

George Fuller, "a perfect likeness for \$7.00. . ." 11 April 1840

(keywords: George Fuller, François Gouraud, history of the daguerreotype, history of photography.)

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EWER ARCHIVE S8400001

Manuscript letter:

George Fuller to his father, Aaron Fuller, dated 11 April 1840.

(Original line breaks preserved.)

George G. G.

Boston April 11, 1840

Dear Father,

It was my intention when I left home to let you hear from me before this, but "circumstances alter cases" that is I could only have told you that the times were very hard and that the merchants get abundance of experienced help for board, and many cannot get even that but have to go their way sorrowing. As for my getting a place here, that would suit either you, or myself, its all "no go," as the loafers say, so I make myself easy on that point, I have delivered all my letters, &c. Mr. Williams said he would do all in his power for me, and asked me to board with him a week while I looked for a place. I am now at J. E. Fullers 24 Franklin place, and as I have been here long enough for a visit, I intent to pay for my board from this time henceforth.

But I am writing a business letter and must be brief. You have heard much (through the papers) of the Daguerreotype or drawings produced by rays of light upon a plate, chemically prepared. Augustus and I went to see the Specimens and were much pleased; our ticket would entitle us to one of the lectures, but we were too late as they had closed delivering them. Now this can be applied to taking miniatures or portraits on the same principle that it takes landscapes.

Mr. Gouraud is now fitting up an apparatus for this purpose if he can raise a class of 10 or 15, he will give instruction or private lectures, making them perfectly acquainted

with the art. The plate (metallic) costs about \$1.50 and it is easily prepared, but two minutes time is required to ~~take~~ leave a complete impression of a man's countenance, perfect as nature can make it. He will give me instruction for \$10, and the apparatus will cost \$51.00 making in all \$61.00 only, for the whole concern he has shown me the machine and I think it very low at his price we can afford to take a perfect likeness for \$7.00; the plate and glass will cost 2.00 leaving \$5.00 with custom [customers—edit.] enough 50 could be taken in one day.

This is a new invention and consequently a great novelty, of which every one has heard and have a curiosity to see, it is just what the people in this country like viz. something new. I think any one would give 7 dollars for their perfect likeness, we could clear ourselves of all expense in 2 weeks, but before I proceed father, I was your advice and some money (payable on demand). I think you will like the idea as I can go in company with Augustus. I have explained it to him and he likes it much. He can raise \$50 dollars in 2 weeks he says (he is way in Charleston) pretty good business.

Aunt Carolina likes the idea, I am determined to go ahead with it at all events, make the experiment, I wish you to give me an immediate answer and if you can raise/borrow \$100 for me I can repay it in 2 months at least.

I will have all ready to leave the city in 3 weeks, I think it best that we should go the large country towns, where they have seen nothing of this kind. I have nothing more to write upon this subject, at present but as fast as I get information I will let you hear concerning me. Aunt Carolina is well and drove to death with business.

I sent the braid by [illeg.] the [illeg.] there took our [illeg.] red hair.

[End of text. Strike-through of the work "take" is per original manuscript.]

EDITOR'S NOTES:

George Fuller (1822–1884) was a portrait, landscape and figure painter in Deerfield, Massachusetts. Fuller was 18 years of age when he wrote this letter. Despite his enthusiasm, Fuller writes only once of using the apparatus, that of making a daguerreotype of “the old homestead.”

Fuller’s manuscript letter is viewable on the web site of *Memorial Hall Museum Online: American Centuries* (accession #L99.052).¹

A partial transcription of the letter is provided in Josiah B. Millet, *George Fuller: His Life and Works* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1886). Also available in microfilm: Smithsonian Institution—Archives of American Art: George Fuller papers, 1832-1959, reels: 606-610.

Another individual purchasing apparatus from François Gouraud was Dr. Samuel A. Bemis. Bemis’ receipt of sale for a whole-plate apparatus², dated 15 April 1840, provides the details:

| | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| <i>Dr. Bemis bought of M F Gouraud —</i> | |
| <i>One Daguerreotype apparatus</i> | <i>\$.51. . .</i> |
| <i>twelve plates</i> | <i>\$.2—</i> |
| | <i>24</i> |
| | <i>75. .</i> |
| <i>for freight</i> | <i>1</i> |
| | <i>Received payment \$76.</i> |
| <i>François Gouraud</i> | |
| <i>Boston April 15, 1840</i> | |

1. <http://www.memorialhall.mass.edu/collection/itempage.jsp?itemid=5810>
2. See Robert W. Bermudes, Jr., “Ultimate Success is Certain”: The Life and Art of Samuel A. Bemis,” *Daguerreian Annual 2006* (Pittsburgh: The Daguerreian Society, 2007): 101.

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