

Making the Daguerreotype portrait of the Rinharts



The year 1973 was a very active and productive year for me, that spring, I made a Daguerreotype portrait of Floyd and Marion Rinhart; later the Dag portrait of my daughter Christina, age 5, [that image was shown at the Smithsonian and is now in their image collection], and then the 19th century Photographic class featuring the Daguerreotype and Wet-plate processes.

After a year of back-and-forth discussions, The Ohio State University did purchase the Floyd & Marion Rinhart 19th century photographic collection. The collection consisted of 1800 images, countless papers of interest, and a complete set of the published books by the Rinharts. The Rinharts were very pleased to have their collection placed with a major university so it could be of use for continued research into the early photographic processes.

It was during one of the many visits that the Rinharts were to make to the Dept. of Photography & Cinema that I was able to ask that they pose for me while I attempt to make a Daguerreotype portrait of the two of them. It was a beautiful sunny day, and I thought that the conditions were perfect, and as we made our way outside, the discussion was ongoing as to who would stand, and who would sit for the portrait. Floyd was certain that he should sit because of the historical president, but Marion quick to point out that this image is not of them as 19th century persons, but 20th century. In the end, it was Marion who would sit, while Floyd stood at her side with a very large smile the whole time of the exposure. After the exposure, they insisted that

they watch me continue the process of completing the darkroom processing of the image. I still recall the sounds they each had made in each of the different elements to complete the image; they would inhale at the same time, and their “ Oh’s & Ah’s” would bring a big smile for me every time, to this day, very pleasant memories to recall.

The completed Daguerreotype image was given to the Rinharts; Marion was quick to contain it in her handbag for safe keeping, but the balance of the day was spent showing to anyone who would take the time to view it because Floyd was so pleased that his smile displayed the pleasure of the moment.

Floyd and Marion were very special people in so many ways, their collection was a joint effort, Floyd would think the “What if thoughts”, and Marion would be there to answer with “Perhaps we could”; in short, a perfect working team to accomplish anything that they would put their mind to. I shall always remember the laughter and smiles that we had shared during our lengthy conversations on and about anything photographic, and for several days after their visit, I would be thinking of the many ideas exchanged between us, and then look forward to their next visit.

Walter Johnson