Photographers’ Identities Catalog
pic.nypl.org
Biographical data on ~130,000 photographers and studios including:

- Birth, death & active dates & locations
- Genders
- Photographic processes & formats used
- Links to public collections of their works
- Links to authoritative sources (ULAN, VIAF, LoC, etc.)
PIC began around 2003 as a personal reference copy of the George Eastman House (now Eastman Museum) Telnet database of 90,000 names. Was cleaned & deduped, resulting in a core of ~65,000 names. The GEH database went permanently offline in 2010. PIC continued to grow, as other online and print resources were scraped, OCR’d or otherwise wrangled into a spreadsheet.
... a very large, color-coded spreadsheet. It has since migrated to a SQL database.
Sources indexed or cited include:

Online:
- Getty ULAN
- Library of Congress
- VIAF
- RKD artists
- BNF
- Oxford Biographies online
- Benezit Dictionary of Artists
- Yale Photogrammar
- CLARA (Women Artists)
- Photographydatabase.com
- PhotoLondon.org.uk (RIP)
- Craig's Daguerreian Registry
- Wikidata & Wikipedia

Print:
- Biographical dictionaries by Peter Palmquist, William C. Darrah, Bernard Kossoy, et al
- Regional biographical dictionaries for Chile, Brazil, St. Petersburg (Russia), Michigan, Baltimore, et al
- Membership directories of the Photographers' Association of America
PIC data are stored in our TMS database. Custom lists (left) allow us to track concepts such as Roles & Processes. Alternate Numbers (right) allow us to manage links to external resources.
The interface: Search and faceting (left) updates the results and map. “Open” a name (center) for more details.
Repurposing fields: tracking lat/longs in TMS
PIC is international
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... and then some
Amor de Cosmos
American, 1825-1897
Male
View raw data

William Alexander Smith was born August 20, 1825 in Windsor, Nova Scotia. After becoming a Mormon in 1843, he traveled to Boston, New York and New Orleans, before settling in Kanesville, Iowa, where he opened a daguerreotype gallery. He advertised a specialty in views of "Houses, Stores, Terra, Wagons, Graves, &c. At Moderate Prices." In 1852, as a partner in the studio Cannon & Smith, he advertised that he accepted cash, livestock, wheat, flour, butter and adobe bricks as payment. He left Utah in 1853, travelling the California gold fields as an itinerant daguerreotypist. In February of 1854, Smith legally changed his name to Amor de Cosmos. De Cosmos opened a new studio above a saloon in Columbia, California, but it was destroyed by fire the same week. He settled in Oroville, California, where he operated a studio until July 1857, when he sold it and moved to Victoria, British Columbia. There, he started a newspaper, the Victoria Colonist, and served in the Vancouver Island House of Assembly and the British Columbia Legislative Council. In 1872, he was elected premier of British Columbia, and remained in politics until 1882. In 1895, De Cosmos was declared insane. He died in Victoria, July 4, 1897.
These IDs auto-populate the Authority Control box in many languages’ Wikipedia pages, providing links back to PIC.
Other databases’ or institutions’ identifiers in Wikidata are easily harvested via SPARQL queries for reuse in PIC.

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Roles performed
Photographer

Processes used
Daguerreotypes

Data from
Library of Congress Authorities (visit site)
Pioneer Photographers from the Mississipp to the Continental Divide (visit site)
Pioneer Photographers of the Far West (visit site)
Virtual International Authority File (visit site)
Wikipedia (visit site)
Wikidata (visit site)

Locations
Amor de Cosmos has 9 locations.
Birth (August 20, 1825)
Windsor, NS Canada
Active in (ca. 1850)
Boston, MA USA
Active in (ca. 1860)
New Orleans, LA USA
Active in (1864-1865)
Columbus, CA USA
Active in (1864-1865)
Crosville, CA USA
Death (July 4, 1897)
Victoria, BC Canada

Image of Amor de Cosmos from Wikidata

PIC ID: 376750
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Male
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All data is CC0 1.0 and is available for download at https://github.com/NYPL/pic-data

The PIC application was built by Mauricio Giraldo (@mgiraldo) (formerly) of NYPL Labs

The code is CC0 1.0 and is available at https://github.com/NYPL/pic-app

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