of the collaboration of Louis Jacques Mande Daguerre (1787-1851) and Nicéphore Niépce, which began in 1827. During their experiments to invent a commercially viable system of photography a number of photographic processes were evolved which contributed elements that led to the daguerreotype. Following Niépce's death in 1833, Daguerre continued experimentation and discovered in 1835 the basic principle of the process. Later, investigation of the process by prominent scientists led to important understandings and improvements. By 1843 the process had reached technical perfection and remained the commercially dominant system of photography in the world until the mid-1850's. The image quality of the fine daguerreotype set the photographic standard and the photographic industry was established around it.

The standardized daguerreotype process after 1843 entailed seven essential steps: plate polishing, sensitization, camera exposure, development, fixation, gilding, and drying. The daguerreotype process is explored more fully in the *Technical Note: Daguerreotype*.

The daguerreotype image is seen as a positive to full effect through a combination of the reflection the plate surface and the scattering of light by the imaging particles. Housings exist in great variety of style, usually following the fashion of miniature portrait presentation. The daguerreotype plate is extremely vulnerable to mechanical damage and the deteriorating influences of atmospheric pollutants. Hence, highly colored and obscuring corrosion films are commonly found on daguerreotypes. Many daguerreotypes have been damaged or destroyed by uninformed attempts to wipe these films away. Professional chemical "cleaning" methods have long been employed. Growing understanding of the complexity of the physical and chemical deterioration manifestations of the daguerreotype has led to a very conservative approach to the "restoration" of this form of photography.



---

## SESSION OUTLINE CONT'D.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

As a result of this session, participants should be able to:

- 1. Understand the technical and aesthetic evolution of the Daguerreotype process.
- 2. Articulate how the Daguerreotype established the "The Photographic Standard".
- 3. Judge the aesthetic and technical quality of any daguerreotype.
- 4. Be familiar with specialized educational resources.

### CONTENT OUTLINE

1. The Origin of the Daguerreotype Process
2. Improvement of Daguerre's Process For Commercial Portraiture
3. The Daguerreotype -1843 to 1849
4. The Daguerreotype -1850 to 1860
5. The Daguerreotype Revival
6. The Collecting of Daguerreotypes

### ASSIGNMENTS

#### # 1

Search Ebay for Daguerreotypes and, if possible, acquire one for less than \$30

#### #2

Explore these sites:

1. The Daguerreian Society: <http://www.daguerre.org/>
2. Dennis Waters/ Dealer: <http://www.finedags.com/>
3. Contemporary Daguerreotypes: <http://www.newdags.com/>
4. Contemporary Daguerreotypes: <http://www.cdags.org/>
5. Modern Housings: <http://www.casedimage.com/>
6. Master Daguerreotypist: <http://www.centurydarkroom.com/>




---

## SESSION OUTLINE CONT'D.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

 = Essential reading material

 = Available online

 Technical Notes: "The History, Practice and Conservation of the Daguerreotype", "The Daguerreotype Process" and "The Secret of M. Daguerre" by Grant B. Romer

©2010 J. Paul Getty Trust

