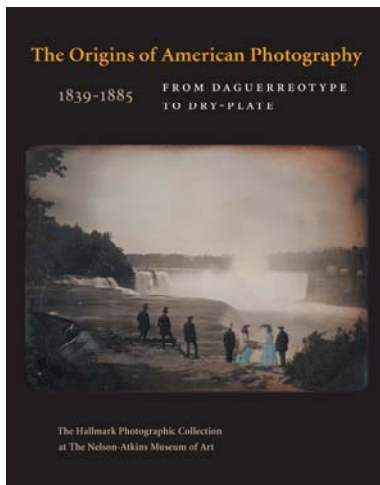


The Origins of American Photography: From Daguerreotype to Dry-Plate, 1839-1885: The Hallmark Photographic Collection at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art / Keith F. Davis.--Kansas City, MO: Hall Family Foundation, in association with the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, dist. by Yale University Press, October 2007. --360 p.: ill.--ISBN-13: 978-0-300-12286-2: \$65.00



This volume was published to accompany the exhibition by a slightly different name, *Developing Greatness: The Origins of American Photography, 1839-1885: From Daguerreotype to Dry-Plate*. The 2005 donation of the Hallmark collection to the Nelson Atkins Museum encouraged Curator of Photography, Keith Davis, and Assistant Curator of Photography, Jane Aspinwall, to compile an in-depth study of the collection and expand upon the earlier catalog, *An American Century of Photography: From Dry-Plate to Digital; The Hallmark Photographic Collection* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995).

The expansion of the museum collection from 141 prints in 1964 to 6,500 in 2005, provided Davis and Aspinwall an opportunity to gather detailed and precise information from original sources, scholars, and collectors. The catalog includes 606 tritone photographs, more images than appeared in the exhibition, and the author contends that the size of the collection has greatly contributed to the illumination of this historical period.

This detailed and scholarly study enumerates the achievements of 19th-century inventors of photographic processes, and highlights significant practitioners. Its authors survey scientific discoveries, process improvements, European influences, and issues of portability, as they relate to the history of photography. In a captivating style, they write about the companies and individuals that were most influential, while bringing the reader's attention to the cultural biases that the new medium enhanced or changed.

Deservedly, sources are generously acknowledged, the index is useful, and the catalog and note sections are brimming with primary sources and appropriate references. The plates are exquisitely reproduced, capturing the texture and color of daguerreotypes, cases, hand coloring, fine to fading albumens, and other rich tones represented in early processes. Recommended for all collections.

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