

Glossary of Terms

The following is a brief glossary of photographic terms found in the essays in this volume.

- albumen print — a photograph made on paper coated with an emulsion made from the whites of eggs (albumen); popular for forty years after its introduction in 1850; commonly used for making prints from wet-collodion glass negatives; the basis of *carte-de-visite*, stereo and cabinet photographs.
- cabinet photograph — a 4 x 5½-inch paper print, usually a portrait, mounted on a 4½ x 6½-inch card, often elaborately imprinted with the name of the photographer on both sides of the mount; popular from the mid-1860s to the turn of the century.
- calotype — the first negative-positive process; yielded multiple paper prints from a paper negative; patented in England in 1841, and made until about 1855; limited in use by patent restrictions; never produced in British Columbia; also known as a Talbotype.
- camera lucida* — not properly a camera; a drawing aid which employed a prism to permit an artist to see both subject and drawing paper at the same time.
- camera obscura* — an early optical instrument used to reduce three-dimensional objects to a two-dimensional plane; essentially a dark room or box with a single pin-hole in one wall through which light passed, projecting on the opposite interior wall, an inverted image of the scene outside; forerunner of the first modern camera which employed a lens and a light sensitive material to record the image cast on the interior wall.
- carte-de-visite* — a miniature photograph, usually a portrait, approximately 2¼ x 3½ inches, mounted on a card 2½ x 4 inches; introduced in 1859 in Europe and made until the turn of the century; eagerly collected and exchanged in the 1860s.
- collodion — a thick, syrupy transparent solution of gun-cotton (cellulose nitrate) in a mixture of ether and alcohol; used in the production of negatives on glass from the early 1850s to the mid-1880s; see: wet-plate, dry-plate.

- daguerreotype — the first practicable photographic process, invented in France in 1839, and popular until the mid-1850s; yielded a direct positive image on a sheet of silver-plated copper; brilliant, infinitely detailed, unique and reversed left-to-right, daguerreotypes were preserved under glass, usually in a hinged case; used little, if at all, in early British Columbia.
- detective camera — a type of light, hand-held camera using dry-plates; sometimes disguised as another object or concealed in books, briefcases or clothing; common from 1883 to 1896.
- dry-plate — completely superseded the wet-plate by the mid-1880s; a ready-to-use, factory-prepared plate with a light-sensitive emulsion for making a negative on a glass or film base; the earliest dry-plates were made with collodion — later, gelatin.
- duotone — a photomechanical reproduction created by two printings of a halftone screen, often using a different colour for the second inking; see: halftone.
- film — a flexible, transparent support coated with a light-sensitive emulsion for the production of negatives; manufactured in sheet or roll form.
- gelatin(e) — a glutinous material used in the preparation of light-sensitive emulsions for glass or film negatives and paper prints; first introduced in the 1870s and still the basis for standard photographic emulsions.
- glass-plate — a negative on glass; first introduced in the early 1850s with the collodion wet-plate; superseded by the collodion dry-plate and the gelatin dry-plate.
- halftone — a printed reproduction of a photograph which uses a screen of dots to simulate the continuous tones of an original print; a photomechanical process which permits photographs and text to be printed on the same page; used for book and newspaper illustration.
- Kodak No. 2 — a simple box camera with a fixed-focus lens; came from the factory already loaded with gelatin film for 60 exposures; yielded circular negatives with an image $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter; manufactured 1889-1897.
- lantern slide — a positive image on glass used for projecting an image on a screen for easy viewing by large audiences; first developed in Philadelphia around 1850; commonly $3\frac{1}{2}$ by 4 inches ($3\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{1}{2}$ in Great Britain).
- likeness — a term commonly used in the mid-nineteenth century for a photographic portrait.
- magic lantern — a device which first used an oil lamp to project an image from a lantern slide through a lens onto a screen or wall; popular for parlour entertainment and public lectures from the 1850s until the First World War; forerunner of the modern slide projector.
- photographer — early term for a photographer.

- platinum print — a photograph on paper made light-sensitive using platinum instead of silver; noted for its permanence, delicacy and long tonal range; popular from the 1870s until World War I when the scarcity and rising cost of platinum made the process impractical; also known as a platinotype.
- roll film camera — a modern type of camera, popularized with the introduction of the Kodak in 1888; has a transport mechanism to advance flexible film from one spool to another, permitting consecutive exposures to be made without loading and unloading the camera each time.
- stereo — the common abbreviation for stereoscopic view, stereograph, stereogram, stereocard; a pair of photographic images designed to be viewed in tandem; based on the principles of binocular vision, two slightly offset images, when viewed through a device known as a stereoscope, produce a single image with the realistic sensation of three-dimensional space; produced throughout the last half of the nineteenth century, but most popular in the 1860s and 1890s.
- view — a term commonly used in the nineteenth century for a photograph of an outdoor scene.
- wet-plate — a negative produced by a process which fixed a light-sensitive emulsion to glass using collodion; the name derives from the fact that the plate required exposure and development while the emulsion was still “wet” (tacky); invented in England in 1851 and popular until the 1880s.
- whole-plate — standard daguerreotype or photographic plate size; $6\frac{1}{2} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$ inches; smaller designations such as quarter-plate ($3\frac{1}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{4}$) or sixth-plate ($2\frac{3}{4} \times 3\frac{1}{4}$) were derived from this basic size.

For more information or for an explanation of other terms, useful reference works are:

Margaret Haller

Collecting Old Photographs

New York: Arco Publishing Company, Inc., 1978

Robert A. Weinstein and Larry Booth

Collection, Use, and Care of Historical Photographs

Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1977

Lee D. Witkin and Barbara London

The Photograph Collector's Guide

Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1979