

Ellen Bahr

# Uncapping the lens

## The history of early photography

The following list developed out of a personal interest in photography and an interest in early photographic processes in particular. Explore some of the sites here to learn about the rich history of traditional photography. Included are overviews, timelines, descriptions of photographic processes, resources for traditional photography supplies, podcasts, online discussion lists, organizations, portals, and image collections.

The focus for the most part is on noncommercial sites that would be useful to students, historians, and practitioners of traditional photography.

### Overviews

- **A History of Photography: From Its Beginnings to the 1920s.** This site is a good starting point for learning about the history of photography. It includes suggested readings, an essay on the beginning of photography, more than 100 biographic sketches of important figures in the history of photography, and information about the major processes, styles, and movements in photography. Maintained by author and educator Robert Leggat. *Access:* <http://www.rleggat.com/photohistory>.

- **Midley History of Photography.** Midley refers to the ancestral home of R. Derek Wood, who published many scholarly articles on the history of photography. In addition to the scholarly articles, the site also includes a number of interesting primary source documents, such as letters written by Wood and documentation of early dioramas in Paris and London. *Access:* <http://www.midley.co.uk>.

- **The First Photograph.** The First Photograph is an online exhibit from the Harry Ransom Center of the University of

Texas-Austin. The exhibition is built around a “heliograph,” taken by Frenchman Joseph Nicéphore Niépce in 1826. The site includes the story of how photo-historian Helmut Gernsheim followed clues to locate the photograph and establish its provenance. He later donated it to the Ransom Center. *Access:* <http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/exhibitions/permanent/wfp/>.

- **The Foundations of an Art: A Prehistory of Photography.** This site focuses on two discoveries—the camera obscura and photochemistry—which were essential to the later development of photography. *Access:* <http://www.portfolio.mvm.ed.ac.uk/studentwebs/session2/group60/history.htm>.

### Timelines

- **Image Permanence Institute Photography Timeline.** This concise timeline includes examples of images made with various photographic processes. *Access:* [http://www.archivaladvisor.org/shtml/gal\\_phototimeline.shtml](http://www.archivaladvisor.org/shtml/gal_phototimeline.shtml).

- **Metropolitan Museum of Art Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History.** Written by the museum’s curatorial, conservation, and education staff, this timeline let’s you explore art history, including photography, by date, geography, or theme. *Access:* <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/splash.htm>.

- **Photomuse.** Photomuse provides a year-by-year chronology of photography from 1830 to 2006. The timeline is organized into ten-year increments and cross-referenced

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with political and cultural events in the same years. *Access:* <http://photomuse.org/chrono.html>.

- **Timeline of Color Photography.** Compiled by Jennifer Uhrhane from a variety of sources, this Web site provides a timeline of events in the development of color photography. *Access:* <http://www.bu.edu/prc/GODOWSKY/timeline.htm>.

### Overviews of photographic processes

- **British Library, Historic Photographs, Photographic Processes.** This site provides definitions and examples of eight early photographic processes. *Access:* <http://www.british-library.uk/onlinegallery/features/photographicproject/photographicprocesses.html>.

- **Glossary of Processing Terms.** Part of a larger site of Victorian photograph exhibit catalogs, this page provides overviews of more than 50 terms related to photographic processing. Includes suggestions for additional reading and links to examples from exhibits. *Access:* <http://peib.dmu.ac.uk/about/glossary.php>.

- **Lost and Found: Rediscovering Early Photographic Processes.** This is the online component of an exhibition on early photographic processes, held at the Fisher Gallery at the University of Southern California. Focuses on ambrotypes, daguerreotypes, tintypes, and miniature cases. *Access:* <http://imsc.usc.edu/haptics/LostandFound/welcome.html>.

- **Victoria and Albert Museum: Photographic Processes.** This site provides concise explanations of more than 20 photographic processes. *Access:* <http://www.vam.ac.uk/vastatic/microsites/photography/processes.php>.

### Individual photographic processes

- **Albumen: Albumen Photographs: History, Science and Preservation.** Sections are devoted to primary source literature,

the science and technology of albumen prints and implications for preservation, a gallery of albumen prints, a video demonstrating the albumen photographic process, and a discussion forum. *Access:* <http://albumen.stanford.edu>.

- **Art of the Photogravure.** This site has extensive information on the role of the photogravure in the history of photography. It includes information about key photographers, a detailed description of the photogravure process, a searchable database of early and contemporary photogravures, information about collecting photogravures, and a glossary of terms. *Access:* [http://www.photogravure.com/history/chapter\\_introduction.html](http://www.photogravure.com/history/chapter_introduction.html).

- **The Making of a Daguerreotype.** This detailed guide shows step-by-step how daguerreotypes were made and photographs of the equipment and materials that were used. *Access:* <http://www.daguerre.org/resource/exhibit/brochure.htm>.

### Materials and workshops

- **Bostick and Sullivan.** Bostick and Sullivan is another source for supplies, information, and workshops on alternative photographic processes. *Access:* <http://www.bostick-sullivan.com>.

- **Photographers' Formulary.** This is a good source of supplies for predigital photographic processes. Photographers' Formulary also offers workshops in alternative and traditional darkroom processes. *Access:* <http://www.photoformulary.com/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabindex=0&tabid=1>.

### Podcasts

- **George Eastman House Podcasts.** Using a blog format, the George Eastman House is publishing podcasts on a variety of topics, some related to early photography. The public is invited to submit ideas for podcast stories. *Access:* <http://podcast.eastmanhouse.org>.

- **History of Photography Podcasts: Class lectures with Jeff Curto from College of DuPage.** Jeff Curto, a photography professor at the College of



DuPage, makes his class lectures available via this Web site. Handouts and slides are also provided. See especially the two-part survey of the history of photography. *Access:* <http://photohistory.jeffcurto.com>.

### Discussions lists

- **Photography and Imaging Oriented Mailing Lists on the Internet.** See especially the following lists: PhotoHistorianListRPS, Photohist-L, PACHP, the International Kodak Historical Society, and PhotoHistory. *Access:* <http://people.rit.edu/andpph/photolists.html>.

### Organizations

- **George Eastman House.** An independent nonprofit museum dedicated to photography and motion pictures. The online collection includes digitized selections from the museum's extensive holdings. *Access:* <http://www.eastmanhouse.org/inc/collections/photography.php>.



- **Metropolitan Museum of Art: Educational Resources for Photography.** This site provides an introduction to the museum's photography collection, 100 digitized selections from the museum's holdings organized in a rough chronology, extensive information on current and past exhibitions, and the location of photograph galleries in the museum. *Access:* [http://www.metmuseum.org/Works\\_Of\\_Art/department.asp?dep=19](http://www.metmuseum.org/Works_Of_Art/department.asp?dep=19).

- **Museum of Modern Art Photography Department.** The Museum of Modern Art has many examples of early photography that can be browsed or searched via the Web site. *Access:* <http://www.moma.org/collection/search.php>.

- **The Daguerreian Society.** The site includes a daguerreotype FAQ, a searchable image database, browsable image galleries organized by subject (including contemporary Daguerreotypes), and resources for research (articles, bibliographies, a brief history of daguerreotypes, illustrations of the daguerreian

process, and links to additional resources). *Access:* <http://www.daguerre.org>.

### Preservation

- **Image Permanence Institute (IPI).** IPI is dedicated to research on the preservation of recorded information, with an emphasis on photographic processes. IPI's activities include research, testing, publishing, surveying and consulting, and education and training. IPI's "Preservation Calculator" can be downloaded from the site. Links are provided to additional organizations concerned with preservation. The site includes a useful glossary of terms. *Access:* <http://www.imagepermanenceinstitute.org>.

### Portals

- **Art History Resources on the Web: Photography.** This free-wheeling portal maintained by Christopher L. C. E. Witcombe of Sweet Briar College. The photography section includes links to information about artists, photographic processes, organizations, and collections. *Access:* <http://witcombe.sbc.edu/ARTHprints.html#photography>.

- **intute.** intute is a portal of high-quality online resources for education and research. A search on "photography history" retrieves 378 results. Or, use the Subjects A-Z list to find Photography and its subtopic, Photography History. *Access:* <http://intute.ac.uk>.

- **Librarians Index to the Internet.** A search on "history photography" retrieves more than 100 sites. *Access:* <http://lii.org>.

### Exhibition catalogs

- **De Montfort Database of Royal Photographic Society Exhibitions 1870-1915.** Based in part on Roger Taylor's site below, this database by De Montfort University provides access to a research database of more than 45,000 records from the annual exhibition catalogs of the Photographic Society, London, published between 1870 and 1915. Unlike Taylor's site, this site also includes reproductions of the catalog pages, including pictures of photographs published in the catalogs. *Access:* <http://erps.dmu.ac.uk>.

• **Roger Taylor's Database of Photographic Exhibitions in Britain 1839-1865.** Based on a book by the same title, this Web site provides access to a research database of more than 20,000 records from 40 exhibition catalogs published between 1839 and 1865. Records can be searched or browsed by exhibition, photographer, process, and price. *Access:* <http://peib.dmu.ac.uk>.

### Searchable image collections

• **America's First Look Into the Camera: Daguerreotype Portraits and Views, 1838-1864.** From the Library of Congress American Memory project, this collection includes more than 700 photographs taken between 1839 and 1864, including portraits and architectural photographs. The collection can be searched by keyword or browsed by subject. *Access:* <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/daghtml>.

• **Early Photography: 1839-1860.** This online catalog provides access to nearly 4,000 early photographs from the collections of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the Print Room of the University of Leiden, and 25 other museums, libraries, and archives in the Netherlands. Search or browse by photographer, title words, or photographic process. *Access:* <http://www.earlyphotography.nl/indexonload2.htm>.

• **Joconde.** Joconde is an online catalog for museum collections across France. The catalog currently contains digital images for more than 15,000 photographs. The Web site is available in French only. To browse photo-

graphs, from the homepage select Recherche par listes, followed by Domaine, and then Photographie. *Access:* <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/documentation/joconde/fr/pres.htm>.

• **Library of Congress: Prints and Photographs Online Catalog.** Use the online catalog to search the holdings of the Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress. Many of the images are available online. Collections can be searched individually or as a group. Search is by keyword or by author, title, subject, and number fields. *Access:* <http://memory.loc.gov/pp/pphome.html>.

• **New York Public Library Digital Gallery: Photography Collection.** The photography collection includes many examples of early photographs, including 19th-century photographs from around the world (Japan, India, Egypt, Syria, Russia). Guides are available for some collections. *Access:* [http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/dgdivisionbrowseresult.cfm?trg=1&div\\_id=hsh](http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/dgdivisionbrowseresult.cfm?trg=1&div_id=hsh).

### Historians

• **PhotoHistorians.** PhotoHistorians facilitates communication among historians of photography. The group publishes a directory of photohistorians on its Web site, including names, contact information, and the research interests. PhotoHistorians is edited by William Allen (Art Department, Arkansas State University). *Access:* <http://www.clt.astate.edu/wallen/photohistorians>. *zc*

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