

Daguerre's specimens exhibited to the Chamber of Deputies, 11 July 1839

(keywords: Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre, Nicephore Niépce, Chamber of Deputies, history of the daguerreotype, history of photography.)

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“The Legislators of the Palais Bourbon (Chamber of Deputies),” says a correspondent, “are in their glory, and are, no doubt, envied by the contemporaries at Westminster. They have not time for the consideration and discussion of grave or weighty affairs, such as the political situation of France, the conversion of the 5 per Cents., or the Sugar Duties, which latter involves one of the most important questions that claimed or awaited their attention; but (and mind I extract from the *Moniteur*) they have not ceased to succeed each other in the apartment of the Palace, in which are hung the specimens on which are founded the claims of MM. Daguerre and Niepée [Niépce—ed.] to pensions for their improvement of the *camera obscura*.”

[End of text.]

EDITOR'S NOTES:

The historian R. Derek Wood states that "Although the President of the Chambre des Députés had expected final discussion on awarding a pension to Daguerre would take place on Saturday 6 July, there was in fact a slight delay. The proposed display of Daguerreotypes took place on the following Sunday and Monday."¹ (7 July and 8 July 1839.)

The vote occurred on Tuesday, 9 July 1839. Wood further states "during the counting Arago appeared in the hall where daguerreotypes were displayed and spoke briefly about the technique, apparatus and cost involved to a crowd who assembled there." (Source: *Journal des Débats* [10 July 1839]: 3.)

Also to be noted is the phrase, "improvement of the *camera obscura*." Modern historians tend to think of the daguerreotype image as the entirety of Daguerre's invention. To those witnessing these events in 1839, and to Daguerre himself, Daguerre's camera was an intrinsic part of the invention.

1. R. Derek Wood, "A State Pension for L. J. M. Daguerre for the Secret of his Daguerreotype Technique," *Annals of Science* 54:5 (September 1997): 489–506. The text is also available on Wood's informative web site:

<http://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20100311230213/http://www.midley.co.uk/>

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