

**J. W. Tracy, "D. D. T. Davie, First President of the Association of
Daguerreotypists, September 1851**

(keywords: Daniel D. T. Davie, history of the daguerreotype, history of photography)

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ENGRAVED EXPRESSLY FOR THE PHOTOGRAPHIC ART JOURNAL.

D.D.T. DAVIE. Digitized by Google

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**D. D. T. DAVIE; FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF
DAGUERREOTYPISTS.**

BY J. W. TRACY, ESQ.

MR. DAVIE is now thirty-two years of age. His first essays in the production of photographic pictures were made in the year 1846, at a period which our readers will remember was anterior to the most striking improvements in the processes by which they are now produced. He had early a fondness for pictures, and a strong desire to become a portrait painter; but the want of pecuniary resources compelled him to abandon the idea of adopting this pursuit, and to educate himself for the more active business of life. Accident at length induced him to attempt the making a picture by the ordinary photographic apparatus in use at the time, and his success, uninstructed as he was, led him at once to devote himself to the art. He was at the time almost entirely ignorant of chemistry, and without the aid of resources to aid him in obtaining instructions in its principles, and too poor to afford himself the best apparatus then used by the Daguerreotypists in this country. What he lacked in these respects he determined to make up in careful study and untiring efforts to improve his knowledge and practice. His success in the course he marked out for himself is well known to most of the practitioners of the art. They are indebted to him for several of the most important aids and improvements in the process and apparatus now used in the United States. The refined rotten stone so extensively used, is prepared by a process discovered by him, and his preparations of gold and silver for the use of photographers, are very highly esteemed by the profession. The compound lever buffing vice, the cast iron cone buffer, the machine for clipping and crimping plates, and the camera stand invented by him, are each of them superior to any others in use, and are contributions towards the advancement of the art, which none but its professors can properly appreciate. His latest gift to the profession is his machine called the American Photographer, which clips, crimps, cleans and buffs the plate. This was awarded by the Mechanics' Association in Utica, its first premium, for the most useful recent mechanical invention.

Mr. Davie is enthusiastic in his love of his profession and in his desire to render it useful and respectable. He has been very active in all the movements for uniting photographers in their association for the improvement of their art, and always ready to communicate the results of his studies and experiments to his brethren. For the last three years he has resided in the city of Utica. His rooms are adorned with the portraits of most of the distinguished men of our county, taken by himself. He visited Washington during the session of Congress in 1850, and while there succeeded in obtaining sittings from all the officers of government, and the members of both houses of Congress, with one or two exceptions, which he subsequently obtained. His photograph of Mr. Webster, taken in 1850, is regarded as the most striking likeness of this distinguished statesman extant. Among other well deserved compliments which he has received, the judges at the last State Fair awarded him a silver medal for the largest and best collection of photographic pictures on exhibition.

[End of text.]

EDITOR'S NOTES:

This article is the last of eight biographical sketches of eminent daguerreotypists appearing in the journal's first year of publication. Each profile is accompanied by a full-page lithographic portrait, six of which are by the lithograph artist, Frances D'Avignon. (D'Avignon also provided the lithography for *The Gallery of the Illustrious Americans*.) Other articles in this series are C. Edwards Lester, "M. B. Brady and the Photographic Art," 1:1 (January 1851): 36–40;¹ S. D. Burchard, "Martin M. Lawrence and the Daguerrean Art," 1:2 (February 1851): 103–106;² S. J. Burr, "Gabriel Harrison and the Daguerrean Art," 1:3 (March 1851): 169–77;³ J. P. Kidder, "Augustus Morand and the Daguerrean Art," 1:4 (April 1851): 237–39;⁴ A. D. Cohen, "George S. Cook and the Daguerrean Art," 1:5 (May 1851): 285–87;⁵ R. W. Keyes, "Luther Holman Hale and the Daguerrean Art," 1:6 (June 1851): 357–59;⁶ M. Grant, "John A. Whipple and the Daguerrean Art," 2:2 (August 1851) 94–95.⁷

An editorial note about the biographies and portraits provides this information:

—To those desiring the publication of their biographies and portraits in the Journal we will state that it will be necessary to communicate with us on the subject as early as possible in order that we may assign to each his month, there generally being several engaged ahead, and we are obliged to adopt the very good practice of serving applicants in the order of their application. We deem it necessary to state this much that there may not be any misunderstanding in the matter.⁸

A subsequent editorial response to correspondence provides additional information:

—W. T. [William H. Thomas?] of S. C.—In answer to your question we will say that you have been misinformed in regard to the matter. We make no charge for the insertion of portraits and biographies, although it is generally customary, among periodicals, to do so. The reputation of an operator as an artist must be good, in order to secure the privilege of placing his portrait in our Journal, but as it is undoubtedly of far more advantage to the artist than ourselves, we think it not more than right that he furnish the illustration free of expense to us. As to the style and cost of the portrait, we leave that entirely to the judgment and taste of the operator, requiring only, that the work be executed as nearly perfect as possible. Steel plates are decidedly the least trouble, and much preferable, as finer impressions and more uniform printing can be obtained from them. Lithographic drawings will not always print well, and we have had much trouble with them on that account. With one or two exceptions those who have inserted their portraits have purchased one hundred copies of the number containing it.⁹

In January 1853, Davie joined with Guerdon Evans in publishing the short-lived monthly, *Scientific Daguerrean*.¹⁰

See also D. D. T. Davie, *The Photographer's Pocket Companion, being a Practical Treatise on the Collodion Process, Both Negative and Positive, also the New German Process* (New York: H. H. Snelling, 1857); D. D. T. Davie, *Photographic Senatorial Album of the Empire State, 1858–9* (Saratoga Springs: D. D. T. Davie 1859. This volume is described as consisting of unpaginated mounted portraits.) D. D. T. Davie, *Secrets of the Dark Chamber: Being Photographic Formulae at Present Practiced in the Galleries of Messrs. Gurney, Fredericks, Bogardus, Etc. of New York City* (New York: Joseph H. Ladd, 1870).

1. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8510010_BRADY_PAJ_1851-01.pdf

2. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8510013_LAWRENCE_PAJ_1851-02.pdf

3. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8510012_HARRISON_PAJ_1851-03.pdf

4. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8510014_MORAND_PAJ_1851-04.pdf

5. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8510011_COOK_PAJ_1851-05.pdf

6. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8510015_WHIPPLE_PAJ_1851-08
7. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8510016_DAVIE_PAJ_1851-09
8. *Photographic Art-Journal* (New York) 1:5 (May 1851): 319
9. *Photographic Art-Journal* (New York) 2:5 (November 1851): 319.
10. J. H. French, *Gazetteer of the State of New York* (Syracuse: Pearsoll Smith, 1860): 460.

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