

***Boston photographers (and related miscellany) cited in 19th century
American photographic journals: a less than elegant guide
(ver. 3.0 – 1/2015)***

Compiled & annotated by Ron Polito

Introduction to the Boston Photographer's Database

This version of the database (1.0) contains 1865 records, each with 16 fields. In the default setting the first 14 fields are visible, the last two hidden. The database references:

- 152, 19th century Boston photographers or studios
- 33 stockdealers
- 24 organizations or individuals involved in the industry
- 18 related topics

In addition to individual names or topics, each record cites a specific journal, its bibliographic reference including page numbers, a précis of the article, and keyword annotations.

Sample of Data Fields: Left to Right

1	2	3
OrigSort	LastName	FirstName
52	Barnum	DeLos [also De Los]
76	Black	James Wallace
82	Blair Camera Company	(T. H. Blair)

4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Journal	Volume	Issue	Month	Day	Year	1stPage	LstPage
Humphrey's	19	4	6	15	1867	63	
Humphrey's	12	13	11	1	1860	195	196
Phila. Photog.	22	256	4		1885	127	

12	13	14	15	16
Keywords	Notes	NotBoston	OrigAmendDate	ID
Exhibit; Stereo	Barnum, formerly of Boston, now in	X	12/08 (0)	91
Arial; Views	Black's views of Boston, from a balloon,		12/08 (0)	162
Stockdealer	Blair Tourgraph & Dry Plate Company		12/08 (0)	325

Description of Data Fields: Left to Right

- 1. OrigSort** An ascending numeric field. Whenever opened, the database will be sorted by: Last Name, First Name, Journal, Volume, Issue, Month, Day, Year, & 1st page. When a filter is employed for selected items and subsequently removed, the sort order of the database may change. Sorting **OrigSort** in ascending order will quickly return the database to its default setting.

2. LastName An alphabetical field, usually the name of a studio or company, the last name of a photographer, stockdealer, photographic worker, or related organization. There are two exceptions:

a. **X-Boston Photographers: Multiple Names** – identifies an article where several photographers or stockdealers are mentioned briefly or simply listed, e.g., a list of Boston daguerreotypists. These occurrences are generally not cross-referenced with an individual record for each name. Articles with substantial information about multiple photographers or stockdealers are cross-referenced. In the default sort order, “X-Multiple Names” entries are the next to last category in the database.

b. **Z-Topic: ...** – identifies an article where no Boston photographer or stockdealer is named, but where the information supplements other Boston references. The specific topics referenced here are also listed in the **Keywords Field**. A full list of topics will be found at the end of the document, **Keywords Used in the Database**. In the default sort order, “Z-Topic” entries are the last category in the database.

Finally, the 25 photographic and 8 stockdealer partnerships in this database can be isolated by filtering for “*&*” in the **LastName Field**.

Note: in at least the versions of Access & Excel used to create these databases, it is important to place wildcard characters () before and after the search terms: more on this below, in the section on “Searching”.*

3. FirstName An alphabetical field providing the first name of individual photographers and stockdealers. Names in parentheses, e.g. (Franklin & John A.) indicates the names of principles in studios or companies. In this case, Franklin Metcalf and John A. Welldon operated the photographic firm of Metcalf & Welldon.

4. Journal An alphabetical field providing the abbreviated title of the photographic journal in which the citation for this record will be found. For a complete list of abbreviations, journal titles, plus their full publication history and notation of specific journals searched, see the document, **Bibliographic Information for Journals Used**.

The *Access* version of this database has a look-up table for journal abbreviations build-in. To open this table, highlight any single journal cell and click on the pull-down menu that will appear in the upper right of that cell.

There are a number of records with “miscel” (miscellaneous) in the **Journal Field**. These are largely cross-references to specific names; refer to the information recorded in the **Notes Field**.

- 5. Volume** The volume number, if any, for the journal cited in a specific record. A numeric field.
- 6. Issue** The issue number, if any, for the journal cited in a specific record. A numeric field.
- 7. Month** The month in which the journal for a specific record was published, if provided by the publisher. A numeric field (1-12).
- 7. Day** The day on which the journal for a specific record was published, if provided by the publisher. A numeric field (1-31).
- 9. Year** The year in which the journal for a specific record was published. A numeric field (1850-1899). If a reference cited was published in the early 20th century, a “0” (zero) will appear in this field and additional information is provided in the [Notes Field](#)
- 10. 1stPage** A numeric field providing the first page of the article cited in a specific record. If the actual page is not Arabic, e.g., unnumbered or Roman numerals, a “0” (zero) will appear in this field; additional information is often provided in the [Notes Field](#).
- 11. LastPage** The last page of the article cited in a specific record, if different than the first page. A numeric field.
- 12. Keywords** This alphabetic field identifies topics found across several articles, allowing access to discussions on a variety of subjects, including specific processes, patent issues, professional photographic organizations, etc. A full list of keywords will be found in the document, *Keywords Used in the Database*.

The *Access* version of this database has a look-up table for keyword abbreviations build-in. To open this table highlight any single keyword cell and click on the pull-down menu that will appear in the upper right of that cell.

Note: When searching/filtering by keyword it is important, at least in the versions of Access & Excel used to create these databases, to place wildcard characters () before and after search terms: more on this below, in the section on “Searching”.*
- 13. Notes** This field provides a short précis of the article cited in a specific record, and occasionally supplementary information. In the default setting, the text often runs beyond the visible length of the cell, but will appear if the cell length is extended or one spaces to the end of the line.

In articles of substance, the names of studios, photographers, topics, and keywords are generally cross-referenced. However, articles with passing references to photographers, topics, terms, etc. are not extensively cross-referenced. A secondary search of the [Notes Field](#)

using the search/filter functions may reveal some articles not captured in a single search/filter of the [LastName](#) or [Keywords Fields](#).

- 14. NotBoston** A check-mark in this field identifies articles with information supplemental to Boston photography and allows the user to quickly access or exclude articles where no specific Boston studio or photographer is mentioned. Terms in the [Keywords Field](#) will help link these articles to those identifying specific Boston practitioners.
- 15. OrigAmendDate** Normally, this is a hidden field showing dates of original data entry & emendations, if any. Contributor codes are provided in parentheses; e.g. “12/08 (0); 1/09 (1)” indicates original information was provided by contributor “0” and entered on 12/08, with additional information or correction of data from contributor “1” on 1/09. A key to contributors who agree to be identified is provided. Currently, all entries are by Ron Polito (0).
- 16. ID** This field should remain hidden. It is useful only to the manager of this database for future additions or corrections.

Locating Full Copies of Articles Cited

Once the desired bibliographic citations are located in the database, the first place to look for full copies is Gary Ewer’s impressive online database of photographic texts, graphics, and ephemera; <http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/>. Articles not in the Ewer database will be found in the microfilm series: *History of Photography: Monographs & Periodicals* (489 reels, Research Publications, Woodbridge, CT, 1980?-1982). Note that journals in this series can be incomplete: missing pages and missing issues do occur.

Many libraries have all or part of this series in their collections or it may be possible to request them through inter-library loan. In the Boston area, the Boston Public Library and Boston University’s Mugar Library are two of the libraries holding this compilation.

An additional source of information on Boston photographers is *A Directory of Massachusetts Photographers: 1839-1900* (Picton Press, 1993). Assembled by Chris Steele and Ron Polito, the compiler of this database, the *Directory* chronicles the studio addresses, years of activity, and often residential and other information for over 5000 Massachusetts photographers and some 1000 photographic workers. Of the 704 pages in this volume, 121 are devoted to Boston photographic studios and photographers, another 41 pages to other photographic enterprises in the city. This reference can be found in a number of Massachusetts’ libraries or from www.pictonpress.com.

Other references to 19th century Boston photography include:

Online Resources

The Daguerreian Society, <http://www.daguerre.org/>

Ewer, Gary, *The Daguerreotype: An Archive of Source Texts, Graphics, and Ephemera: The research archive of Gary W. Ewer regarding the history of the daguerreotype*. <http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/>

Griffiths, Alan, *Luminous Lint, for Connoisseurs of Fine Photography*.
<http://www.luminous-lint.com/app/home/>

Photographic Historical Society of New England. <http://www.phsne.org/>

Polito, Ron, *Boston Photographers Cited in 19th-Century American Photographic Journals: A Bibliographic Database* (2008).
<http://www.phsne.org/members/RonPolito/>

Books and Articles

Bergen, Philip, *Old Boston in Early Photographs, 1850–1918, Collection of the Bostonian Society* (New York: Dover Publications, 1990).

Bermudes, Robert W. Jr., “‘Ultimate Success Is Certain’: The Life and Art of Samuel A. Bemis” *The Daguerreian Annual 2006* (Pittsburg: The Daguerreian Society, 2006), pp. 74–153.

Hoyle, Pamela
The Boston Ambience: An Exhibition of Nineteenth Century Photographs (Boston: The Boston Athenaeum, 1981).

The Development of Photography in Boston, 1840–1875 (Boston: The Boston Athenaeum, 1979).

Kamplain, Anna Lee, *A Photographic Portrait of Boston: 1840–1865* (Boston: Boston University Art Gallery, 2006).

Ness, Daniel, “‘Executed in the Highest Style of the Art’: A Study Collection of Nineteenth-Century Boston Photographers” *New England Journal of Photographic History*, Number 171, 2013, pp. 29-34.

Pierce, Sally, *Whipple and Black: Commercial Photographers in Boston* (Boston: Boston Athenaeum, 1987).

Pierce, Sally & Sloane Stevens, *The Daguerreotype in Boston: Process, Practitioners, and Patrons* (Boston: The Boston Athenaeum, 1994).

Polito, Ron
A Directory of Boston Photographers: 1840–1900. First edition 1980; second edition 1983; revised edition 1985. (Boston: Ron Polito), editions issued as works in progress.

A Directory of Massachusetts Photographers: 1839–1900. Chris Steele and Ronald Polito, research; Ronald Polito, editor (Camden, ME: Picton Press, 1993).

“Early Boston Photography: Charles E. & Luther Holman Hale – Brothers in the Art of Daguerre” *The Daguerreian Annual 2014* (Pittsburg: The Daguerreian Society, 2015), pp. TBA. A shorter version of this article appeared in the *New England Journal of Photographic History*, Number 165, 2006 (Boston: Photographic Historical Society of New England, 2006), pp. 20–22.

“The Emergence of Commercial Photography in Boston, 1840–1841” *New England Journal of Photographic History*, Number 164, Spring 2005 (Boston: Photographic Historical Society of New England, 2005), pp. 16–32. Reprinted in *The Daguerreian Annual 2006*, pp. 154–173.

“One and the Same? Miss S. R. Charter, Boston’s First Female Daguerreotypist, 1844-1849 & Susan R. D. (Charter) Humphrey, Patrician’s Wife” *The Daguerreian Annual 2005* (Pittsburg: The Daguerreian Society, 2005), pp. 27–85.

Romer, Grant & Brian Wallis, editors, *Young America: The Daguerreotypes of Southworth and Hawes* (New York: International Center of Photography, 2005).

Collections with strong 19th-century Boston photograph holdings

American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA. <http://www.americanantiquarian.org/>

Boston Athenaeum, Boston, MA. <http://www.bostonathenaeum.org/>

A large collection of daguerreotypes and paper images. Includes a *Study Collection of 19th- Century Boston Photographers*, holding some 1,600 cdvs and cabinet cards by Boston photographers.

Boston Public Library, Boston, MA. <http://www.bpl.org/research/print/>

Bostonian Society, Boston, MA. <http://www.bostonhistory.org/>

A large collection of 19th-century Boston street scenes.

George Eastman House. <http://www.geh.org/>

Not a large collection of Boston images, but significant daguerreotypes by Samuel Bemis, an early amateur.

Historic New England, Boston, MA. <http://www.historicnewengland.org/>

A large collection of daguerreotypes and paper images.

Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA. <http://www.masshist.org/>

Photographic Dealers

Daguerreotypes by Boston photographers frequently appear on these sites:

Dennis A. Waters Fine Daguerreotypes. <http://www.finedags.com/>

Greg French Early Photography. <http://www.gregfrenchearlyphotography.com/>

Gunter Mueller, VinimagePlus. <http://www.vinimageplus.com/>

Searching the Database (Important)

While it easy to perform a simple search by selecting a term in the database and using the “search/filter by selection” function, this can result in missed records. Therefore, it is important, at least in the versions of *Access* and *Excel* used to create these databases, to employ the “**advanced search/filter**” function, and place a wildcard character before and after the search terms. For example, using the search string, “*NPA Convention*”, in the [Keywords Field](#) will extract 82 records. If the “search/filter by selection” method is used and the chosen term “NPA Convention” is the first of multiple keywords for that record, only 57 records will appear; if “NPA Convention” is chosen and it appears at the end of a string of keywords, a mere 14 records will emerge.

It is also important to remember that articles with less than substantial information are not extensively cross-referenced. Doing a secondary “**advanced search/filter**” for a specific name, term, etc. in the [Notes Field](#) may result in additional records.

The Data-Gathering Process: Additions & Corrections to this Database

Until 19th century photographic journals are digitized and can be searched by 21st century means (an event one hopes will occur soon), extracting references on any topic can be a challenge and prone to error -- some might say significant error. The citations to Boston photography in this database were extracted by setting a microfilm reader to a slow crawl and scanning each page as it passed by – certainly more than a few references were missed or miss-noted. Therefore, new citations and corrections are most welcome and, with their permission, contributors will be acknowledged in updated releases. Please send correspondence to ronpolito@comcast.net and put “Boston Database” in the subject line.

Database Files

In most browsers, you can just click on the links below to download the file.

Boston Photographer’s Database - Access version (created in Access 2000)

Boston Photographer’s Database - Excel version (created in Excel 2000, ver. 9.0.69.26)

Bibliographic Information for Journals Used (PDF)

Keywords Used in the Database (PDF)

Acknowledgements

My very sincere thanks and gratitude to:

- *David Mattison, whose counsel and guidance helped shape this database*
- *Ruth Thomasian, for her careful reading of the introductory documents and constructive comments*
- *Joe Walters, Jr., for his immeasurable help and expertise in making this project web-accessible*
- *And to the Photographic Historical Society of New England (PHSNE) for hosting the project on their web-site*

(ver. 3.0 – 1/14/2015)