



# The Origins of American Photography : From Daguerreotype to Dry-Plate, 1839-1885: The Hallmark Photographic Collection at The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

Keith F. Davis, Contributions by Jane Lee Aspinwall



The Origins of American Photography chronicles the emergence of a new visual paradigm, from the introduction of the daguerreotype in 1839 through the Civil War and the exploration of the West to the rise of popular photography in the 1880s. Beautifully designed and produced, with over 600 reproductions in tritone and four-color, this important volume features works by all the leading practitioners of the time and by others who remain unknown. Many of these images are published here for the first time all are from the acclaimed Hallmark Photographic Collection at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. In a detailed and authoritative text, Keith F. Davis examines photography's social history and aesthetic development in an era of rapid national growth. He demonstrates how key themes and genres—including the business of daguerreian portraiture, the markets for Civil War images, and the art of Western landscape photography—reflected the concerns and values of 19th-century society. Photographers of this era expressed a new national consciousness while, at the same time, helped to shape it. They also explored the visual language of a radically new medium, laying the foundation for all of photography's subsequent history. This essential book will be the most definitive study of this period in American photographic history. It will be of interest to all scholars and enthusiasts of the medium, and to anyone interested in the visual history of 19th-century American culture.

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