

“Portrait of Webster,” (by Frederick DeBourg Richards) March 1885

(keywords: Frederick DeBourg Richards, Daniel Webster, history of the daguerreotype, history of photography)

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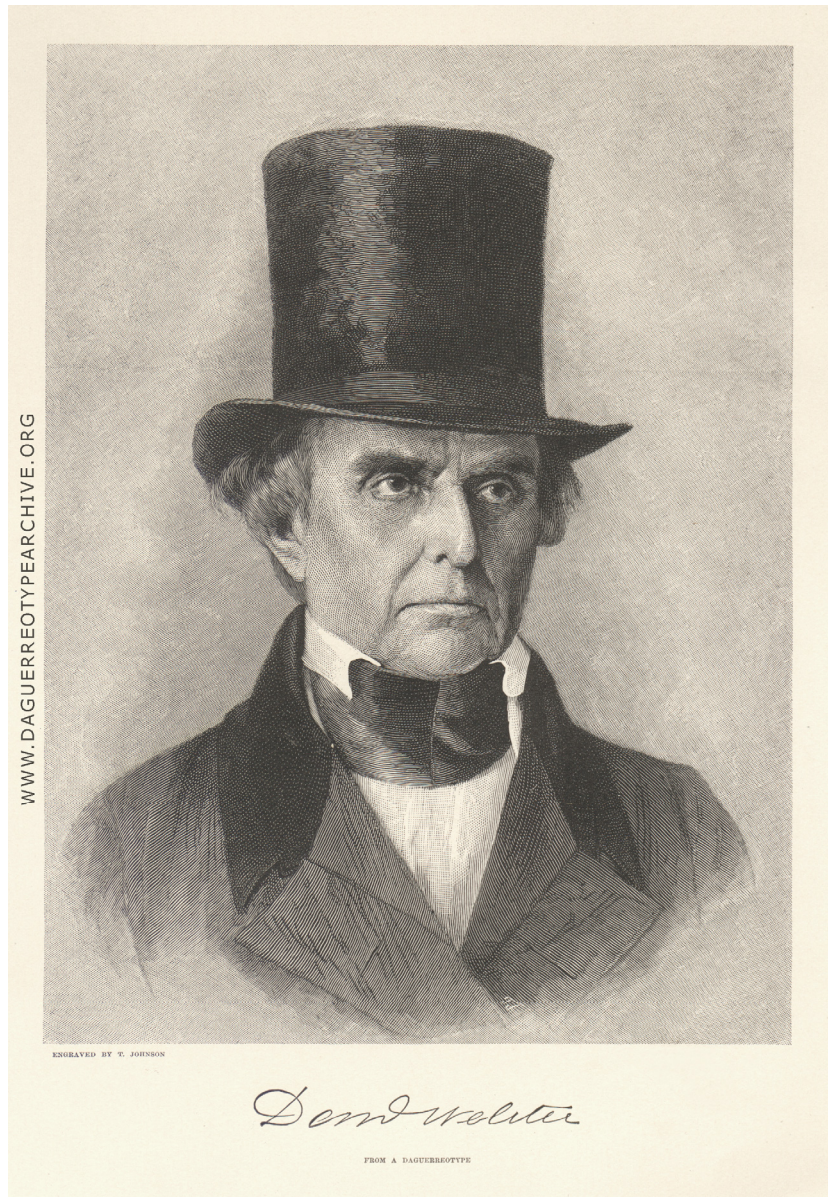
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Selected text published in:

Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine (New York) 29:5 (March 1885): 721.

This text is an editorial remark accompanying the article by Stephen M. Allen, “Reminiscences of Daniel Webster” (pp. 721–25) and provides anecdotal information regarding the portrait of Webster.



The portrait of Webster, printed as a frontispiece, is from a daguerreotype made by Mr. F. de B. Richards, of Philadelphia. Mr. Richards, now a painter, was formerly a daguerreotypist, and went, under the guidance of Dr. McClellan (father of the general), to get Webster to pose for the likeness. Mr. Richards is confident that this was in 1849, though we can find no record of a public speech made by Webster in Philadelphia in that year. Mr. Richards says that Webster had spoken with his hat on, and they wished to preserve a memento of the speech; but when they found Webster he was pacing the floor in furious anger, frowning like Jupiter Tonans, because some unfeeling creditor had ventured to dun him for a debt. Dr. McClellan whispered to Richards not to touch the picture question. Meantime, Webster's friends were raising money among the Whigs with which to satisfy the debt. At ten minutes before two the doctor and the daguerreotypist returned, to find the lion tame and happy. But there was to be a reception that afternoon, and Webster turned and growled, "McClellan, if that picture is to be taken, it must be at two o'clock." Dr. McClellan thereupon whispered to Richards to run and have all things ready. Mr. Richards remembers hearing Webster's angry grumbling when he reached the top of the third flight at finding he must mount one more. When he entered the gallery Richards said: "Stand just as you are, Mr. Webster; we wish to take you first with your hat on." "Your first will be your last," roared the statesman. But when the artist announced that the sitting was ended in about four seconds, he said: "What, all done?" "Yes." "Why, in Boston they will set your eyes out!" and he sat for two or three other pictures. The hat shown in the picture, or a similar one, is preserved in the "Historical" rooms in Philadelphia.—Ed.

[End of selected text. All content related to the daguerreotype herein provided.]

EDITOR'S NOTES:

The daguerreotype portrait of Webster reproduced in this publication is not known to have survived to the present day.

Over twenty daguerreotypes or daguerreotype-derived portraits of Webster are provided in Harold Francis Pfister, *Facing the Light: Historic American Portrait Daguerreotypes* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1978): 76–82, 210–18, 354–59, 373–74.

In the anecdote, Webster speaks of the daguerreotypists in Boston. Both John A. Whipple and the firm of Albert S. Southworth and Josiah J. Hawes took daguerreotype portraits of Webster. Webster's sitting with Southworth and Hawes is described as lasting thirty minutes:

His portrait of Daniel Webster is of the first importance. The sitting for it was given by Mr. Webster on the 22d of April, 1850, directly upon his arrival from Marshfield on his way to Washington. He sat for thirty minutes, and the result was one of the best likenesses of him in existence.

—Rufus Rockwell Wilson, "A Famous Photographer and His Sitters," *Demorest's Family Magazine* (New York) Vol. 34, No. 5 (April 1898): 134–35, 156.¹

Mathew B. Brady also recounts a sitting by Daniel Webster:

I made my first picture of Daniel Webster in New York in 1848. He was as courteous and as pliable as it was possible for man to be. "Use me as the potter would the clay, Mr. Brady," he said to me, and he was more than pleased with the result.

—"An Old-Time Photographer and His Reminiscences," *Photographic Times and American Photographer* (New York) 25:681 (5 October 1894): 226.²

1. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8980001_HAWES_DEMOREST_1898-04.pdf

2. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8940004_BRADY_PHOTO-TIMES_1894-10-05.pdf

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